VIRGINIA WOOLF'S CONCEPTION OF THE SUBJECT: MODERNIST FLUIDITY OR ROMANTIC VISIONARY?

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ABBREVIATIONS

AWD	*A Writer's Diary: Being Extracts from the Diary of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Leonard Woolf (London: The Hogarth Press, 1975)
BA	*Between the Acts* [1941], ed. by Frank Kermode (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992)
BP	*Books and Portraits: Some Further Selections from the Literary and Biographical Writings of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Mary Lyon (London: The Hogarth Press, 1977)
CE I-IV	*Collected Essays*, vol. 1-4 (London: The Hogarth Press, 1966-7)
CR I	*The Common Reader: First Series* [1925] (London: The Hogarth Press, 1948)
CR II	*The Common Reader: Second Series* [1932] (London: The Hogarth Press, 1959)
CSF	*The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Susan Dick (London: Triad Grafton Books, 1989)
CW	*The Contemporary Writers* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1978)
D I-V	*The Diary of Virginia Woolf 1915-19*, ed. by Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie, vol. 1 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977); vol. 2 (1978); vol. 3 (1980); vol. 4 (1982); vol. 5 (1984)
EVW I-III	*The Essays Of Virginia Woolf 1904-12*, ed by Andrew McNeillie, vol. 1 (London: The Hogarth Press, 1986); vol. 2 (1987); vol. 3 (1988)
FGN	*Four Great Novels: Jacob's Room* [1922], *Mrs Dalloway* [1925], *To the Lighthouse* [1927], *The Waves* [1931] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994)
L I-VI	*The Flight of the Mind: The Letters of Virginia Woolf 1888-1912*, ed. by Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautman, vol. 1 (London: The Hogarth Press, 1975); vol. 2 (1976); vol. 3 (1977); vol. 4 (1978); vol. 5 (1979); vol. 6 (1980)
MB	*Moments of Being: Unpublished Autobiographical*

	Writings, ed. by Jeanne Schulkind (Brighton: Sussex University Press, 1976)
ND	*Night and Day* [1919], ed. by Julia Briggs (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992)
O	*Orlando: A Biography* [1928], ed. by Rachel Bowlby (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992)
ROO, TG	*A Room of One's Own* [1929] and *Three Guineas* [1938], ed. by Morag Shiach (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992)
Y	*The Years* [1937] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968)

'Is life like this?' she asks. 'Must novels be like this?' (CR, I, p. 189). In answer to these questions, Woolf gives a summary of her own views for modernist fiction:

> Look within and life, it seems, is very far from being 'like this'. Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions - trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old...Life is not a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible? We are not pleading merely for courage and sincerity; we are suggesting that the proper stuff of fiction is a little other than custom would have us believe it.
>
> It is, at any rate, in some such fashion as this that we seek to define the quality which distinguishes the work of several young writers, among whom James Joyce is the most notable, from that of their predecessors (CR, I, pp. 189-90).

What, in effect, Woolf defines here as 'life' is 'consciousness' - the 'unknown and uncircumscribed' aliveness of 'an ordinary mind'. Woolf's dissatisfaction with traditional novels is located primarily upon the conception of identity they construct. Her continuous quest for an answer to the question 'what is life as consciousness?' propels most of her experimentation with the form of the novel. For this reason, my study, too, will focus largely upon Woolf's characterization as locus of her exploration of the uncircumscribed nature of identity as 'life'. This exploration begins in her first novel, *The Voyage Out* (1915), with the coming to consciousness of an individual life and develops through the course of subsequent novels into an attempt, in her final books, to convey the consciousness of the 'common life' across the boundaries of time and individual identity. I shall trace this development by close readings of five novels but also by detailed reference to Woolf's short fiction, essays, letters, autobiographical and other writing.

Unlike the Edwardians, then, Woolf focuses on the 'within', the subjective dimensions of character, representing with new perception 'the dark places of

psychology' (CR, I, p. 192). She thus feels it necessary to discover and develop new forms and methods to address her new views in fiction - the method which will redefine 'the proper stuff of fiction', whose quality and characteristic will be 'other than custom would have us believe it'. Throughout her writing life, this ambition constantly pushes her to develop new forms for the novel. After finishing her first two novels, *The Voyage Out* and *Night and Day* (1919), Woolf writes of: 'some idea of a new form for a new novel. Suppose one thing should open out of another - as in An Unwritten Novel', and she assumes that her new 'approach will be entirely different this time: no scaffolding; scarcely a brick to be seen; all crepuscular, but the heart, the passion, humour, everything as bright as fire in the mist' (D, II, pp. 13-4, 26 Jan. 1920). This new novel becomes *Jacob's Room* (1922), and after finishing it she writes that 'there's no doubt in my mind that I have found out how to begin (at 40) to say something in my own voice' (D, II, p. 186, 26 July 1922).[3]

Most critics have interpreted Woolf's 'voice', like that of Conrad and Joyce, as a modernist voice.[4] Her new voice rejects the 'appalling narrative business of the realist: getting you from lunch to dinner: it is false, unreal, merely conventional' (D, III, p. 209, 28 Nov. 1928). For Woolf, as for other modernist writers, the meaning of life is not solid, but changeable, 'something very erratic, very undependable' (ROO, pp. 143-4)[5], in which writers try to express the meaning of their modern experiences. What constructs meaning in modernist fiction is a sense, derived from heightened aesthetic awareness, of the texture of life as consciousness. This awareness includes the experience of characters in the novel, of the readers as well as of the writer who creates an aesthetic work of art. According to David Lodge, Woolf with her new attitude towards reality exemplifies a modernist tendency; she moves from metonymic (realist) mode to metaphoric representation of experience, in which the authoritative narrator's actual reporting and describing

voice 'fades away as the discourse locates itself in the minds of characters with limited knowledge and understanding'.[6] Similarly, in a recent Introduction to *To the Lighthouse* (1927), Margaret Drabble argues that Woolf is 'very consciously modernist...She had divorced herself...from attempts at conventional plot-filled narration...and from detailed realistic descriptions of material objects and social background'.[7]

In a typical modernist text, therefore, the traditional stability of character dissolves and disappears, giving way to a view of identity as indeterminate and unfinished in accordance with the varying and complex modern experience. Arnold Bennett, as a traditionalist, was stunned by Woolf's characterization when he reviewed *Jacob's Room*. For him, the creation of character was the foundation of good fiction, yet Woolf's characters in the novel, he asserts, are not convincing and thus 'do not vitally survive in the mind'.[8] In her reply, Woolf writes that for her character 'is dissipated into shreds now' (D, II, p. 248, 19 June 1923); in another response to criticisms about *The Waves* (1931), she writes: 'odd, that they (*The Times*) should praise my characters when I meant to have none' (AWD, p. 175, 5 Oct. 1931). Woolf's approach to characterization in her novels is apparently consistent with the general modernist sense of the complexity of human character and relationships in an age which is 'a season of failures and fragments' ('Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown', CE, I, p. 335). Thus, she wants us not to 'expect just at present a complete and satisfactory presentment' of her characters, but to 'tolerate the spasmodic, the obscure, the fragmentary, the failure' (CE, I, p. 337).[9]

However, since the 1980s there has been a tendency to assimilate Woolf's writing within the critical context of postmodernism.[10] Postmodernist critics do not categorize Woolf as a postmodernist writer as such, but there is a greater interest in the relations between her 'textual experiments and current theories of language and

narrative...'[11] These critics challenge the model of subjectivity as well as the very idea of self-identity. As Slavoj Zizek argues, 'the fundamental gesture of post-structuralism is to deconstruct every substantial identity...to dissolve the substantial identity into a network of non-substantial, differential relations'.[12] Postmodernist critics view the subject as fragmented and insubstantial, considering that reality and the subject are both constructed culturally in the language that produces the social world as well as the identity of the person. In their readings of Woolf, postmodernist critics pay attention mainly to the culturally and socially constructed aspect of reality and the subject. Particularly for feminist critics, Woolf is important for the way she represents feminine identity as constituted within the framework of the dominant patriarchal culture. For example, Makiko Minow-Pinkney views Woolf's works as 'a feminist subversion of the deepest formal principles - of the very definitions of narrative, writing, the subject - of a patriarchal social order'.[13] Throughout her book, Minow-Pinkney's argument focuses on cultural and political aspects of Woolf's fictional female subjects in the light of postmodern literary theory. In Minow-Pinkney's view, the subject is 'a project, not a given', 'a representation and cultural construction, not an eternal essence'.[14] In addition, Pamela L. Caughie reads Woolf's works in relation to the narrative strategies which produce character: 'we can approach narrative strategies not as representations of a certain set of conditions, such as women's lives or consumer society, but as functions of "multiple interacting conditions"'.[15] Within 'multiple interacting conditions', Woolf, Caughie argues, is thoroughly free of any conventions or traditions, but 'tests out various narrative possibilities that allow for different conceptions of self and world. Her fiction works on the assumption that narrative activity precedes any understanding of self and world'.[16] The various possibilities of narrative strategies in Woolf's works undermine the stability of the traditional

character as well as that of reality, because they bring out multiple perspectives of the self. What is postmodernism in Caughie's reading of Woolf's works is that the multiplicity of meanings, voices and views subverts the fixity of any coherent perspective, so that meaning is always in the process of construction.

I believe that these critical categorizations, although useful, are too limited in the way they look at Woolf's works. In my view, they place them into a restrictive critical realm, either modernist or postmodernist, and thus fail to see that Woolf's works, though experimental and new, are actually part of a wider and developing perspective in the historical process of the dominant literary tradition. I will thus view her works throughout my study not as completely breaking away from literary tradition, but rather as a reworking and redevelopment of it.

In her reworking of the traditional novel, I suggest that Woolf 'makes it new' by 'returning' to the Romantics. By this claim, I do not mean that Woolf is a Romantic in the sense that Wordsworth and Shelley are Romantics. Clearly this is impossible since the original Romantic writers were responding passionately to their own specific historical time and Woolf is writing from her own early twentieth century perspective. Woolf's Romanticism is strongly mediated by a Victorian reading of Romanticism as well as by her own aesthetic and political needs. Woolf draws upon the work of writers like Wordsworth and Shelley to expand her understanding of life as consciousness and to find ways of expressing her aesthetic philosophy. Lytton Strachey and Edwin Muir as well as many of Woolf's readers have noticed her 'romanticism'.[17] By 'returning' to the Romantics, Woolf develops her sense of 'reality' as both fragmented and whole, and of the 'self' as fragmented but desiring and imagining unity. Hence she strives to construct a poetical or lyrical novel to express that contradictory view. Woolf uses her fiction to explore the mystery of the subjective consciousness: that sense of life which when we come so

'close' to its quick reveals 'the flickerings of that innermost flame which flashes its messages through the brain': 'Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall', Woolf writes in 'Modern Fiction', 'let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness' (CR, I, pp. 191, 190). Clearly Woolf's view emphasizes a poetic attitude, a Romantic lyric attitude in prose, in which she not only tries to capture states of subjective feeling within the unstable process of consciousness, but she also desires to communicate a vision of life. Undoubtedly her view finds its echo in the vision of Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse*. While painting her picture, Lily Briscoe perceives the meaning of life imaginatively in a moment of intense illumination; she captures something permanent in her vision: 'In the midst of chaos there was shape; this external passing and flowing...was stuck into stability' (FGN, p. 383). Critics generally acknowledge that Woolf's representation of intense or visionary states of feeling is similar to lyric poetry.[18] Woolf herself views her own attempts in this way. After finishing *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse*, she desires 'an escapade after these serious poetic experimental books whose form is closely considered' (D, III, p. 131, 14 March 1927). This 'escapade' becomes *Orlando* (1928), but there follows another 'poetic experimental' book, *The Waves*, about which G. Lowes Dickinson writes to Woolf: 'your book is a poem, and I think a great poem'.[19]

My thesis will trace the interaction of Woolf's modernism with her Romanticism in five novels: *The Voyage Out* (1915), *Night and Day* (1919), *Orlando* (1928), *The Years* (1937) and *Between the Acts* (1941). These novels have been selected for discussion rather than the more obvious choices of *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *The Waves* (1931), largely because they are less canonical and therefore have been less studied. But more particularly because

critical opinion has tended to see the texts I have selected as more 'realist' and less 'poetic' than her other work. In this sense the five novels discussed here represent the most difficult texts to substantiate as deeply influenced by Romanticism.

In 'The Narrow Bridge of Art' (1927), Woolf makes clear what poetic elements will bring to the new novel form; and again her emphasis is upon 'the mind' and consciousness:

> [The new novel] will differ from the novel as we know it now chiefly in that it will stand further back from life. It will give, as poetry does, the outline rather than the detail. It will make little use of the marvellous fact-recording power, which is one of the attributes of fiction. It will tell us very little about the houses, incomes, occupations of its characters...With these limitations it will express the feeling and ideas of the characters closely and vividly, but from a different angle. It will resemble poetry in this that it will give not only or mainly people's relations to each other and their activities together, as the novel has hitherto done, but it will give the relation of *the mind to general ideas and its soliloquy in solitude* (CE, II, pp. 224-5, emphasis added).

Rather than talking of poetry's formal qualities such as its rhyme, metre and poetic diction, Woolf describes the main purpose of poetry in a way which strikingly recalls what Wordsworth writes in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1798): 'its object is truth, not individual and local, but general'.[20] Like Wordsworth, Woolf is interested not in individual relationship, not in 'the psychology of personal intercourse' which caused the psychological novelists to lose all touch with reality, but in the 'impersonal relationship' with 'ideas', with 'dreams', with 'imagination' and with 'poetry' (CE, II, p. 225). Moreover, Woolf's view of the mind's 'soliloquy in solitude' suggests a parallel with what Wordsworth writes in the Preface to *The Excursion* (1814): 'On Man, on Nature, and on human life, / Musing in solitude, I oft perceive / Fair trains of imagery before me rise' (1-3).

Behind Woolf's attempts to construct the lyrical novel lies her dissatisfaction with the modernist style. Like her modernist contemporaries, she abandons the representation of objective realism, but she also finds her contemporaries self-

conscious in their writings. For example, Woolf realizes this danger of 'the damned egotistical self' in James Joyce and Dorothy Richardson, which, she thinks, 'ruins' them (D, II, p. 14, 26 Jan. 1920). In her view, the self-centred style, as in the psychological novel of the nineteenth century, narrows and restricts the artist's mind and personality, so that she or he cannot embrace or create outside and beyond herself or himself. However, Woolf believes that 'a large and important part of life consists in our emotions toward such things as roses and nightingales, the dawn, the sunset, life, death, and fate' ('The Narrow Bridge of Art', CE, II, p. 225). It is the poetic quality in the novel that would enable the artist to stand back from life and to achieve a symbolic distance from the limitation of self. In this way, the artist will expand beyond herself or himself and express fully the important aspects of 'life'.

Woolf's second worry derives from the fragmentary nature of modernist style. In her review of Dorothy Richardson's *The Tunnel* (1919), she praises Richardson's method which achieves 'a sense of reality far greater than that produced by the ordinary means', but she also feels that it lacks in 'some unity, significance, or design' that 'we should perceive in the helter-skelter of flying fragments'; Woolf desires to see if 'the flying helter-skelter resolves itself by degrees into a perceptible whole' ('The Tunnel' (1919), CW, p. 121). In 'The Narrow Bridge of Art', Woolf makes clear her dissatisfaction with modernist poetry, which fails 'to serve us as [poetry] has served so many generations of our fathers...for our generation and the generation that is coming the lyric cry of ecstasy or despair, which so intense, so personal, so limited, is not enough' (CE, II, pp. 218-9).[21] For her, the failure of modernist poetry is caused not only by the poets, but also by the atmosphere of the age: 'the fine fabric of a lyric is no more fitted to contain this [modernist] point of view than a rose leaf to envelop the rugged

immensity of a rock' (CE, II, p. 219). Woolf exemplifies her view in 'Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown'. She admits that T. S. Eliot 'has written some of the loveliest single lines in modern poetry', but he is 'intolerant' of 'the old usage and politeness of society - respect for the weak, consideration for the dull' (CE, I, p. 335). His obscurity, which makes her take 'a dizzy and dangerous leap...from line to line, like an acrobat flying precariously from bar to bar', does not let her dream quietly in 'the shade of a book' (CE, I, p. 335). Woolf envies her indolent 'ancestor' and cries out for 'the old decorums' (CE, I, p. 335). In feeling that it is time to get 'their advice...by consulting the masterpieces' for our modernist failures, uncertainties and fragmentation, therefore, Woolf continuously returned to and read the masterpieces of those old decorums ('How It Strikes a Contemporary' (1923), CR, I, p. 300).

As her private and critical writings as well as her pervasive use of literary allusions in her works indicate, Woolf was deeply involved in 'one continuous unexhausted reading' from childhood to the end of her life (L, V, p. 319, 29 July 1934).[22] Born into a culturally rich, intellectual upper-middle class family as the daughter of Sir Leslie Stephen, the editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, she read widely not only fiction, poetry, and drama of English literature, but also classical and continental literature - Greek, French and Russian; not only literature but also criticism, memoirs, biography and social history. Woolf read for different purposes, and the best way of reading for her was to allow herself to have 'great fun & pleasure' (D, II, p. 259, 28 July 1923).[23] She also read to enrich the meaning of her work, or sometimes to mitigate her suffering. Woolf began her reading as 'a dreamy amateur' (D, III, p. 210, 28 Nov. 1928), but developed her own kind of reading that became 'serious...reading with pen & notebook' (D, II, p. 259, 28 July 1923; see also, D, III, p. 210, 28 July 1928). 'It was the Elizabethan prose writers

I loved first & most wildly,' she writes in 1929, 'stirred by Hakluyt, which father lugged home for me...& why I don't know, but I became enraptured...I used to read it & dream of those obscure adventures, & no doubt practised their style in my copy books' (D, III, p. 271, 8 Dec. 1929).

Woolf's passionate reading suggests her sense of the continuing presence of a whole cultural tradition. She believes that 'great writers do not die; they are continuing presences' (ROO, p. 148).[24] Like T. S. Eliot in his essay 'Tradition and The Individual Talent' (1919), Woolf considers it our responsibility to pass the wider significance of literary tradition on to the next generation: 'let us keep the long succession of readers; let us in our turn bring the insight and blindness of our own generation to bear upon the "Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia", and so pass it on to our successors' ('The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia' (1932), CE, I, p. 19). In order to bring the continuing presences of the great writers of the past into life, she also recommends modernist writers to 'compare what [they] have written with what the great writers have written. It is humiliating, but essential. If we are going to preserve and to create, that is the only way' ('The Leaning Tower' (1940), CE, II, p. 181). Moreover, Woolf wants critics to 'take a wider, a less personal view of modern literature, and look indeed upon the writers as if they were engaged upon some vast building, which being built by common effort, the separate workmen may remain anonymous' ('How It Strikes A Contemporary', CR, I, p. 304).

Woolf's views of 'common effort' and anonymity are of central importance in relation to the continuity of the past literature in the present. By valuing 'common effort', Woolf discredits modernist poetry which fails to give the 'self' that Wordsworth and Shelley 'have described', because the modernist poet pays less attention to what is held in common within a culture; instead modernists represent 'a world that has perhaps no existence except for one particular person at one

particular moment' ('A Letter to a Young Poet' (1932), CE, II, p. 189). But Woolf, as she writes in 'Notes for Reading at Random' just months before her death in 1941, desires 'to find the end of a ball of string & wind out', simply to keep 'the continuity of tradition' through common effort.[25] Moreover, as we will see in chapter four, anonymity suggests two views for Woolf. First, the anonymity becomes a female pose against the imposition of the male-centred tradition. 'Anonymity runs in [women's] blood', she writes in *A Room of One's Own* (1929). 'The desire to be veiled still possesses them' (ROO, p. 65). Thus Woolf comes to see herself as 'an outsider...writing against the current' (D, V, p. 189, 22 Nov. 1938). Secondly, anonymity has an aesthetic outcome. Woolf desires to escape 'the damn egotistical self' and avoid close attention to her personal identity (D, II, p. 14, 26 Jan. 1920). She writes in a 1933 diary entry: 'I wish I need never read about myself, or think about myself...but look firmly at my object & think only of expressing it' (D, IV, p. 289). Anonymity will bring out impersonality, an escape 'from the cramp and confinement of personality', and thus has a close relation to the artistic creativity and expansion ('How It Strikes a Contemporary', CR, I, p. 302).

Woolf's immersion in literary tradition through her life-long practice of reading includes her response to the Romantics, particularly Wordsworth and Shelley, finding in their writings the means to make her fiction new. Her first acquaintance with Wordsworth starts early in her life through her father's chanting of 'the most sublime words of Milton and Wordsworth, stuck in his memory'.[26] Shortly after his death in 1904, Woolf writes that 'many of the great English poems now seem to me inseparable from my father; I hear in them not only his voice, but in some sort his teaching and belief'.[27] Although she accuses Wordsworth of having male sex-conscious in him (ROO, p. 135), Woolf is also fascinated by him. In an earlier review of *Wordsworth's Guide to the Lakes* (1835) by E. de Selincourt,

she praises Wordsworth's 'penetrating eye' in his selection and description of natural objects, in which 'he sees them all as living parts of a vast and exquisitely ordered system' ('Wordsworth and the Lakes' (1906), EVW, I, pp. 106, 107). Wordsworth's description is imaginative and suggests a transcendental meaning in that what he perceives becomes part of a 'vast' and 'ordered system' (EVW, I, p. 107). This sense of immanent order is obviously produced by the close interaction between external objects and the poet's creative mind. Moreover, Wordsworth's description, Woolf claims, has a restorative effect on the human psyche 'as a relief from other things' (EVW, I, p. 107). Two years later in another review of *Letters of the Wordsworth Family From 1787 to 1855* (1907) edited by William Knight, Woolf considers Wordsworth as the man 'who is to lead the great poetic revolution of his age' ('Wordsworth Letters (1908), EVW, I, p. 184). However, although she admits Wordsworth's contribution to the poetic 'revolution', she finds in his letters the careful 'record of daily life and accumulating experience' rather than 'rhapsody and poetry' (EVW, I, p. 185). Woolf's response to Wordsworth's letters is ambivalent in the sense that she does not consider his letters poetic, but she does not ignore them completely. For her, the success of the letters is the 'revelation' 'that at the very moment when he shows you something petty or commonplace you become aware of the vast outline surrounding it' (EVW, I, p. 185). Thus, Wordsworth shows us that 'there is no gulf between the stuff of daily life and the stuff of poetry, save that one is the raw material of the other' (EVW, I, p. 186). Here what is important for Woolf about Wordsworth is his self expansiveness; unlike modernist poets, he does not confine himself to self-consciousness, but when imaginative aspirations are raised, the artist and familiar things merge into each other; they become part of a larger unity.

Rather than defining Wordsworth's poetic 'revolution', I want here to focus

on the qualities in his writings and views which are important for Woolf's perception of 'character', or identity, which I will develop more fully in subsequent readings of Woolf's individual novels. In her earliest letter to Saxon Sydney-Turner on 13 April 1911 while still at work on *The Voyage Out*, Woolf writes of how she admires Wordsworth's work: 'I am reading *The Prelude* [1850]. Don't you think it one of the greatest work[s] ever written? Some of it, anyhow, is Sublime' (L, I, p. 460).[28] Woolf not only urges contemporary critics to consult 'the masterpieces of the past' for their correct judgment, she also advises her readers to 'compare each book with the greatest of its kind'; she herself places *The Prelude* among 'the greatest of its kind' ('How Should One Read a Book?' (1926), CE, II, pp. 8-9). She avails herself of its greatness to define her fiction. Having copied out the following lines from Book VII of *The Prelude*, Woolf comments in her diary, 'a very good quotation I think' (D, III, pp. 247-48, 22 Aug. 1929):

> The matter that detains us now may seem,
> To many, neither dignified enough
> Nor arduous, yet will not be scorned by them,
> Who, looking inward, have observed the ties
> That bind the perishable hours of life
> Each to the other, and the curious props
> By which the world of memory and thought
> Exists and is sustained (458-64).

The 'very good quotation' from Wordsworth seems obviously appropriate to both Woolf's modernist vision as 'the proper stuff of fiction' and her adherence to literary continuity. First, the 'looking inward' clearly suggests what she favours in her fiction - the subjective experience. Secondly, as we will see below, memory, in Woolf's views, provides a sensuous continuity between past and present, binding 'the perishable hours of life' to each other in the process of consciousness that constitutes the individual identity over time.

The first striking affinity in regard to consciousness shared between

Wordsworth and Woolf, though not limited to him only, is a highly developed visionary imagination and capacity for intense states of feeling. However, there occurs difficulty in defining the nature of imagination, because as Earl Wasserman warns us, the English Romantics do not hold a common definition of it.[29] Even Wordsworth himself gives different meanings. For him, the imagination is an 'awful Power [that] rose from the mind's abyss' like 'a flash that has revealed / The Invisible world' (*The Prelude*, VI, 592-602). Elsewhere, Wordsworth talks of 'what passed within' as 'genius, power, / Creation and divinity itself' (III, 173-76) or of 'spots of time' which retain 'A renovating virtue.../ A virtue by which pleasure is enhanced / That penetrates, enables us to mount / When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen' (XII, 207-217). I suggest that Wordsworth's 'flashes' of imagination and 'spots of time' with 'renovating' power are linked to Woolf's moments of vision. Explicitly expressed in her diary entry of 28 November 1928, her 'moment is a combination of thought' and 'sensation' (D, III, p. 209). But she finds it difficult to catch such 'moments of vision' even in combination, because they have 'an unaccountable nature', and when you 'leave them alone...they persist for years; try to explain them and they disappear; write them down and they die beneath the pen' ('Moment of Vision' (1918), CW, p. 75).[30] But what is important for Woolf, as for Wordsworth in particular and other Romantics in general, is that the 'shaping power' of imagination enables her to capture in a moment of vision a sense of the 'whole; whatever it includes', and thus 'its variety and divagations [are] ordered' (D, III, p. 209, 28 Nov. 1928; 'The Pastons and Chaucer' (1925), CR, I, p. 33). This creative power of imagination gives life a moment of endurance and permanence within its fluidity and fragmentation. The real threat to this awareness, Woolf realises, is a fixed adherence to linear sequence, the 'appalling narrative business of the realist', so she tries to eliminate the solid view of the realist narrative

by means of poetic style in her fiction. This poetic or lyric quality of her writing style is developed as the means of conveying intense states of consciousness. Hence the capacity for almost visionary moments of feeling that occurs to many of Woolf's female characters enables them not only to approach life through intuition, but also to discover a truth which transcends empirical knowledge of the world. Katherine Hilbery in *Night and Day*, for example, comes to the conclusion that the only truth she can discover is the truth of what she herself feels (ND, p. 265); similarly Lily Briscoe at the end of *To the Lighthouse*, experiences a moment of vision which enables her to complete her picture: 'Yes, she thought...I have had my vision' (FGN, p. 415).

The second Wordsworthian quality which Woolf employs as an important means of expressing identity is the use of memory. There is a close relationship between the creative imagination and the working of memory, because strong emotion is stimulated by memories of the past, and these memories exist and are sustained alive by 'curious props', that is intense images of scenes and objects retained freshly through time. The force of memory is often evident in both writers in that they recall a number of 'exceptional moments' from their childhood which 'come to the surface unexpectedly' with renewed force (MB, p. 71). For these 'exceptional moments', Woolf writes, 'I felt that I had put away in my mind something that I should go back [to], to turn over and explore' (MB, p. 71). Meaning pours into each moment through what she calls her 'tunnelling process' that ties the present to the past when the strong emotion is stimulated by memories (D, II, p. 272, 15 Oct. 1923).

It is consistent with Wordsworth that Woolf's view of past experience takes its root in her childhood. The first and 'the most important of all [her] memories', Woolf writes in 'A Sketch of the Past', is that of hearing the waves breaking, of the

splash of water over the beach, of seeing the light of the Lighthouse at night evoked by 'the pure ecstasy [she] can conceive' when she was in the nursery bed at St Ives (MB, pp. 64-5). Woolf's next memory at St Ives is more 'highly sensual' than the first one due to the sound and sight impression of external objects: the 'smelling of so many smells at once', the different colours of apples, the 'murmur of bees', 'pink flowers' and 'silver leaves' produce 'such a complete rapture of pleasure that I stopped, smelt; looked' (MB, p. 66). Her use of the words 'ecstasy' and 'rapture' about the natural world she observes obviously recalls Wordsworth's sensual pleasure of nature among 'hills, 'deep rivers, and the lonely streams' (*Tintern Abbey* (1798), 67-9). When 'the picture of the mind revives again', Wordsworth continues to write in *Tintern Abbey*, 'the coarser pleasures of my boyish days' come back with 'aching joys' and 'dizzy raptures' as well as with 'wild ecstasies' (60-85, 138). In Wordsworth's views, in after years, these ecstasies are 'matured / Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind / Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms, / Thy memory be as a dwelling-place / For all sweet sounds and harmonies' (138-42). Similarly, Woolf speculates: 'if life has a base that it stands upon, if it is a bowl that one fills and fills and fills - then my bowl without a doubt stands upon this memory' (MB, p. 64). Woolf's words are remarkably close to Wordsworth's 'I...see / In simple childhood something of the base / On which thy greatness stands' (*The Prelude*, XII, 273-75).

As these views indicate, both Woolf and Wordsworth achieve a sense not only of the sensuous unity of self through time by means of memory, a state of which they become increasingly aware, but also of the changeable, continuously renewed self. In my view, this new sense of being, constructed by the immediate fusion of both personality and memory, suggests a strong conscious affinity in Woolf for Wordsworth both in her visionary experience and her awareness of the creative

and unifying quality of the mind. This awareness in Woolf produces two important results in relation to her perception of identity and of time. First, there is a deep expression of a Romantic awareness, in which human identity continually expands, develops and fabricates itself in the juxtaposition of the present and past self, since every emotion or sensation deriving from exceptional moments of the past changes its shape continuously in response to the present forces surrounding it. Thus, human identity is always in process without a final view in time and space. Secondly, we come to see that the flashes of illumination display a view of consciousness that establishes continuity of the past within the present.

There is a further affinity between Wordsworth and Woolf as to their attitudes towards the composition of their art through memory. The working of memory does not always bring 'ecstasy' and 'rapture'; intense experience often involves feelings of terror as well as joy. Woolf explains how moments of catastrophe and shock are part of 'what makes [her] a writer' (MB, p. 72). The aesthetic result of sudden 'shocks' is that these moments 'become a revelation of some order...a token of some real thing behind appearances'. After bringing the 'severed parts together' and putting them into words, the pain disappears, and then she becomes able to discover what she calls 'reality' or her 'philosophy' in her literary composition: 'behind the cotton wool [of everyday life] is hidden a pattern; that we - I mean all human beings - are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work of art' (MB, p. 72). This resembles the Wordsworthian language of 'beauty and...fear' (*The Prelude*, I, 302). Like Woolf, Wordsworth recognizes 'visionary dreariness' as important among 'those passages of life that give / Profoundest knowledge' (XII, 220-1).

The third similarity between Woolf and Wordsworth is the interaction between the natural world and the human sensibility. Wordsworth's central belief

is that there is a mutual interaction between the living person and external objects. Wordsworth 'felt [the pleasure of this interaction] in the blood, and felt along the heart' (*Tintern Abbey*, 28) when the earth is before him with its 'green fields' and the 'azure sky' (*The Prelude*, I, 4). In this creative process, natural objects such as sea, rock, stones and trees, do not remain the same things, but are transformed by imagination into significant or even symbolic objects and beings which are not familiar to us. Like Wordsworth, Woolf perceives external objects or scenes intuitively. Similar to Wordsworth, 'the look of things has a great power over' Woolf (D, III, p. 191, 12 Aug. 1928). In the country side in Asheham, the rocks and trees give vivid sensations not only to her eyes, but also 'to some nervous fibre or fan like membrane in [her] spine' (D, III, p. 191, 12 Aug. 1928). In 'The Narrow Bridge of Art', she accuses modernist writers of putting too much emphasis on their personal views, and thus of forgetting 'a large and important part of life consists in our emotions toward such things as roses and nightingales, the dawn, the sunset...'; Woolf does not forget, but gives 'the relations of man to nature' (CE, II, pp. 225-26). As for Wordsworth, the interaction between the subject and natural objects is not one dimensional, but mutual in Woolf's view. The implication of her representation of object and subject is that the sensibility joins together the objective world of nature and the subjective world of the mind. The true nature of reality is perceived when a visionary unity takes place between the subject and the object, that is, the person observing and the object being observed. Thus, natural objects, Woolf observes, are transformed into something else. They are defamiliarized, becoming what we call a mental landscape, a state of being created by this dual interaction. For example, she writes in a diary entry:

> ...my brain seems to fill & expand & grow physically light & peaceful...And so the unconscious part now expands; & walking I notice the red corn, & the blue of the plain & an infinite number of things without naming them;

> because I am not thinking of any special thing. Now & again I feel my mind take shape, like a cloud with the sun on it, as some idea, plan, or image wells up, but they travel on, over the horizon, like clouds, & I wait peacefully for another to form, or nothing - it matters not which (D, III, p. 248, 22 Aug. 1929).

Similarly, the narrator of *Orlando* explains how 'the thing one is looking at becomes, not itself, but another thing, which is bigger and much more important and yet remains the same thing' (O, p. 273). The world of nature becomes a world of thought, in the creation of which the individual mind is not acting alone, but with the help of the external objects. This creative vision is linked to the Romantic perception, in which self identifies with external objects. As Woolf suggests in the diary entry above, this identification is a temporary identification, but it brings about a complete dissolution of the stable self appropriate to her modernist perception of identity.

Like Wordsworth, Shelley retains a significant fascination for Woolf as 'one of the greatest poets [like Coleridge, Wordsworth and Keats]'.[31] As with Wordsworth, her familiarity with Shelley starts with her father's habit of reciting and chanting many of the great English poems which dwelt in his memory. Unlike Wordsworth, however, Leslie Stephen's view towards Shelley was ambivalent. He found Wordsworth 'thoroughly manly and tender and honest'[32], whereas Shelley lacked in 'the moral beauty of the man'.[33] Moreover, although he was fond of the beauty of Shelley's lyrics, Stephen believed that Shelley, unlike Wordsworth, sought escapism beyond the boundaries of ordinary experience. In contrast to Wordsworth's truth-seeking mind, Shelley's mind stood 'on the top of the Wetterhorn - the giddiest place I have known in the Alps - and with the peculiar illusion, which one has on high mountains, that the meadows and houses below have become unsubstantial mist'.[34]

Unlike her father, Woolf places Shelley in a central position in her aesthetic

views.[35] Woolf's first reference to Shelley occurs in a letter to Violet Dickinson on 1 December 1906, in which she writes: 'I have been reading Shelley all the evening...Did you ever read Shelley? It is about as good as most things - as walking or running or talking or writing...' (L, I, p. 255) In 1908, she reviews an edition of *Letters from Percy Bysshe Shelley to Elizabeth Hitchener* (1908), in which she praises him as 'the truest poet of them all' and his verse as 'consummate', but his ambivalent personality puzzles her. Although his character 'is always amazing' for her, Woolf becomes deeply distressed by his 'curious lack of humanity' as when he implores Elizabeth to remain the 'sister of his soul' after marrying Harriet Westbrook ('Shelley and Elizabeth Hitchener', EVW, I, pp. 174-5). Yet Woolf celebrates both 'the intense comedy and tragedy of his life' (EVW, I, p. 174).

In another review of *Shelley: His Life and Work* (1927) by Walter Edwin Peck, Woolf honours Shelley and emphasizes not only 'the political importance of Shelley's poetry', but also 'some stories [about him] which have to be retold by each generation, not that we have anything new to add to them, but because of some queer quality in them which makes them not only Shelley's own story but our own' ('Not One of Us' (1927), CE, IV, p. 20). She suggests that we should read the Shelley biography by Peck 'not to find out new facts', but to find out 'the shifting image of ourselves' (CE, IV, p. 20). What Woolf finds most interesting in Shelley's 'queer' views and works is his approach to reality and identity. In Shelley's view, she argues, nothing is substantial and 'definite as a philosophy' or 'pure as perfection of expression', but uncertain, ambivalent and complex (CE, IV, p. 25). Thus, Shelley's works, particularly long poems such as *Prometheus Unbound* (1820) and *Epipsychidion* (1821) represent 'a state of being', in which 'We come through skeins of clouds and gusts of whirlwind out into a space of pure calm, of intense and windless serenity' (CE, IV, p. 25). Such a view of being, Woolf

points out, can help us 'in our conflicts' (CE, IV, p. 25).

Thus, Woolf takes from Shelley's views and works, those qualities which are of importance for the 'shifting' perspective of identity and reality in her modern experience. Shelley occupies an important place in Woolf's aesthetic views as a visionary poet. In 'The Intellectual Imagination' (1919), she emphasizes his difference from poets such as Brooke, Meredith and Donne, who display the 'intellectual' imagination though they are 'never for a second unconscious. The brain [is] always there, working steadily, strenuously, and without stopping' (BP, p. 91). However, poets like Blake, Keats and Shelley show 'visionary' imagination; their 'supreme felicities...seem to come when the engine of the brain is shut off and the mind glides serene but unconscious, or more truly, perhaps, is exalted to a different sphere of consciousness' (BP, p. 91). This visionary view of the mind suggests a similarity to Woolf's diary entry and review given earlier, in which the self forgets and loses itself in various sensations. Woolf and Shelley also share a thematic concern: a profound sense of conflict between the ordinary world and a transcendental impulse causes their characters or speakers to seek some other better ideal or self-escape beyond the uncertainty of the world. Both writers seek 'the likeness of what is perhaps eternal' or 'exquisite beauty' in the 'extraordinary vision, ascending to the very heights of existence' ('Not One of Us', CE, IV, pp. 23-6). This characteristic appears in the feelings of many of Woolf's female characters from the first novel to the last. For example, Rachel in *The Voyage Out* wants 'many more things than the love of one human being - the sky, the sea' (VO, p. 309), and Eleanor in *The Years* (1937) longs for 'another life' different from the ordinary life (Y, p. 343); for Isa of *Between the Acts* (1941), the ideal world is 'not here, not now...but somewhere surely...' (BA, pp. 56-7) Here it is important to recognize crucial differences in the ways in which Shelley and Wordsworth represent

their visionary experiences. According to Jay Clayton, although they share a view of transcendence, they display it differently. First, in Wordsworth's view, there is 'a shift between two selves or two consciousnesses', whereas Shelley always tries to catch at unity. Secondly, Wordsworth's 'spots of time are retrospective', registering 'exceptional moments' of transcendence from the past, but 'Shelley's union is prophetic, looking forward to a time when all life will be lived on a transcendant plane'. Thirdly, Wordsworth's visionary experience suggests only 'a momentary break in the action; after interruption' the narrative continues on a 'higher' level, while in Shelley, it disappears forever; 'after union, there is no longer need for further acts because the lovers are united'. Finally 'Shelley's lovers will have no need of a new language when they are ["]one spirit["] within two frames': 'our lips / With other eloquence than words, eclipse / The soul that burns between them' (*Epipsychidion*, 566-8).[36] All these characteristics of both Wordsworth and Shelley can be applied to Woolf's presentation of identity in her novels. In particular, she draws upon retrospective memory in developing a sense of the process of consciousness over time, but increasingly her last novels look prophetically to a utopian future for the 'common life'.

In relation to this concern with commonality, another idea in Shelley's visionary view which appears in Woolf's artistic philosophy is the aesthetic power of combination. In her essay 'The Novels of E. M. Forster' (1927), she writes: 'if there is one gift more essential to a novelist than another it is the power of combination - the single vision' (CE, I, p. 345). In *A Defence of Poetry* (1840), Shelley terms 'the power of combination' as the marriage of opposite realities in a new whole.[37] For Shelley, poetry 'marries exultation and horror, grief and pleasure, eternity and change; it subdues to union under its light yoke, all irreconcilable things. It transmutes all that it touches...'[38] I believe that such

opposing forces haunt Woolf both in her own life and writing. In a 1929 diary, she writes:

> Is life very solid, or very shifting? I am haunted by the two contradictions. This has gone on for ever: will last for ever; goes down to the bottom of the world - the moment I stand on. Also it is transitory, flying, diaphanous. I shall pass like a cloud on the waves. Perhaps it may be that though we change; one flying after another, so quick so quick, yet we are somehow successive, & continuous - we human beings (D, III, p. 218, 4 Jan. 1929).

She also wants the 'two contradictions' to be reconciled in fiction. In 'Phases of Fiction' (1929), Woolf writes that the successful novelist can 'balance' the opposing 'powers' of 'accuracy' of representation with 'design and order', and thus the two opposing 'powers' fly once they are brought into combination. In 'The Narrow Bridge of Art', Woolf sees that the future novelist will marry 'the ordinariness of prose' with 'the exaltation of poetry' (CE, II, p. 224). At the end of 'Phases of Fiction', she makes her point clear: 'we desire synthesis' (CE, II, p. 102). As will be explored in detail in following chapters, I suggest that Woolf applies this idea of the aesthetic combination of opposites to her view of life-writing (biography) as well as to her theory of androgyny.

Like the novel, Woolf believes that biography should be a product of the marriage between these opposing powers. The aim of the biographer, she theorizes, is to synthesize the 'granite-like solidity' of character with 'personality['s] rainbow-like intangibility', 'to weld these two into one seamless whole' ('The New Biography' (1927), CE, IV, p. 229). Woolf discerns that Victorian biographers had failed to achieve this fusion because of the fact that they had tried to transmit a realist representation of personality in a linear narrative. With the twentieth century, however, she argues that biography has undergone changes, and the biographer has become not the 'chronicler' of events and life, but an 'artist' who synthesizes (CE, IV, p. 231). Woolf praises the method developed by Harold Nicolson, but she also

finds him playing with fire when he tries to bring together biography and autobiography, 'to mix the truth of real life and the truth of fiction' (CE, IV, pp. 233-4). But she accepts that this start is promising, and future biographers will succeed in the real synthesis of opposing qualities in their new forms, representing 'that queer amalgamation of dream and reality, and that perpetual marriage of granite and rainbow' (CE, IV, p. 235). This perpetual marriage indicates that Woolf wants biography to be an artistic creative work of art, including everything about life - truth and fiction, jokes and gossips, failure and success, the external and the internal.

Woolf's concept of androgyny also suggests the same marriage of opposites, or of Shelleyan visionary combination into the ideal marriage of what she writes to G. L. Dickinson is 'the double soul' (L, IV, p. 106, 6 Nov. 1929).[39] Woolf first takes the idea of androgyny from Coleridge; she considers him as androgynous in her review of *The Table Talk and Omniana of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (1918) by Coventry Patmore, Coleridge 'even more than Shelley [is] "a beautiful and ineffectual angel" - a spirit imprisoned behind bars invisible and intangible to the tame hordes of humanity, a spirit always beckoned by something from without' ('Coleridge as Critic (1918), BP, p. 32). In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf develops more fully her view of androgyny, suggesting a model of personality based on the assumption that 'in each of us two powers preside, one male, one female'; in men's brains, 'the man predominates over the woman', and in women's brains, 'the woman predominates over the man' (ROO, p. 128). Here Woolf is arguing against the sex-consciousness which she sees in her male contemporaries. For example, both Galsworthy and Kipling, she asserts, have 'single-sexed minds' without 'a spark of the woman' in them, so that they cannot create (ROO, pp. 133, 135). As chapter four explores in detail, Woolf proposes a model of human conscious, which fuses

emotionally and psychologically the impulses of both 'man-womanly' and 'woman-manly' qualities of personality within a single self (ROO, p. 136). When the two opposing powers are 'united' in a 'natural fusion', the mind becomes 'fully fertilized and uses all its faculties' (ROO, p. 127-8). The opposite powers must 'live in harmony together, spiritually co-operating. If one is a man, still the woman part of the brain must have effect; a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her' (ROO, pp. 127-8). In a harmonious, sexually-integrated fusion of the personality, the mind can not only bring 'the secret of perpetual life' to the work of art (ROO, p. 132), but also establish a natural sympathetic communication between the sexes with a romantic expansiveness beyond the limitation of self as opposed to the constraints of egoistic sex-consciousness. Hence the artist will have no 'special sympathy' with either of the sexes (ROO, p. 128). In this fruitful communication and sympathetic relation, the artist produces an art which is 'resonant and porous' because of the fact that an 'androgynous mind' becomes 'naturally creative, incandescent and undivided' and thus conveys feeling without impediment (ROO, p. 128). For the real creativity, therefore, Woolf suggests that 'some collaboration has to take place in the mind between the man and the woman before the act of creation can be accomplished. Some marriage of opposites has to be consummated' (ROO, p. 136).

In addition to Coleridge, Shelley is also the great androgynous artist in Woolf's view. Unlike Wordsworth, she speculates about Shelley as perhaps 'sexless' (ROO, p. 135). In her view, Shelley has a fully 'fertilized' mind and thus does not have sex-consciousness. It enables him not only to transcend the sexual stereotypes which had become established in the dominant values of the Western bourgeois society, but also to create genuinely visionary works of art. As chapter four examines, Woolf develops the Shelleyan view of the androgynous mind in

Orlando not only as a way of reconciling the pressure of male and female views, but also as a way of genuine creativity and unity in vision. The idea of androgyny brings about a multiplicity of voices of men and women speaking in the text.

In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf's consideration of the androgynous combination of the creative mind concludes with an idealistic evocation of the common life shared by all. It is this more complex vision of combination which underlies her final experimentations with choral form in her last novels. Paradoxically, while there is a shift from the individualized consciousness of a single protagonist in Woolf's early to middle work to a multiplicity of protagonists and consciousness in her final novels, the multiplying of identities and voices constitutes an aesthetic impulse for combination. This is Woolf's visionary assertion of the unity of the common life in defiance of the threatening war, and of all oppressive forces that seek to rule by division and difference. Woolf's intense sense of fragmentation, failure of connection, and loss of certainties marks her sensibility as modernist, but her visionary politics comes from the Romantic poets. Her artistic achievement is the result of an aesthetic combination of these two contrary influences, Modernism and Romanticism, upon her practice as a writer.

Notes

1. The letter from Lytton Strachey to Virginia Woolf on 9 Oct. 1922 is quoted in *Virginia Woolf: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Robin Majumdar and Allen McLaurin (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 93.

2. *Virginia Woolf: The Critical Heritage*, p. 94, letter from Woolf to Lytton Strachey on 9 [10th?] Oct. 1922.

3. In her letter to Clive Bell on 24 July 1917, Woolf seeks 'new shapes', and in another letter to David Garnett on 26 July 1917, she writes that 'one ought to invent a completely new form' (L, II, pp. 167, 300). These letters as well as another letter to Violet Dickinson on 20 July 1907 indicate that in her art of writing, Woolf does not

submit to the 'tyranny' of the traditional conventions, but develops her own method, experimenting continuously with form and narrative strategy: 'A specimen of my narrative, which is far from good, seeing that I am forever knotting it and twisting it in conformity with the coils in my brain' (L, I, p. 300). Moreover, while still at work on *Mrs Dalloway* in 1923, Woolf also writes of another discovery: 'It took me a year's groping to discover what I call my tunnelling process, by which I tell the past by instalments, as I have need of it. This is my prime discovery so far' (D, II, p. 272, 15 Oct. 1923). In another diary entry, she defines her 'discovery': 'my discover; how I dig out beautiful caves behind my characters; I think that gives exactly what I want; humanity, humour, depth. The idea is that the caves shall connect, & each comes to daylight at the present moment' (D, II, p. 263, 30 Aug. 1923). Furthermore, in her essay 'The Narrow Bridge of Art', Woolf speculates about the future form of the novel 'in ten or fifteen year's time', CE, 2, pp. 218-229.

4. See, for example, the following critics who have categorized Woolf as a modernist writer: Peter Faulkner, *Modernism* (London: Methuen, 1977), pp. 28-38; Dennis Brown, *The Modernist Self in Twentieth-Century English Literature: A Study in Self-Fragmentation* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 99-107; Susan Stanford Friedman, 'Lyric Subversion of Narrative in Women's Writing: Virginia Woolf and the Tyranny of Plot', in *Reading Narrative: Form, Ethics, Ideology*, ed. by James Phelan (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1989), pp. 162-185; Sandra Kemp, 'But How Describe a World Seen Without a Self? Feminism, Fiction and Modernism', *Critical Quarterly*, 32 (1990), pp. 99-118; Lyn Pykett, *Engendering Fictions: The English Novel in the Early Twentieth Century* (London: Edward Arnold, 1995), pp. 90-111.

5. In her diary on 19 June 1923, Woolf also writes of a similar view: 'I insubstantise, wilfully to some extent, disturbing reality - its cheapness. But to get further. Have I the power of conveying the true reality? (D, II, p. 248).

6. David Lodge, *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy, and the Typology of Modern Literature* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), p. 177.

7. Margaret Drabble, 'Introduction to *To the Lighthouse*', in *Virginia Woolf: To the Lighthouse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. XII-XXV.

8. Arnold Bennett, 'Is the Novel Decaying?', *Cassell's Weekly*, 28 March 1923, p. 47; rpt in *Virginia Woolf: The Critical Heritage*, pp. 112-4.

9. In Woolf's modernist view of characterization, people cannot be summed up, but one, as the narrator of *Jacob's Room* says, 'must follow hints, not exactly what is said, nor yet entirely what is done', (FGN, p. 21). Thus, Woolf's characters are constructed continuously 'by

observing incoherence, the fresh natural sequences of a person who, wishing to tell the story of a friend's life in talk, breaks off a thousand times to bring in something fresh, to add something forgotten, so that in the end, though one may feel that one has been in the presence of life, the particular life in question remains vague' ('Life and Novelist' (1926), CE, II, p. 134).

10. See, for example, Sandra M. Gilbert, 'Woman's Sentence, Man's sentencing: Linguistic fantasies in Woolf and Joyce', in *Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury: A Centenary Celebration*, ed. by Jane Marcus (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 208-224; Patricia Waugh, *Feminine Fictions: Revisiting The Postmodern* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 88-125; Edward L. Bishop, 'The Subject in *Jacob's Room*', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 38 (1992), pp. 147-175; Ban Wang, '"I" On The Run: Crisis of Identity in *Mrs. Dalloway*', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 38 (1992), pp. 177-191; Rebecca Saunders, 'Language, Subject, Self: Reading The Style of *To the Lighthouse*', *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, 26 (1993), pp. 192-211; Julie Vandivere, 'Waves and Fragments: Linguistic Construction as Subject Formation in Virginia Woolf', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 42 (1996), pp. 221-233.

11. Pamela L. Caughie, *Virginia Woolf & Postmodernism: Literature in Quest & Question of Itself* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), p. xi.

12. Slavoj Zizek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), p. 72.

13. Makiko Minow-Pinkney, *Virginia Woolf & The Problem of The Subject* (Brighton: Harvester, 1987), p. x.

14. Minow-Pinkney, p. 11.

15. Caughie, p. 18.

16. Caughie, p. 67.

17. After Lytton Strachey, the earliest critic who discerned the Romantic resemblance of Woolf's characterization is Edwin Muir. He writes in his essay 'Virginia Woolf': 'the result is less akin to anything else attempted in the novel [*Mrs Dalloway*] than to certain kind of poetry such as Wordsworth's, which records not so much a general judgment on life as a moment of serene illumination, a state of soul', *Nation and Athenaeum*, 17 April 1926, pp. 70-72 and reprinted in *Virginia Woolf: The Critical Heritage*, pp. 178-85 (p. 184). Following Strachey and Muir, many critics have made scattered Romantic references to Woolf's novels. See, for example, Bernard Blackstone, *Virginia Woolf: A Commentary* (New York: Harcourt, 1949), p. 212; Joan Bennett, *Virginia Woolf: Her Art as a Novelist*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), pp. 69, 71, 106; Avrom Fleishman, *Virginia Woolf: A Critical Reading* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), p. 227. In addition, there are also the

following articles: Margaret Beede, 'Virginia Woolf: Romantic', *North Dakota Quarterly*, 27 (1959), pp. 21-29; James Holt McGavran, JR., '"Alone Seeking The Visible World" The Wordsworths, Virginia Woolf, and *The Waves*', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 42 (1981), pp. 265-91; James Holt McGavran, JR., 'Shelley, Virginia Woolf, and *The Waves*: A Balcony of One's Own', *South Atlantic Review*, 48 (1983), pp. 58-73; Nathaniel Brown, 'The "Double Soul": Virginia Woolf, Shelley, and Androgyny', *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 33 (1984), p. 182-204; William J. Burling, 'Virginia Woolf's "Lighthouse": An Allusion to Shelley's *Queen Mab*?', *English Language Notes*, 22 (1984), p. 62-65; Anca Vlascopolos, 'Shelley's Triumph of Death in Virginia Woolf's *Voyage Out*', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 47 (1986), pp. 130-153. Moreover, Charles Schug devotes a chapter to Woolf's Romanticism, in *The Romantic Genesis of The Modern Novel* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1979), p. 189-225.

18. See, for example, David Daiches, *Virginia Woolf* (New York: New Direction, 1963), p. 36; Ralph Freedman, *The Lyrical Novel: Studies in Hermann Hesse, Andre Gide, and Virginia Woolf* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 185-270; William Troy, 'Virginia Woolf and The Novel of Sensibility', in *Virginia Woolf: To the Lighthouse: A Selection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Morris Beja (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1970), pp. 85-89; Moris Beja 'Matches struck in the Dark: Virginia Woolf's Moments of Vision', in *Virginia Woolf: To the Lighthouse: A Selection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Morris Beja (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1970), pp. 210-230; Leon Edel, 'The Novel as Poem', in *Virginia Woolf: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Claire Sprague (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971), pp. 63-69; E. M. Forster, 'Virginia Woolf', in *Virginia Woolf: A Collected Essays*, ed. by Claire Sprague (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971), pp. 18-23; Malcolm Bradbury, *Possibilities: Essays on the State of the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 121-139; Morris Philipson, '*Mrs Dalloway*: What's Sense of Your Practices?', *Critical Inquary*, 1 (1974), p. 138; Ralph Freedman, 'Introduction: Virginia Woolf, the Novel, and a Chorus of Voices' in *Virginia Woolf: Revaluation and Continuity* (California: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 3-12.

19. The letter from G. Lowes Dickinson to Woolf on 23 October 1931 is quoted in *Virginia Woolf: The Critical heritage*, p. 271. Moreover, as Woolf mentions in her diary entry on 22 September 1931, Winifred Holtby also views *The Waves* as 'a poem' more completely than Woolf's other novels: 'It is most rarely subtle. It has seen more deeply into the human heart, perhaps, than even *To the Lighthouse*' (AWD, p. 174).

20. *Wordsworth: Poetical Works*, ed. by Thomas Hutchinson and Ernest De Selincourt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 737-38.

21. In her essay 'Phases of Fiction', Woolf makes a similar comment about the failure of modernist lyric: 'for the moment...poetry with her rhythms, her poetic diction...is too far from us today to do for us what she did for our parents' (CE, II, p. 102).

22. For the view of Woolf's involvement in a constant reading of the past literature, see also her essays 'How Should One Read a Book' and 'Reading', CE, II, pp. 1-33; Brenda R. Silver, *Virginia Woolf's Reading Notebooks* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983); Hermione Lee, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1996), pp. 402-17.

23. After years, Woolf also gets pleasure from her reading: 'What a vast fertility of pleasure books hold for me! I went in & found the table laden with books. I looked in & sniffed them all. I could not resist carrying this one off & broaching it. I think I could happily live here [in the country] & read for ever' (D, IV, p. 173, 24 Aug. 1933).

24. Woolf's similar view is expressed by her character Lucy Swithin in her last novel (*Between the Acts*, ed. by Frank Kermode, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), who believes that 'we descend by way of the mind' from the great writers, p. 63.

25. Woolf, '"Anon" and "The Reader": Virginia Woolf's Last Essays', ed. by Brenda R. Silver, *Twentieth Century Literature*, 25 (1979), p. 373.

26. Woolf, 'The Portrait of Leslie Stephen', in *Virginia Woolf: To the Lighthouse: A Selection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Morris Beja (London: Macmillan, 1993), p. 51.

27. Frederick William Maitland, *The Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen* (London: Duckworth & Co., 1906), p. 476.

28. Woolf continuously reads Wordsworth's poetry throughout her life. As her 5 April 1918 diary entry indicates, she reads Wordsworth's poem '*Lines Written in Early Spring* (1798) which ends 'what man has made of man' (D, I, p. 131). In a 1936 letter to Ethel Smyth, she also praises *The Prelude* and finds it 'so good, so succulent, so suggestive, that I have to hoard it, as a child keeps a crumb of cake...' (L, VI, p. 73). Moreover, she also reads the 'masses of...Wordsworth[']s letters' and finds them her 'only drug' (D, V, p. 289, 29 May 1940; D, V, p. 295, 13 June 1940).

29. Earl R. Wasserman, 'The English Romantics: The Grounds of Knowledge', *Studies in Romanticism*, 4 (1964), 17-34 (p. 34).

30. For Woolf's view of moments of vision, see also her essay 'The Moment: Summer's Night', CE, II, pp. 293-97.

31. Quentin Bell, *Virginia Woolf: A Biography*, vol. 2 (London: The Hogarth Press, 1973), p. 221. In her short story 'A Society ', Woolf also puts Shelley into the category of Shakespeare and Milton as the great and indispensable writer (CSF, p. 124).

32. Leslie Stephen's letter to C. E. Norton on 5 March 1876, in which his view about Wordsworth takes place, is quoted in Maitland, p. 286.

33. Maitland, p. 331, letter from Leslie Stephen to J. A. Symonds on 4 Jan. 1879.

34. Maitland, pp. 330-1, letter from Leslie Stephen to J. A. Symonds on 28 Oct. 1878.

35. Throughout her constant reading, Woolf knows Shelley and his work more than Wordsworth and puts him among those she lists for early passion for prose writers (D, 2, p. 310, 15 Aug. 1924). She also alludes to his poetry in her private writings and novels. After an illness of weeks, Woolf alludes to Shelley's *Stanza Written In Dejection, Near Naples* (1824): 'I want to lie down like a tired child & weep away this life of care - & my diary shall receive me on its downy pillow' (D, III, p. 48, 7 Dec. 1925). Moreover, in a journal entry in 1927, she quotes the first two lines of Shelley's song: '"Rarely rarely comest thou, the spirit of delight" That was I singing this time last year; and sang so poignantly that I have never forgotten it...'(Bell, II, p. 109). It is most fascinating that she quotes Shelley's 'song' to express her feelings when she finished *To the Lighthouse*. In her earlier interest in Shelley's prose, Woolf praises Shelley's view of immortality to challenge Edmund Gosse (D, 1, p. 29, 27 Jan. 1915; D, 2, p. 128, 10 Aug. 1921). Other references in her diary confirm that Woolf was fascinated by Shelley. For example, she visited in Pisa in 1933 not only 'a very good great man's house' with a balcony, in which, she imagines, 'Mary Shelley stands and looks out across the sea', but also showed her vivid sense of fascination for Shelley's life (AWD, pp. 200-01, 12 May 1933). Moreover, in a letter to Vita Sackville-West in 1929, referring to some photographs Vita had taken of Shelley's last home, Casa Magni, on the Gulf of Spezia at Lerici, Woolf writes: 'Oh and thanks for Shelley's pictures: I'm sentimental about them' (L, 4, p. 219).

36. Jay Clayton, *Romantic Vision and The Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp.18-9.

37. *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977), p. 505.

38. *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, p. 505.

39. There are different books and articles about Woolf's view of androgyny. See, for example, the following critics: Nancy Topping Bazin, *Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous*

Vision (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1973); Carolyn G. Heilbrun, *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973); Ellen Hawkes Rogat, 'A Form of One's Own', *Mosaic*, 8 (1974), 77-90; Marilyn R. Farwell, 'Virginia Woolf and Androgyny', *Contemporary Literature*, 16 (1975), 433-51.

CHAPTER II

The Voyage Out (1915): 'Surely Order Did Prevail'[1]

In her essay 'The Novels of E. M. Forster' (1927), Virginia Woolf writes: 'if there is one gift more essential to a novelist than another it is the power of combination - the single vision' (CE, I, p. 345). Woolf associates this essential gift with the lyric expression of intense states of feeling which the Romantic poets developed in their work, a gift which would enable the artist 'to put the severed parts' of our experience 'into words' and 'make it whole' (MB, p. 72). In *Moments of Being* (1976), she describes this aesthetic principle of combination as her 'philosophy', in which Woolf views herself not as a separate atom of existence, as in a modernist perception of life, but as part of a continuity of art and experience, linking all life to a whole: 'behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern; that we - I mean all human beings - are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work of art...we are the thing itself' (MB, p. 72). She emphasizes the imaginary vision and sensibility by which the artist could perceive an infinity beyond the daily view of reality and life, and thus the artist could draw together the seen and unseen - a Shelleyan view of unity. Although Woolf attempts to develop such a poetic quality in her first novel *The Voyage Out*, critics have generally read the novel as a traditional realist narrative.[2] Even the ironic representation of the Dalloways and their introduction of Shelley and his work *Adonais* (1821) have drawn little critical attention.[3] However, I believe that Woolf's allusion to Shelley and his work, Clarissa's confessed passion for, and Richard's dismissal of him, have great importance for the full meaning of *The Voyage Out*. It is important because the episodes in which Woolf represents the Dalloways and alludes to Shelley raise the central questions of the role of art and of

the value of politics in society.

In *The Voyage Out*, Woolf represents the world of politics and much of culture as masculine constructs for imposing male power and for subordinating others. In her view, patriarchal politics and culture operate on a 'divide and rule' principle, in which masculine modes of authority and knowledge separate and categorize all human beings. Not only are women defined as different from and so inferior to men, they are, by this means, silenced and controlled in both public and private spheres. The conventional male characters in the novel, such as Richard Dalloway and St. John Hirst, express the cultural values which perpetuate the dominance of patriarchy in society: in particular these are embodied in a sense of knowledge as possession and order. Woolf represents her own opposing views indirectly through her characterization of Rachel Vinrace, who is on the verge of entering adulthood and hence patriarchal society. By means of this characterization Woolf suggests that instead of separation, a sense of unity should be sought by means of art and the combining power of imaginative vision. In addition to this thematic concern with the opposing values of separation and combination, Woolf draws upon the subjective qualities of lyric poetry as a means of experimenting with the conventions of the traditional novel. Paradoxically, although thoroughly modernist in her desire to remake fictional form, Woolf's ceaseless experimentation from *The Voyage Out* to her last work, develops from the visionary lyric mode of the Romantic poets.

Like the Romantic poets, especially Shelley, Woolf explores the problem of language and its arbitrary representation of reality, the conflict between social values and human desire for transcendence, the tension between fixed identity and an unstable self. While thinking of *The Waves* (1931), Woolf writes of her position towards lyric poetry which would provide her with the means to work out all these

views:

> I mean to eliminate all waste, deadness, superfluity: to give the moment whole; whatever it includes. Say that the moment is a combination of thought; sensation; the voice of the sea. Waste, deadness, come from the inclusion of things that don't belong to the moment; this appalling narrative business of the realist: getting on from lunch to dinner: it is false, unreal, merely conventional. Why admit anything to literature that is not poetry - by which I mean saturated? Is that not my grudge against novel[ist]s - that they select nothing? The poets succeeding by simplifying: practically everything is left out. I want to put practically everything in; yet to saturate (D, III, pp. 209-10, 28 Nov. 1928).

The Voyage Out, though completed more than fifteen years earlier, uses artistic techniques midway between the 'appalling narrative business of the realist' and the yearning of the poet for the 'saturated' moment of being. Woolf not only saturates the themes and imagery of fact and vision, male and female, art and politics, but she also strives to reconcile and achieve unity through her lyrical imagination linked to the Romantic poets, specifically Shelley.

Woolf's selection of Shelley as a poet and the Dalloways as the representative of a class is important for her characterization on both realist and visionary levels in *The Voyage Out*. More important, Woolf's choice of *Adonais* as a contrast to the view of life represented by the Dalloways suggests the theme that underlines the affinity between Woolf and Shelley with regard to their relations to society. Both rebel against the restraints of social institutions and conventions as well as against political tyranny and injustice. In addition, both Woolf and Shelley share a strong desire to escape beyond their personal unsatisfactory and fragmentary relationships with society and politics through the interrelation of vision and art.

While representing her characters and exploring the role of art in society, Woolf develops a new narrative technique in *The Voyage Out*, a technique further developed in each subsequent novel. This narrative technique allows her to avoid direct authorial intrusion, as in the traditional novel, by diverting the reader's

attention into the consciousness or state of being of her fictional characters. Woolf believes that 'it was for the good of the cause, just as it was for the good of [her] art', not to give any theoretical argument in her own voice, not to sum up and explain; she prefers to remain impartial and outside without justifying her own voice in the novel ('The Novels of Turgenev' (1933), CE, I, p. 252).[4] Hence we learn various aspects of the central issue of the novel through the lives and views of her characters. In *The Voyage Out*, for example, Woolf uses the representation of Rachel to embody her own interpretation of the kind of life allocated to the majority of middle-class women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Particularly, Rachel's relationship with her father and her education illuminate Woolf's own view that the traditional father educates his daughter not for her own sake but for the benefit of patriarchal society and of himself. For example, Helen Ambrose, Rachel's aunt, proposes to Willoughby Vinrace, Rachel's father, that she could take on the further education of his daughter in Santa Marina, South America, where the Ambroses spend their holiday. He sympathizes with her idea, because Willoughby eventually intends to go into Parliament like Richard Dalloway and thinks that his daughter can help him more in his career:

> I should want Rachel to be able to take more part in things. A certain amount of entertaining would be necessary - dinners, an occasional evening party. One's constituents like to be fed, I believe. In all these ways Rachel could be of great help to me (p. 83).

He does not care about Rachel's own life, but about his own career. In talking with Terence Hewet about her own childhood, Rachel summarizes briefly the position of girls in the late Victorian society: 'a girl is more lonely than a boy. No one cares in the least what she does. Nothing's expected of her' (p. 219).

Similarly, when Woolf moves from the individual perspective of life to a wider discussion of society, politics, and art, she makes use of the Dalloways

without giving her own authorial judgement; that is, the Dalloways' ideas, their use of images and literary allusions become means for characterization, and thus for the conceptions of life that interest Woolf as a woman writer. The Dalloways, who unexpectedly join the crew of *Euphrosyne*[5] in Lisbon, are travelling on the Continent, 'chiefly with a view to broadening Mr Dalloway's mind' (p. 35). In Spain they ride mules, 'for they wished to understand how the peasants live' (p. 35); Clarissa Dalloway 'inspected the royal stables...photographed Fielding's grave, and let loose a small bird which some ruffian had trapped, because one hates to think of anything in a cage where English people lie buried' (p. 35). Woolf mocks both Richard and Clarissa Dalloway in the comic way that they ride mules to learn about the lives of the peasants. As this suggests, Richard Dalloway is satirized for his insular and inadequate view of what is entailed in broadening his mind. Woolf suggests that politicians, like Richard Dalloway, are limited and narrow-minded in contrast to the visionary mind of the artist. What is more important, Woolf's allusion to Fielding and a small bird suggests a hidden and satirical reference to *Tom Jones* (1749). Clarissa's nationalism is pretentious and, as Alice van Buren Kelley argues, 'no one who remembers the odious Blifil in *Tom Jones* with his hypocritically pious freeing of Sophia's bird can fail to catch the negative note in this element of Clarissa's character'.[6] The Dalloways represent the values of materialism, not of sensibility. They are first introduced with 'many solid leather bags of a rich brown hue', and Rachel is amazed by their luxury, particularly when she follows Clarissa who seems wrapped up in furs and carries 'a dressing-case suggestive of a diamond necklace and bottles with silver tops' (p. 36). Clarissa with her clothes, beauty, and manners appears to Rachel as if she were a goddess: 'she [Clarissa] seemed to be dealing with the world as she chose; the enormous solid globe spun round this way and that beneath her fingers' (p. 42). The implication

of Clarissa's 'dealing with the world as she chose' suggests her class alliance with British imperialism rather than her imaginative quality as Rachel thinks.

Richard Dalloway appears more impressive than his wife represented in the imagery of mechanistic masculinity. 'He seemed to come from the humming oily centre of the machine where the polished rods are sliding, and the pistons thumping...he made the others appear like old maids' (pp. 42-3). Like his wife, he possesses the globe: 'He ran his mind along the line of conservative policy...gradually enclosed, as though it were a lasso that opened and caught things, enormous chunks of the habitable globe' (p. 47). Woolf's repetition of the image of 'globe' with the modifier 'enormous' is linked to the form of British politics during the period in which *The Voyage Out* was written, a period when British imperialism still dominated the world order. Hence the imagery of the 'globe' with its implication of vastness suggests the expansion of British power. Clarissa, not a participant but a supporter of this expansion, praises the boys who go to India and Africa to safeguard what Richard Dalloway calls 'the continuity' of English history (p. 47). Yet Woolf implies that the empire is crumbling when she ridicules Clarissa's trivial nationalism through Mrs Thornbury's view: 'how difficult it is to find boys for the navy - partly because of their teeth' (p. 114). Woolf uses Clarissa's own thoughts to mock her exaggerated praise of her husband as exemplar of British oppression, hypocritically masked as virtue:

> I often wonder...whether it is really good for a woman to live with a man who is morally her superior, as Richard is mine. It makes one so dependent. I suppose I feel for him what my mother and women of her generation felt for Christ (p. 48).

Clarissa accepts her subjection to her husband; she bolsters his egotism and idealises him by denying her own identity. To her words of praise, Richard just answers with the remark, 'you're a pretty creature, anyhow', mocking her intellect and reassuring

his self-confidence (p. 48).

The Dalloways with their manners make people feel inferior to the class that they represent. For example, Rachel, with her naivety, thinks that particularly Richard can tell her 'everything' or 'what she wanted' to know (p. 53). When she asks for his ideal in life, he explains: 'Unity. Unity of aim, of dominion, of progress. The dispersion of the best ideas over the greatest area' (p. 61). The 'unity of dominion' and the 'dispersion of the best ideas over the greatest area' associate explicitly with the idea of Empire. Behind the 'dominion' lies the need to dominate or the habit of power, but Woolf satirizes and ridicules the idea of Empire and dominion through Richard's own mouth. Pressed by Rachel to tell what his best ideas are, he says that they are English ideas, yet he explains them absurdly: 'the English seem, on the whole, whiter than most men' (p. 61). In her mockery of the 'best ideas', Woolf suggests that the patriarchal political order is weak in spite of all its efforts to survive, but she also implies the viciousness of the Empire and the thinking it perpetuates. She herself finds any dominion over the others disgusting as she writes in her diary: 'more & more I come to loathe any dominion of one over another; any leadership, any imposition of the will' (D, 1, p. 256, 19 March 1919). Richard's 'best ideas' appear absurd, but he is also uneasy about them, and thus he diverts Rachel's attention from his best ideas to his success in politics, since Richard, as Woolf represents him, is greedy for validation and self-esteem. Without constant praise, he cannot control at home and abroad, and thus he needs someone not only to satisfy his psychic desires of dominion, but also to support his position in society. Rachel with her innocence seems an easy victim for him. With regard to his contribution to politics, Richard praises himself as a man who has reduced the working hours of some thousands of girls in Lancashire, making himself 'appear a battered martyr, parting every day with some of the finest gold, in the service of

mankind' (p. 62). But as the conversation progresses, Richard appears inarticulate about his caring philosophy. In order to keep control of the conversation, he resorts to imaginative language; he uses the metaphor of organism developed by the Romantics: 'a human being is not a set of compartments, but an organism. Imagination, Miss Vinrace; use your imagination; that's where you young Liberals fail. Conceive the world as a whole' (p. 63). Yet immediately it appears that he is not able to apply this view to the human subject and again he turns to the language of dominion:

> Conceive the state as a complicated machine; we citizens are parts of that machine; some fulfil more important duties; others (perhaps I am one of them) serve only to connect some obscure parts of the mechanism...Yet if the meanest screw fails in its task, the proper working of the whole is imperilled' (p. 63).

Richard is, in fact, afraid of losing his public position and reputation which give him power and self-assurance. Hence he wants to keep 'the meanest screw' fastened in its separate, inferior place.

In his public service, Richard Dalloway boasts that he wants to mitigate 'the misery of the poor' (p. 65), but at the same time, he tries to divert Rachel's attention from the corruption of society as well as from the inequality of political and economic rights, which brings about such misery. In being proud of girls who spend their time 'over their looms' (p. 61), in fact, Richard camouflages his own materialism and inability to develop a welfare state. He claims that he contributes to the improvement of society more than poets, and thus he is prouder of what he has done for textile workers than he 'should be of writing Keats and Shelley into the bargain!' (p. 61). Similarly, Clarissa shares her husband's view that artists are indifferent to social ills. Art gives Clarissa 'the delights of shutting oneself up in a little world of one's own, with pictures and music and everything beautiful', but when she meets 'the first child...with its poor, hungry, dirty little face' in the street,

Clarissa wants 'to stop all the painting and writing and music until this kind of thing exists no longer' (pp. 40-41). Clarissa's other attack on art and artists occurs not only when she makes errors while quoting stanza 40 of Shelley's *Adonais* for Rachel, but also when she finds it 'divine! and yet nonsense!' (p. 55).[7] Moreover, although Clarissa often appears enthusiastic about Shelley, she favourably compares a 'snuffy old stockbroker' with the poets, 'whom everyone worships, just because they're geniuses and die young' (p. 55). Through their own views, Woolf represents the Dalloways ironically as insular and intolerant, so that eventually Rachel takes sides not only with the artist when she finds herself 'one of those who [will] write Keats and Shelley' (pp. 61-2), but she also finds the Dalloways' view of life 'absurd' (p. 43).

In fact, the Dalloways have inadequate understanding of art and artists, and their accusation is an insult to Shelley, who himself rebels strongly against the 'invisible corruption' of society (*Adonais*, VIII, 67).[8] In justifying the role of art in industrial society, Shelley in *A Defence of Poetry* (1840) establishes a correlation between 'the connexion of poetry and social good'.[9] According to him, the 'corruption' of human society and 'manners' as well as the 'extinction of the energies that sustain the soul of social life' are caused by ignorance of the highest artistic performance. Art, specifically poetry, is opposed to the 'calculating' and 'accumulating' of capitalist civilisation.[10] Art also, by its unifying vision, resists what Woolf calls drawing 'chalk marks' round people and dominating the globe (p. 149).

I think the illuminating argument about art and politics comes out in a conversation between the Dalloways themselves and other passengers. The conversation indicates the internalized version of the male form of knowledge at work through Richard's views. Richard thinks that the politician has a wider grasp

of reality than poets and artists, and thus 'one has to make allowances' for them but not for the politician like himself. Although Woolf accuses Shelley of having a 'curious lack of humanity' towards women, she links him with the feminine view against the masculine view of life in *The Voyage Out* (EVW, 1, p. 175). Richard Dalloway says that 'whenever I hear of Shelley I repeat to myself the words of Matthew Arnold. 'What a set! what a set!' (p. 40). For him, Matthew Arnold is 'a man of the world' (p. 40), since he sees 'the object as in itself it really is'.[11] Behind his appreciation of Arnold lies Richard's own view of life in which he believes that he sees 'both sides' of reality and thus gets 'a grasp of things' (p. 40). Richard's 'grasp of things' implies not only the male form of knowledge as rational but also as a mode of possession and dominance. However, the artist, according to him, has what Arnold writes about Shelley, 'irregular relations'.[12] In Arnold's notorious description of Shelley as 'a beautiful and *ineffectual* angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain', Richard confirms his own view that 'artists *find* things in a mess, shrug their shoulders, turn aside to their visions - which I grant may be very beautiful - and *leave* things in a mess' (p. 40).[13]

Woolf's representation of Richard Dalloway's rejection of Shelley introduces the opposition set up in *The Voyage Out* between two contrary perceptions of life and knowledge: an impulse for unity versus a desire to control by means of division and possession. Richard tries to dominate women through his male form of knowledge and power, and Rachel, having realized his position towards women, tries to defend herself. As soon as the Dalloways arrive, they make other passengers feel inferior to them either by their material wealth or by their way of life. It is mainly Richard who tries to impose his own superiority of knowledge and authority on others. Rachel is like 'a victim dropped from the claws of a bird of prey' in his hands (p. 33). Her ignorance as well as her desire to learn about life draw her

continuously towards him, since she feels that 'to talk to a man of such worth and authority' is a privilege, yet her submission to his worth brings about her 'supreme self-abasement' (pp. 62, 43). Ironically, he does not tell Rachel 'everything' she wants, rather his 'wonderful masculine stories' make her seem featureless and small (p. 74). When Richard tells her that one of the 'revelations' of his life is 'love' (p. 65), the word love, seems to 'unveil the skies for Rachel' (p. 65). Yet it is not love, but sexuality that uncovers the sky for her when Richard kisses her. Although she appears exultant after the kiss, thinking that 'life seemed to hold infinite possibilities she had never guessed at' (p. 73), Rachel becomes confused and terrified later by 'a thousand feelings of which she had not been conscious before' and has a dream about a 'little deformed man' (pp. 76, 74).

After her aunt, Helen, explains the relationship between men and women, a relationship which is linked to male sexual desire and the reason for prostitutes in the London streets, Rachel comes to realize how women are victimized and exploited by a patriarchal society that subjects women and artists, like Shelley, to its own authority. Later in the novel Rachel describes to Terence how women are vulnerable within society and how their lives include 'terrors and agonies...prostitutes...Men kissing one' (p. 219). She also understands the terror and limitation of her own life as a woman: 'so that's why I can't walk alone!' (p. 79). In the light of this new understanding, Rachel sees 'her life for the first time a creeping hedged-in thing, driven cautiously between high walls, here turned aside, there plunged in darkness, made dull and crippled for ever' (p. 79). What becomes clear to Rachel is that women are outsiders, excluded from the educational and administrative hierarchies of their own society, that they are exploited by society as a whole. She also begins to realize that the male form of dominion and knowledge categorizes, separates and draws 'lines' round all people on the earth (p. 40). Ironically it is Richard who

stimulates Rachel to begin this process of adult self-awareness.

The further example of how male dominance of knowledge functions to separate and divide is demonstrated in *The Voyage Out* by St. John Hirst, a Cambridge intellectual, who is writing an 'indecent' poem on God (p. 275). The Ambroses and Rachel meet him in the hotel near the villa where they spend their holiday. Like Richard Dalloway's 'lasso' and 'lines', St. John Hirst draws rational 'chalk-marks' in his mind which humiliate people, degrade their knowledge and distort their experiences (p. 149). In *Three Guineas* (1938), Woolf links drawing mental 'lines' and 'chalk-marks' to the 'masculine' point of view perpetuated by the education system. As a woman, she sees 'the old and rich universities' as 'uneasy dwelling-places - cities of strife, cities where this is locked up and that is chained down; where nobody can walk freely or talk freely for fear of transgressing some chalk mark, of displeasing some dignitary' (TG, p. 200). In Woolf's view, a new kind of college should not 'segregate', but 'combine'; it is only in this way that 'mind and body can be made to cooperate; discover what new combinations make good wholes in human life' (TG, p. 200). In *The Voyage Out*, however, Hirst reduces the common familiarity of people to 'types', to a 'party of old women', or to his dismissive view that 'you could draw circles round the whole of them' (p. 106). This view of 'chalk-marks' and 'types' suggests that Hirst, like Richard Dalloway and Mr Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse* (1927), upholds a fixed, static view of knowledge and of people as something to be possessed and grasped.

Hirst, like Mr Ramsay, is another of Woolf's scholarly characters with his uncompromising intellect, having 'a mind' which is, as Terence defines, 'like a torpedo...aimed at falsehood' (p. 302, see also pp. 142-43). Woolf first introduces him as he sits reading 'the third volume of Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of Rome* (1776-88) by candle-light' (p. 104). For him, Gibbon is 'immaculate' with

'splendid sentences' that 'went marching through his brain in order' (p. 105). The words 'torpedo' and 'marching' suggest war-like imagery, thus linking his way of thinking to masculine desire for dominance. The 'immaculate' writing style with its 'order' suggests the male form of knowledge, and behind Hirst's reading of Gibbon lies his own faithful adherence to this form of knowledge. After meeting and talking to him, however, Helen believes that Hirst is 'one of the people who really matter' for the completion of Rachel's education (p. 160). He would talk to innocent and inexperienced Rachel and teach her the 'facts of life' which could take her outside her 'little world of love and emotion' (pp. 163, 311). Not surprisingly, Hirst first begins to teach Rachel with Gibbon:

> You see, the problem is, can one really talk to you? Have you got a mind, or are you like the rest of your sex? You seem to me absurdly young compared with men of your age...
>
> About Gibbon...D'you think you'll be able to appreciate him? He's the test, of course. It's awfully difficult to tell about women...how much, I mean, is due to lack of training, and how much is native incapacity (p. 153).

Hirst categorizes and judges others according to their reading. Through Hirst's views, Woolf shows us how the male form of knowledge functions to draw 'chalk marks' round some people, while it encourages egotistical and self-satisfied feelings in those like Hirst. Unlike her silent attitude towards Richard Dalloway's views, however, Rachel reacts strongly against Hirst's views of the superiority of his knowledge and experience. Hirst is an impenetrable egoist, incapable of imaginative movement beyond self, as Terence describes him: 'nothing moves Hirst...' (p. 141). Hirst mocks Rachel by likening her to his Victorian spinster aunt; Hirst, like Richard Dalloway, makes others appear 'like rats and mice squirming on the flat' (p. 205). As a result of the anger she feels towards Hirst, Rachel concludes: 'it's no good; we should live separate; we cannot understand each other; we only bring out what's worst' (p. 155). When she thinks that men and women should live separately,

Rachel appears to have accepted a chalk-mark division between men and women.

However, Woolf utilizes her fictional character, Rachel, both to explore an oppositional way of perceiving the world to that of separation and division, and to offer a modernist representation of personality as complex, diffuse and unfixed. Rachel's fluid uncertainty is the opposite of Hirst's static immovability. The complexity of Rachel's view derives mainly from her deep concern about the rights of women and the nature of their relationships with the other sex. Indeed, the novel explores the culturally determined destiny of women in the world of the late Victorian society that finds its meaning in Terence's ironic celebration: 'What a miracle the masculine conception of life is - judges, civil servants, army, navy, Houses of Parliament, lord mayors - what a world we've made of it!' (p. 213). Woolf emphasizes women's relation to the history and culture of the masculine world in two ways. On the one hand, she shows us the plight of the Victorian women through the views which her traditional characters express about women. In this respect, Woolf's representation of Richard Dalloway and St. John Hirst becomes not a mere debate of their individual views, but a wider consideration of the structure of British society and of its politics, a consideration which is focused on the issues of women's upbringing, education, marriage, social participation, and political and economic rights. On the other hand, Woolf endows young Rachel with a strong desire to transcend the culturally determined destiny of women that society imposes on them. Rachel's struggle raises two questions: how can a woman live in a less ideal society without submitting herself to its authority and exploitation? Is there a way to evade all the categorizations and divisions of relationships between the two sexes? Woolf raises these questions, makes us aware of them in her fictional world of *The Voyage Out*, and I think that she answers these question through her sense of art and the artistic vision. In *Three Guineas*, Woolf argues the

importance of the poetic vision, 'assuring us of a unity that rubs out divisions as if they were chalk marks only' by transcending the repressive world of political, social and sexual relationships (TG, p. 365). To achieve this ideal unity, she knows, is a dream that 'has haunted the human mind since the beginning of time' (TG, p. 365), but she, like Shelley[14], yearns for the realization of this dream through artistic vision; that is, for an art which consumes all personal fragmentation and grievance and brings them into a unity in which not only men and women meet, but in which the self expands beyond its actual existence. Thus, at the end of *To Jane: The Invitation* (1822), Shelley manages to transcend all obstacles in the lyric celebration of 'radiant Sister of the day' (47). He imaginatively brings the 'multitudinous' into 'one', so that 'all things seem only one' (65-9). Woolf strives to accomplish such a lyric celebration of unity in *The Voyage Out* by means of artistic images of love and death.

In *The Voyage Out*, the idea of love is modified from its conventional meaning. In a conventional view, love is full of personal emotions and is based upon the attraction of the lovers to the unique qualities of each other. Thus, it generally leads to what Lady Otway describes in *Night and Day* (1919) as 'a happy marriage' (ND, p. 177). Yet this 'happy marriage' brings compromise, submission, and loss of identity for women; it encourages them to be an 'Angel' in the house or 'looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size' ('Professions for Women' (1931), CE, II, p. 285; ROO, p. 45).[15] In *The Voyage Out*, the relationship between Richard and Clarissa Dalloway is a clear example of the traditional marriage. Society always idealizes marriage as 'the only solution' for women, creating an illusion that 'unmarried women' have a hard life (pp. 179, 114). In marrying Arthur, for example, Susan, in *The Voyage Out,* thinks that he removes her not only from the 'groups of girls

importance of the poetic vision, 'assuring us of a unity that rubs out divisions as if they were chalk marks only' by transcending the repressive world of political, social and sexual relationships (TG, p. 365). To achieve this ideal unity, she knows, is a dream that 'has haunted the human mind since the beginning of time' (TG, p. 365), but she, like Shelley[14], yearns for the realization of this dream through artistic vision; that is, for an art which consumes all personal fragmentation and grievance and brings them into a unity in which not only men and women meet, but in which the self expands beyond its actual existence. Thus, at the end of *To Jane: The Invitation* (1822), Shelley manages to transcend all obstacles in the lyric celebration of 'radiant Sister of the day' (47). He imaginatively brings the 'multitudinous' into 'one', so that 'all things seem only one' (65-9). Woolf strives to accomplish such a lyric celebration of unity in *The Voyage Out* by means of artistic images of love and death.

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much younger than herself', with whom she has been compelled to identify, but also from 'the long solitude of an old maid's life', permitting her 'to join the ranks of the married women' (p. 139).

To Rachel and Terence, love is also 'enormously important' (p. 139), but they discredit its conventional outcome and try to discover what it is and what place it takes in the pattern of their sensibilities. For them, love is linked in many ways to the intuitive quality of perception which interests Woolf and the Romantic poets. This intuitive quality of love leads Rachel not to marriage in the conventional sense, yet to 'the discovery of a terrible possibility in life' by stripping 'some cover off the surface of things' (pp. 176, 200). Both Rachel and Terence have much in common with regard to the characteristics of their personalities. He is open-minded, imaginative, concerned about the rights of women in society. Similarly, Rachel has an independent, sensitive and imaginative life, which could be crushed by union with someone more dominant than herself. Before their engagement, Terence thinks that his marriage to Rachel will be different from other marriages which are full of 'smugness', 'safety' and 'compromise' such as the marriage of the Dalloways (p. 249). Rachel, he thinks, will be 'free like the wind or the sea' (p. 250). After declaring that they are in love with each other, they talk about every kind of issue such as art, family and the relationships between the two sexes. Despite their openness to each other, however, it appears that they still have limitations in their relationship; they can never fully communicate since they are two separate individuals, man and woman, educated and poorly educated, novelist and musician. For example, Terence, shortly after their engagement, orders Rachel to stop playing the piano and answer the letters of congratulations sent by their friends at the hotel on their engagement:

> 'I've no objection to nice simple tunes - indeed, I find them very helpful to

> my literary composition, but that kind of thing is merely like an unfortunate old dog going round on its hind legs in the rain'...'We're wasting the morning - I ought to be writing my book, and you ought to be answering these' (pp. 299, 302).

Terence is not only 'lazy' (p. 287), he also implies that it is a woman's duty to answer the letters. At the same time, his interruption of Rachel's playing in order to answer the letters is a mockery of her talent as a musician. His lack of understanding is further revealed indirectly when Terence is 'puzzled' by the 'simplicity and arrogance and hardness of her youth, now concentrated into a single spark as it was by her love of him', since their engagement does not affect him in the way it does Rachel: 'he still wanted the things he had always wanted, and in particular he wanted companionship of other people more than ever perhaps' (p. 301). A bit later Terence, having realized how love has endowed Rachel with the ability to 'cut herself adrift from him, and to pass away to unknown places where she had no need of him', accuses her of 'always wanting something else' (p. 309). Terence is paradoxical in his view towards Rachel, because while considering his marriage to her, he thinks that Rachel will be 'free, like the wind or the sea', but her independence of him, after their engagement, annoys him.

The inability to establish a stable relationship makes them both hopeless and frustrated. 'They were impotent; they could never love each other sufficiently to overcome all these barriers, they could never be satisfied with less', and Rachel exclaims, 'let's break it off, then' (p. 310). But at the same time, they become aware that they, though their relationship is 'painful and terrific', cannot separate (p. 310). This suggests their fragmentation as they fluctuate between two desires: 'they remain uncomfortably apart; drawn so close together...that there seemed no division between them, and the next moment separate and far away again' (p. 289; see also p. 219-20). Through this relationship between Rachel and Terence, Woolf

shows us that human nature is not something that can be grasped and categorized. They are not only unknown and mysterious to themselves, but also to each other; their lives are entangled in their desires, frustration, lack of communication and intense awareness of the complexity of their relationship. Thus there are no 'chalk marks' defining and containing Rachel and Terence; they are unstable, vague, contradictory and shifting. Into each person, as Woolf writes in 'Street Haunting' (1930), 'nature...lets creep instincts and desires which are utterly at variance with his main being, so that we are streaked, variegated, all of a mixture; the colours have run'. The unitary identity may not be the 'true self'; it is only 'for convenience sake' that we must unite the 'varied and wandering' facets of multiple selves to be whole (CE, IV, p. 161).

Having understood the relationship between human love and its capacity to connect the self to what is beyond self, it is Rachel herself who recognizes the impersonal impulse of transcendence; she realizes that 'she wanted many more things than the love of one human being - the sea, the sky' (p. 309). This constant displacement of desire beyond self obstructs the concept of individuality, of self-sufficiency, or of unitary character. The desire of 'more things' brings about the negation of the given static identity. When Rachel admits that she wants more things than one human love, she implies a fragmentation and instability of her individual existence. This pursuit of what is ungraspable rejects objective reality for the sake of satisfying the desire from which it is born; it creates in its place a subjective visionary reality. Rachel's desire continually recreates an imagined reality beyond her existing social world. Like Isa Oliver in *Between the Acts* (1941), Rachel hates 'divisions' in her life (p. 309), and thus she wants to unite and express her vast yet beautiful desires in a world, 'where people knew each other intimately and thus judge each other by what was good, and never quarrel, because that was

[a] waste of time' (p. 297). But we should not consider Rachel's transcendental view simply as a reaction against the outdated social conventions; additionally it is the embodiment of a vision towards which Woolf will yearn for the rest of her life, and this vision will help her to understand the pattern of life, which is, as Rachel tries to express metaphorically, hidden behind the 'curtain' of external reality (p. 308).

I think Rachel's constant desire for a unity with something behind even the sky and sea suggests a romantic yearning similar to that of the poet in Shelley's *Epipsychidion* (1821). Paradoxically, it appears that it is not possible to achieve such unity within the limitation of the love between two human individuals. For Woolf, as for Shelley, love has a mystical attraction that every one feels towards something beyond the self, and it represents the highest state of being that a visionary self can achieve. As Shelley defines it, 'true love' evokes the notion of limitlessness and unused potential in life, because it is indestructible, having a universal meaning, in contrast to tangible earthly substances such as 'gold and clay' (*Epipsychidion*, 160). Rachel's desire for a unity with something on the other side of the sky and sea indicates this limitlessness of her vision and love. Love in the sense of limitlessness suggests a romantic expansiveness of the self beyond any 'chalk marks' or definitions. As Shelley describes in *Epipsychidion*, love is the enemy of all that constraints: 'it overl⁀aps' all boundaries; it pierces 'its continents' with 'invisible' but lightning-like violence; it can set human beings free from the 'charnel', 'chain', 'agony' and 'chaos' of this life (*Epipsychidion*, 397-407). This romantic expansiveness of the self leads us to another aspect of love which liberates Rachel Vinrace, as it does the mind of Shelley's poet. According to Shelley, this kind of intense apprehension of love, which enables one to unite with something beyond self, is produced by imaginative energy. In *A Defence of Poetry*, he explains

why he links love with imagination. Shelley defines love as 'a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists' beyond ourself. For him, human nature unites itself with the beautiful outside itself by an outgoing of 'the imagination', so that 'a man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others'.[16] Here Shelley's views have political implications, linked to the idea of 'community' which I return to in later chapters. What is important in Shelley's view of love is that it seeks an 'understanding, that grows bright' by 'gazing on many truths' rather than confining itself to one (*Epipsychidion*, 160-73). Shelley's 'many truths' implies a rejection of St. John Hirst's 'torpedo' mind which seeks a single truth without falsehood.

Woolf's representation of love through Rachel's perception resembles that of Shelley in two ways. First, Rachel, like Shelley's poet, does not want to confine herself to human love only, but wants 'many more things'. With her new understanding of life, she does not care about Terence's faults or about the superficiality of the world, rather she wants to affirm life in the face of superficiality, chaos, fear and sorrow:

> For the moment she was as detached and disinterested as if she had no longer any lot in life, and she thought that she could now accept anything that came to her without being perplexed by the form in which it appeared. What was there to frighten or to perplex in the prospect of life? Why should this insight ever again desert her? The world was in truth so large, so hospitable, and after all it was so simple. 'Love,' St. John Hirst has said, 'that seems to explain it all.' Yes, it was not the love of man for woman, of Terence for Rachel...they had ceased to struggle and desire one another. There seemed to be peace between them. It might be love, but it was not the love of man for woman.
>
> ...she thought how often they [Rachel and Terence] would quarrel in the thirty, or forty, or fifty years in which they would be living in the same house together, catching trains together, and getting annoyed because they were so different. But all this was superficial, and had nothing to do with the life that went on beneath the eyes and the mouth and the chin, for that life was independent of her, and independent of everything else. So too, although she was going to marry him and to live with him...and to quarrel, and to be

> so close to him, she was independent of him; she was independent of everything else (pp. 321-22).

Rachel's love for Terence, and the changes it brings about are of importance for the perception of Rachel's identity. Rachel's visionary experience disrupts the limitation of her ordinary life, and she escapes from the enclosure of personal, egoistic concern even though the boundaries of her new self are not certain. Rachel's identity has a transcendental dimension gained by her visionary experience: 'it was love that made her understand this, for she had never felt this independence, this calm, and this certainty until she fell in love with him and perhaps this too was love. She wanted nothing else' (p. 322). Terence's earlier observation comes true that now 'time will make no difference, or marriage' to Rachel (p. 288).

Rachel is able not only to give pattern to her own experience, but also to review her own and other people's lives in a new perspective:

> For the methods by which she had reached her present position, seemed to her very strange, and the strangest thing about them was that she had not known where they were leading her. That was the strangest thing, that one did not know where one was going, or what one wanted, and followed blindly, suffering so much in secret, always unprepared and amazed and knowing nothing; but one thing led to another and by degrees something had formed itself out of nothing, and so one reached at last this calm, this quiet, this certainty, and it was this process that people called living. Perhaps, then, everyone really knew as she knew now where they were going; and things formed themselves into a pattern not only for her, but for them, and in that pattern lay satisfaction and meaning. When she looked back she could see that a meaning of some kind was apparent in the lives of her aunts, and in the brief visit of the Dalloways who she would never see again, and in the life of her father (p. 321)

Rachel imaginatively perceives her life as forming a 'pattern', in contrast to the unsatisfactory, dividing and fragmentary relationships of the actual social world. The 'perpetual conflict' and fragmentation of view is a basic condition of Woolf's artistic creativity in her fiction (p. 41), since she is always in the process of re-constructing and re-working these fragments into 'a pattern'. It is this unifying power of imagination that Richard Dalloway and St. John Hirst lack; instead they

are intent to separate and categorize the world. In *The Voyage Out* as well as in her later novels, Woolf sees the task of the modernist writer as creating out of fragments. Consequently, human identity is constructed and perceived aesthetically by her as having the imaginative potential to achieve moments of vision despite surrounding chaos and conflict. But the unified vision that Rachel achieves should not give us the wrong perception of Woolf's art of writing. That all the conflicts and sufferings eventually lead to a certain and stable view of life is not found in Woolf's novels. The calmness, certainty and pattern that Rachel captures in a moment of vision are not permanent qualities, but part of the imaginative process of re-constructing and re-working, moving from one moment to another without end, so that what Rachel has achieved remains ambivalent, fluid and temporal.

Woolf also employs death imagery to represent a view of transcendental Romantic identity beyond separation and categorization. Rachel Vinrace dies of a local typhoid she contracts during a river expedition. Almost every critic has a different reading of the significance of Rachel's death.[17] Dorothy Brewster in *Virginia Woolf* (1963), for example, argues that Rachel's death 'is typical of Mrs. Woolf's indifference to plot [so] that the reason Rachel fell victim to fever...is never made clear'.[18] Other critics find Rachel's sudden death inappropriate not only to Woolf's aesthetic vision but also to her characterisation.[19] However, most of these critics fail to link Woolf's use of death imagery to her Romantic concern in *The Voyage Out* with the impulse for unity and transcendence and her association of this impulse with women's resistance to knowledge as possession and separation. By employing death as a narrative strategy in *The Voyage Out*, Woolf creates a fictional world in which the plot of marriage ruling female destiny may be challenged or changed or mocked.[20] Furthermore, Woolf's vision of death suggests a representation of transcendent experience beyond the bounds of all limitations, the

self, time and the world, including the unpresentable experience of Romantic union. This appears to be the role of death in Shelley's *Adonais*, in which the poet cries 'No more let Life divide what Death can join together' (LII, 477), a line that Terence could well have spoken after Rachel's death.

Woolf frees Rachel radically from the grasp of patriarchal modes of knowledge by exploring the realm of her imagination in death. Death brings about the complete dissolution of the self, and there will be no demand on her, no fragmentation and division any more between Rachel and Terence, but union and peace that they could never achieve when she was alive:

> An immense feeling of peace came over Terence, so that he had no wish to move or to speak. The terrible torture and unreality of the last days were over, and he had come out now into perfect certainty and peace. His mind began to work naturally again and with great ease. The longer he sat there the more profoundly was he conscious of the peace invading every corner of his soul. Once he held his breath and listened acutely; she was still breathing; he went on thinking for some time; *they seemed to be thinking together; he seemed to be Rachel as well as himself*; and then he listened again; no, she had ceased to breathe. So much the better- this was death. It was nothing; it was to cease to breathe. It was happiness, it was perfect happiness. *They had now what they had always wanted to have, the union which had been impossible while they lived*. Unconscious whether he thought the words or spoke them aloud, he said, "No two people have ever been so happy as we have been. No one has ever loved as we have loved."
>
> It seemed to him that *their complete union* and happiness filled the room with rings eddying more and more widely. He had no wish in the world left unfulfilled. They possessed what could never be taken from them (pp. 360-61, emphasis added).

Rachel and Terence can communicate now after their selves have dissolved completely, that is, after they have been divested of their desires which have always created conflict and instability in their relationship. Terence's union with Rachel recalls the poet, who composes a hymn at the end of Shelley's *Epipsychidion* to love that helps him to achieve a visionary unity:

> We shall become the same, we shall be one
> Spirit within two frames, oh! wherefore two?
> One passion in twin-hearts, which grows and grew,
> 'Till like two meteors of expanding flame,

> Those spheres instinct with it become the same,
> Touch, mingle, are transfigured...
> One hope within two wills, one will beneath
> Two overshadowing minds, one life, one death,
> One Heaven, one Hell, one immortality,
> And one annihilation (573-87).

Like Shelley's poet, Terence and Rachel lose their individual selves within oneness; two different wills merge into each other: 'they seemed to be thinking together; he seemed to be Rachel as well as himself'. But unlike Terence, Rachel achieves eternal liberty through her escape from the dark shadow of her adult identity into 'the white radiance of Eternity' which she has always desired (*Adonais*, LII, 463):

> He has outsoared the shadow of our night;
> Envy and calumny and hate and pain,
> And that unrest which men miscall delight,
> Can touch him not and torture not again (XL, 332-5)

Like Adonais, Rachel is now 'secure' 'from the contagion of the world's slow stain' (XL, 356-7). Her romantic yearning, 'would there ever be a time when the world was one and indivisible', is imaginatively realized in the fictional resolution of death (p. 303). Woolf's representation of Rachel suggests the Shelleyan double perspective that brings into visionary unity the dichotomies of male and female, tumult and order, life and art. However, Terence's unity with Rachel should not be mistaken, because such unity is always unstable in Woolf's artistic view. Terence is happy, since Rachel and he have achieved a mystical union which cannot be destroyed by time, but once he looks at the table with cups and plates outside the room, his serenity shatters and he realises 'here was a world in which he could never see Rachel again' (p. 361). The visionary moment of self-transcendence can never be sustained, in life there is always a collapse back into separateness and division.

Rachel dies, yet life does not stop; its 'continuing breathing' never ceases (p. 362).[21] This 'continuity' of narrative view explicitly challenges the conventional narrative 'chalk marks' which say 'the end'. *The Voyage Out* does not end with the

heroine's happy marriage as in Jane Austen's novels, but with her death only half way through her development. Thus, Woolf does not offer the reader the certainty and completeness provided by so many nineteenth-century novelists. In *The Voyage Out*, Woolf reveals her vision of life as complex and chaotic, but at the same time, she suggests that a pattern might be found beneath the complexities and chaos through artistic vision. In a letter to Lytton Strachey on 28 February 1916, Woolf explains her aim in writing *The Voyage Out*:

> I suspect your criticism about the failure of conception is quite right. I think I had a conception, but I don't think it made itself felt. What I wanted to do is to give the feeling of a vast tumult of life, as various and disorderly as possible, which should be cut short for a moment by the death, and go on again - the whole was to leave a sort of pattern, and be somehow controlled. The difficulty was to keep any sort of coherence, - also to give enough detail to make the characters interesting - which Forster says I didn't do (L, 2, p. 82).

Woolf's exploration of the idea that there might be a pattern and coherence in both art and life is conveyed in the novel through her fictional novelist, Terence Hewet. Like Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse* and Miss La Trobe in *Between the Acts*, she makes use of Terence whose views about his own novel can help us to understand *The Voyage Out*. In a sense, he becomes Woolf's voice in the novel with regard to her modernist experimentation with the formal qualities of fiction. Terence wants to write a novel about 'silence...the things people don't say. But the difficulty is immense' (p. 220). He wants to create aesthetic unity in the novel, not through the values that his predecessors had established, but through his direct subjective sensibility:

> 'What I want to do in writing novels is very much what you want to do when you play the piano, I expect...We want to find out what's behind things, don't we?- Look at the light down there [Santa Marina]..scattered about anyhow. Things I feel come to me like lights...I want to combine them...Have you ever seen fireworks that make figures?...I want to make figures...' (pp. 223-4, Woolf's ellipses).

Through Terence's view, Woolf introduces her own aesthetic view of art in which

the artist does not delineate and define an objective reality, but combines and unifies to envision pattern underlying superficial separateness. Woolf endows Terence with an intuitive ability to combine 'what happened' with 'what he had thought and felt' (ROO, p. 20). This combination of facts with feelings is one of the defining aims of Woolf's artistic creativity.[22] Moreover, this dichotomy of 'what happened' and 'what he had thought and felt' suggests another dimension of Woolf's narrative in *The Voyage Out* in that she does not abandon narrative thoroughly, but builds up her narrative as an interplay of narrative and lyric expression, linearity and simultaneity, man and woman. This view of narrative is linked to the allusion to Shelley in the novel and to a refusal of categorisation and drawing 'chalk marks'.

Similarly, Woolf's views about characterization in *The Voyage Out* as expressed through Terence's views reject categorization. As we have seen, St. John Hirst generalizes, reduces people to 'types' and draws 'chalk marks' round them (p. 106); his imagery of 'chalk marks' implies a sense of identity which is limited, fixed and static with boundaries surrounding people. Terence refuses Hirst's traditional notion of identity, since he believes that 'everything is different. No two people are in the least the same' (p. 106). He does not find cataloguing people simple, because he sees personality as 'bubbles' and 'auras'. 'You can't see my bubbles', he says to Hirst, 'I can't see yours; all we see of each other is a speck, like the wick in the middle of that flame. The flame goes about with us everywhere; it's not ourselves exactly, but we feel' (pp. 107-08). The images of Terence's 'bubbles' and 'auras' disrupts the boundary of Hirst's 'chalk-marks' round people. Later in the novel, Terence makes his point even clearer to Rachel when he explains his difference to Hirst:

> 'I'm not like Hirst...I don't see circles of chalk between people's feet. I sometimes wish I did. It seems to me so tremendously complicated and confused. One can't come to any decision at all; one's less and less capable

> of making judgments. D'you find that? And then one never knows what anyone feels. We're all in the dark. We try to find out, but can you imagine anything more ludicrous than one person's opinion of another person? One goes along thinking one knows; one really doesn't know' (p. 222).

Through Terence's views, Woolf challenges Hirst's 'harrowing descriptions' (p. 299) of 'circles of chalk between people's feet', which is, as I have argued above, linked to patriarchal political 'dominion' and 'possession'; people, Woolf suggests, cannot be summed up. For Rachel, life is simply the movement of light: 'Does it ever seem to you, Terence, that the world is composed entirely of vast blocks of matter, and that we're nothing but patches of light - she looked at the soft spots of sun wavering over the carpet and up the wall - "like that?"' (pp. 299-300; see also, p. 124). In a sense, Rachel expresses Woolf's view: 'one person all in the dark about another person' (p. 309); even Helen becomes inconclusive about knowing another person. For example, after his engagement to Rachel, Terence tells Helen about himself and asks her if she finds him satisfactory on the whole as a husband for Rachel, she replies: 'Yes, I like what I know of you...But then - one knows so little' (p. 295). Through her fictional characters' views, Woolf suggests that one person's view of another is inevitably insubstantial, distorted, vague and inconclusive.

Woolf shares this rejection of narrative closure and of character as unitary, fixed and knowable with other modernist writers like Joyce and Forster. However, as I have argued, her formal innovations derive from a visionary impulse consciously affirming a continuity between her own writing and that of the Romantic poets. Even the apparently typical modernist technique of literary allusion functions to bear witness to the pervasive and central place of Shelley in her novelistic aims and to the political thinking that shapes those aims. The allusion to *Adonais* in *The Voyage Out* during a discussion of the role of art and politics in society introduces the structural opposition between different modes and perception in the novel. It is

a Shelleyan vision of unity which informs the heroine's developing capacity to reject the impulse to divide and categorize as modes of authority and power and to achieve instead the imaginary power of combination. Thematically and formally it is this desire for wholeness which underlies Woolf's first novel, with its fusion of innovation and tradition.

Notes

1. Woolf, *The Voyage Out* (London: Triad Grafton, 1988), p. 367. Further references to this edition will appear in the text.

2. Dorothy Brewster argues that *The Voyage Out* 'is traditional in many ways, with its chronological sequence, easily followed flashbacks, central characters fully drawn and others receding into the background, a narrative diversified with scenes and dialogue, explanations of what goes on in people's minds, but not in stream of consciousness technique, description of settings, and so on' (*Virginia Woolf*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1963), p. 87. According to Nancy Topping Bazin, Woolf's first two novels 'reveal that she had not yet developed the techniques which enabled her to fulfil her aim' of poetic quality (*Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision*, New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1973), p. 47; Madeline Moore argues that *The Voyage Out* lacks in the poetical quality (*The Short Season Between Two Silences: The Mystical and the Political in the Novels of Virginia Woolf*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), p. 36.

3. According to Alice van Buren Kelley, the presence of the Dalloways represents fact and vision, but she does not develop this view in her argument (*The Novels of Virginia Woolf: Fact and Vision*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), pp. 14-5; Avrom Fleishman perceives Shelley's presence as 'prefiguration of the pairing of love and death' in Rachel's 'career' (*Virginia Woolf: A Critical Reading*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), p. 16; Beverly Ann Schlack finds Woolf's allusion to Shelley useful not only for characterizing the Dalloways and Ridley, but also for the 'larger conflict of active and contemplative natures which Woolf builds into all of her fiction' (*Continuing Presence: Virginia Woolf's Use of Literary Allusion*, Pennylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 1979), pp. 7-8.

4. For a similar view, see also D, 2, p. 14, 26 Jan. 1920.

5. *Euphrosyne* means joy and festivity according to Dictionary of Greek and Roman Mythology, ed. by David Kravitz (London: New English Library, 1975), p. 94.

6. van Buren Kelley, p. 14.

7. Joan Bennett links the quoting error with Woolf's discredit of facts; the inaccuracy 'is due to the essential femininess of her mind' (*Virginia Woolf: Her Art as a Novelist*, 2nd ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), p. 79.

8. For a detailed argument about Shelley's concern with the restoration and reconstitution of the existing political institutions, see, for example, the following critic: Gerald McNiece, *Shelley and the Revolutionary Idea* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969).

9. *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977), p. 492.

10. *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, pp. 492, 502-03 and 508. In her essay 'Not One of Us' (1927), Woolf also praises Shelley's concern with society: 'Shelley loved humanity...there were criminals in chains, hoeing up the weeds in the pavement of St. Peter's Square; there was an old woman shaking with ague on the banks of the lovely Thames. Then he would thrust aside his writing, dismiss his dreams, and trudge off to physic the poor with medicine or with soup...It was the poetry of a man who was not a "pure poet", but a poet with passion for reforming the wrongs of men. Had he lived, he would have reconciled poetry and the statements of `the necessity of certain immediate reforms in politics, society, and government' (CE, 4, p. 24).

11. *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, ed. by Margaret Drabble (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 43.

12. Matthew Arnold, 'Shelley', in *Matthew Arnold's Essays in Criticism*: First and Second Series (London: Dent, 1966), p. 347.

13. Arnold, p. 351.

14. For Shelley's constant pursuit of the image and reflection of his ideal harmony and unity, see for example *Adonais*, stanzas 44-46 and *Epipsychidion*, 94-122.

15. For the ideological argument of the 'family' or marriage as an institution, see also Woolf's essay 'Women and Fiction' (1929), CE, II, pp. 141-48; MB, p. 135; Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. by Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971), pp. 121-73.

16. *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, pp. 487-8. Shelley also defines love in 'On Love' as 'the bond or sanction which connects not only man with man, but with everything which exists'(*Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, p. 473). His definition of love resembles what Socrates tells Agathon about love in Plato's *Symposium*. According to Socrates, love arises not from richness and fulfilment, but from lack and need. One of Socrates's key passages in Shelley's translation of the dialogue follows: 'Love, therefore, and every thing else that desires anything, desires that which is absent and beyond his reach, that which it has not, that which is not itself, that which it wants...' This text is quoted in James Notopoulos, *The Platonism of Shelley: A Study of Platonism and the Poetic Mind* (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1949), p. 400.

17. Jean Guiguet finds Rachel's death simply the natural end of life's voyage (*Virginia Woolf and Her Works*, trans. by Jean Stewart, London: The Hogarth Press, 1965), p. 198; Phyllis Rose links Rachel's death with her engagement with Terence: 'she withdraws into herself as she always does when threatened...her purity and integrity are preserved through death (*Woman of Letters: A Life of Virginia Woolf*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 72-3; Michael Rosenthal argues that Rachel through her death achieves 'satisfying vision of harmony and meaning'; it helps Woolf to 'define that process that Woolf herself calls living'. Moreover, he also see death as 'the daily business of life, with its pleasure and sadness, relationships and routines' (*Virginia Woolf*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 61; Madeline Moore sees Rachel's death as the one that 'magically produces the rain which refurbishes the dry land of [travellers'] hopelessness' (*The Short Season Between Two Silences: Mystical and the Political in the Novels of Virginia Woolf*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), p. 55.

18. Brewster, pp. 89-90.

19. Winifred Holtby considers Rachel's death 'an interruption, an irrelevance' (*Virginia Woolf*, London: Wishart, 1932), p. 63. According to Herbert Marder, it illuminates 'Woolf's inability to get to grips with the heroine's dilemma' (*Feminism and Art: A Study of Virginia Woolf*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 21; Guiguet finds it 'pointless and unnecessary' (p. 198); Carole O. Brown argues that death is 'the abrupt and apparently pointless sacrifice of Rachel' ('The Art of the Novel: Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out*', *Virginia Woolf Quarterly*, 3 (1977), p. 71.

20. Rachel's death before marriage might mock the plot of the traditional marriage. In the early decades of the twentieth century, while most young girls are tracing their happy marriages, Woolf as a young girl anticipates her first novel in a letter : 'The only thing in this world is music- music and books and one or two pictures.

I am going to found a colony where there shall be no marrying - unless you happen to fall in love with a symphony of Beethoven - no human element at all, except what comes through art' (L, 1, pp. 41-2, letter to Emma Vaughan on 23 April 1901). In another letter, she imagines a comic play about the marriage plot: 'I'm going to have a man and a woman - show them growing up - never meeting - not knowing each other - but all the time you'll feel them come nearer and nearer. This will be the real exciting part (as you see) - but when they almost meet - only a door between - you see how they just miss - and go off at a tangent, and never come anywhere near again. There'll be oceans of talk and emotions without end' (L, 1, p. 60, letter to Violet Dickinson on October/November 1902).

21. There is a thematic similarity between Shelley and Woolf in that death provides them with escape from the world of conventions as well as from uncertainty and conflicts. For them, death does not mean nothingness, but renewal although it is, non-mystically, simply the end of life. For example, Shelley explains what death means to him:
'And death is a low mist which cannot blot
The Brightness it may veil. When lofty thought
Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair,
And Love and life content in it, for what
Shall be its earthly doom, the death live there
And move like winds of light on dark and stormy air'
(*Adonais*, XLIV, 391-96).

22. See, for example, D, III, p. 209, 28 Nov. 1928; AWD, pp. 209-10, 12 Aug. 1933; AWD, p. 215, 18 Feb. 1934; MB, p. 70.

CHAPTER III

Recovering a Female Tradition in *Night and Day* (1919) as a Forerunner of *A Room of One's Own* (1929)

Night and Day is perhaps the most neglected of Woolf's fiction. It is often regarded as an Edwardian novel in which she does not overcome the conventions of the traditional novel.[1] E. M. Forster, for example, describes it as 'an exercise in classical realism'.[2] *Night and Day* also disappointed Katherine Mansfield who saw it as 'a novel in the tradition of the English novel...we had never thought to look upon its like again'.[3] Undoubtedly, it is more disciplined and conventional in relation to 'the form' that 'must sit tight, and perhaps...sits too tight; as it was too loose in *The Voyage Out* [(1915)]' (L, II, p. 400, letter to Janet Case, 19 Nov. 1919). However, Woolf's diary entry about *Night and Day* on 27 March 1919 implies how she strives to find a distinctively new way of writing which could express her new thoughts and feelings: 'I don't admit to being hopeless...only the spectacle is a profoundly strange one; & the process of discarding the old, when one is by no means certain what to put in their place, is a sad one' (D, I, p. 259). The entry indicates Woolf's artistic concerns in *Night and Day*; while she appears committed to the principles of modernist innovations, her ambivalence towards the 'old' method of the traditional novel is indicated by the difficulty and sadness she feels in discarding it.

Unlike Forster and Mansfield, I see *Night and Day* as transitional; not so much a traditional novel as a novel about tradition. In this second novel, Woolf begins to work out her understanding of women writers' relation to the literary tradition and projects her vision for women writers' future place in that tradition, which she would eventually publish as *A Room of One's Own*. In claiming *Night and Day* as a forerunner of *A Room of One's Own*, I will look closely at the

problem of women writers' relation to the literary tradition. This chapter will focus on the question of women writers' predicament in attempting to gain recognition within the imposing authority of patriarchal culture by conforming to literary conventions and genres established by earlier great men of letters. Woolf's most well-known discussion of this comes in *A Room of One's Own*, but her first explicit examination of the crippling effect of male forms on women's creativity is the representation of Mrs Hilbery in *Night and Day*, who is writing a biography of her father Richard Alardyce. On the other hand, Katharine Hilbery as an earlier projection of Mary Carmichael in *A Room of One's Own* breaks up 'a great many convenient phrases' of patriarchal language often through silence and tries to develop a new language by studying abstract symbols of mathematics.[4] In doing so, however, she does not reject her mother's tradition completely, but thinks back through her, not through these great men whose values are quite different from women's in both art and life.[5] This does not mean that Katharine imitates her mother in every aspect of life, yet it is from Mrs Hilbery that she receives her visionary quality, a visionary quality which I will link to the literary tradition, to the Romantics, particularly Shelley. Finally, this chapter will look ahead to women writers' future place in the literary tradition with regard to the view that future women writers will base their writing on the linguistic disruption of conventional form and style, which will eventually alter the view of human identity in fiction.

Woolf reveals the traditional position of women writers before the modern era through her characterization of Mrs Hilbery in *Night and Day*. As the only child of the great poet Richard Alardyce, Mrs Hilbery comes from one of the most famous literary families in England. The house where she lives with her daughter Katharine is something more than just a house; it is a house which is a literary monument of the past full of a 'mass of red-and-gold books' written by 'those giant men' (pp. 8-

9). At its centre is a shrine to past art, where a lamp flickers before the portrait of Alardyce. As the inheritor and guardian of that literary tradition, Mrs Hilbery organizes meetings in her house for her own relations and calls in other visitors with the intention of passing its values on to the younger generation by showing them 'books, pictures, china, manuscripts, and the very chair that Mary Queen of Scots sat in when she heard of Darnley's murders' (p. 14). For Woolf, objects such as a book, a writing table, a chair and a house carry the fact of their historical perspective with them into the present, adding something to the atmosphere of the place where they are kept. In her essay 'The Countess of Pembroke's *Arcadia*' (1932), Woolf writes of 'other hands [that] have been before us, smoothing the leather...turning the pages until they are yellow' and continue to summon their ghosts (CE, I, p. 19).

Above all, Mrs Hilbery is trying to recreate and perpetuate the literary tradition of the past by writing the life of her father. However, Woolf represents her as trapped and silenced by the weight of male culture and by her reverence for the literary tradition of great men. Her sense of their past lives cripples her own present writing and creativity. In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf argues that the social and cultural confinement of women's existence made it almost impossible for them to fulfil any creative abilities. Their lives were restricted not just materially by lack of money of their own to dispose of and hence of the freedom and personal space that wealth is able to provide. Equally damaging was the cultural and psychological confinement imposed upon them. This was not merely a matter of inequality of education, important though that was, it was the intangible but persistent pressure of a sense of natural inferiority, whispered always in their ears, and of the pervasive moral conventionalism that hemmed in all their activities, thoughts and horizons of possibility. In this sense women were forced to live in a

smaller world than men; one which began early in inculcating a timid and uncertain belief in their own ability for and right to creative freedom: 'The indifference of the world which Keats and Flaubert and other men of genius have found so hard to bear was in her case not indifference but hostility. The world did not say to her as it said to them, Write if you choose; it makes no difference to me. The world said with a guffaw, Write? What is the good of your writing?' (ROO, p. 68) Such attitudes locked would-be women writers into a further debilitating constriction: their reverential relationship to a literary canon not made by themselves and not suited to women's language usage or their way of understanding the world.

Mrs Hilbery is clearly free from financial restrictions. She has a room and the time in which to write; she even has privileged access to books and sources. She has no need to sue for entrance to prestigious university libraries preserved for male scholars. She has, moreover, abdicated to her daughter the onerous social duties of 'angel in the house'. All of this only serves to highlight the destructive effects of cultural constriction upon her capacity to write. Mrs Hilbery has not broken free from the enclosure of moral convention. This brings upon her a paralysis of indecision as to what she should include and exclude in her account of her father's sexual affairs. This shrinking from the whole truth fearlessly told is at odds with her equally conventional belief that the life of a great man demands the truth. Above all, it is this respectful obedience to past literary forms and language which continually thwarts Mrs Hilbery's best efforts: 'The glorious past, in which men and women grew to unexampled size, intruded too much upon the present, and dwarfed it too consistently, to be altogether encouraging...' (p. 29). Like the earlier women writers, Woolf describes in *A Room of One's Own,* Mrs Hilbery finds herself 'cramped and thwarted' by the 'hardened and set' structure of patriarchal language which is the only language she is able to recognize as proper to literature (ROO, pp.

99-100).

As Woolf writes in *A Room of One's Own*, 'there was no common sentence ready for her use', because the 'man's sentence' inherited by 'Thackeray and Dickens and Balzac' from 'Johnson, Gibbon and the rest' is as unsympathetic to her mind as 'the older forms of literature' are to her imagination (ROO, pp. 99-100). Mrs Hilbery is writing the life of Alardyce, not only to keep him alive, but also to establish 'indisputably that [he] was a very great man' (p. 30). For her, and even more so for her daughter Katharine, completion of the biography is necessary to justify their status as inheritors of the tradition: 'if they could not between them get this one book accomplished they had no right to their privileged position' (p. 30). To prove their right to inherit, the book must be written very much in the traditional way so as to produce what Woolf, elsewhere, calls the 'integrity' of the great poet's life (ROO, p. 93). By 'integrity' she means that impression of accumulation and solidity of the materiality of life which is the achievement of nineteenth-century realist writers like Tolstoy and which Woolf feared her own writing lacked. It is such writing which 'gives one [the belief] that this is the truth' (ROO, p. 93). Yet Mrs Hilbery and Katharine 'were making no way at all...The book still remained unwritten' even though the enormous mass of manuscripts as source materials for the biography 'lay furled in yellow bundles' (p. 29). The life of Alardyce cannot be written, since it is conceived in the old form, and all the manuscripts are written in the 'old words', so that Mrs Hilbery and Katharine are unable to find a linguistic medium for their task. Woolf ironically represents Mrs Hilbery searching for inspiration among the 'old words' of patriarchal language as if to polish her own language by mere contact with its lustre:

> She liked to perambulate the room with a duster in her hand, with which she stopped to polish the backs of already lustrous books, musing and romancing as she did so. Suddenly the right phrase or the penetrating point of view

> would suggest itself, and she would drop her duster and write ecstatically for a few breathless moments; and then the mood would pass away, and the duster would be sought for, and the old books polished again (pp. 29-30).

Under these changing moods, Mrs Hilbery produces disorganised collections of paragraphs about Alarydce's life, but they do not add up to a complete and comprehensive whole; they do not cohere into a realist solidity. When they go though disorganised bundles of drafts written in the 'old words' of Alardyce that Mrs Hilbery has been writing over ten years, 'they found a state of things well calculated to dash their spirits...They found, to begin with, a great variety of very imposing paragraphs with which the biography was to open; many of these, it is true, were unfinished, and resembled triumphal arches standing upon one leg' (p. 31). Woolf links these 'very imposing paragraphs' to man's language in both *Night and Day* and *A Room of One's Own*, and elsewhere she describes the sentence made by men as 'too heavy, too pompous for a woman's use' ('Women and Fiction' (1929), CE, II, p. 145).

In *Night and Day,* both Mr Hilbery and William Rodney resort to pompous language when they feel the need to re-assert their male dignity and authority (pp. 399, 423). At almost the same moment, Mrs Hilbery is talking of Shakespeare's tomb, apparently quite oblivious of their need to impose themselves, and singing 'her strange, half-earthly song of dawns and sunsets' (p. 423). The tradition of literary expression, entirely the product of man, is suitable for his identity, his world view and his historical perspective as a means of expression, but not for a woman's. Thus handling man's materials about a man's life by a woman affects her achievement and creativity. Mrs Hilbery suffers from her attempt to conform to language and generic conventions which are alien to her way of thinking and experiencing. The language that she is using is composed of solemnities and formal conventions which are barriers to her, and it appears to her impossible to reconstruct

the multiplicity of her father's past experiences as they really were. Although Mrs Hilbery's scattered writings are 'so brilliant' and 'so nobly phrased, so lightning-like in their illumination', 'they produce a sort of vertigo, and set her asking herself in despair what on earth she was to do with them?' (p. 30) Her scattered writings lack the 'integrity' that the realist text demands, dashing her hope of finishing the book: 'I don't believe this'll do' (p. 93). When Katharine wants her mother to proceed in the traditional linear narrative pattern from point to point, she becomes more frustrated and hopeless:

> 'Oh, I know,' Mrs Hilbery exclaimed. 'And that's just what I can't do. Things keep coming into my head. It isn't that I don't know everything and feel everything (who did know him, if I didn't), but I can't put it down, you see. There's a kind of blind spot,' she said, touching her forehead, 'there. And when I can't sleep o'nights, I fancy I shall die without having done it' (p. 93).

In Mrs Hilbery's inability to produce a cohesive writing, Woolf suggests the woman writer's difficulty in creating a successful work of art in a literary style that does not belong to her. Mrs Hilbery seems to have accepted her defeat as she wanders from one sentence to another; she knows and feels everything, but she is not able to express it in a way that she wants, because she is constrained by the tyranny of 'straightforward and commonplace' sentences or plot (p. 93). Under the constraint of the realist plot, therefore, she cannot express what she knows and feels, so that the 'blind spot..there', she perceives, remains undefined and unexpressed and the book still unfinished. Indeed, at the conclusion of the novel, it seems likely to be 'swept into a very insignificant heap of dust' (p. 365). Mrs Hilbery's predicament forms the basis of Woolf's wider argument about the position of nineteenth-century women writers in *A Room of One's Own*. Through Mrs Hilbery's dilemma, Woolf as a woman writer indicates her own concern about the form of language and novel in the Victorian period. Both Mrs Hilbery and Katharine are

very much under the influence of language of the past: 'no one can escape the power of the language...Even Katharine was slightly affected against her better judgement' (p. 258).

What Woolf implies in her representation of Mrs Hilbery's struggle with language is that she fails, because she is trying to go against a form of expression which arises from her own way of perceiving and understanding experience. It seems to her daughter Katharine that 'the book became a wild dance of will-o'-the-wisps, without order or continuity, without coherence even' (p. 32). However, this could equally suggest a new form of narrative structure, one which disregards the coherence and linearity which earlier realist novelists had aimed to achieve. When Mrs Hilbery abandons her attempt to use this weighty language of the literary tradition, she produces a form of writing very similar to that described by Woolf in 'Women and Fiction' as the 'ordinary and usual type of sentence' suitable for women's use (CE, II, p. 145):

> Here were twenty pages upon her grandfather's taste in hats, an essay upon contemporary china, a long account of a summer day's expedition into the country, when they had missed their train, together with fragmentary visions of all sorts of famous men and women, which seemed to be partly imaginary and partly authentic (p. 32).

Mrs Hilbery would be able to bring her father's life freshly into the present in all its immediacy by means of her fragmentary vision of hats, china, a summer's day expedition whereas a linear narrative and solemn language would embalm it forever in the past. Clearly, Mrs Hilbery's fragmentary form has close affinities with the way modernist narrative techniques are used to convey the complexity and incompleteness of modern experience. This is the direction in which Woolf would develop her own style subsequent to her completion of *Night and Day*; an increasing dispersal of narrative linearity and a language affirming the 'scraps, orts and fragments' of modern experience (BA, p. 173).

Despite her reverence for the great men of the past, Mrs Hilbery is represented as strangely ironic, 'half malicious and half tender' as she speaks of their lives and persons (p. 34). In this too, there are affinities with Woolf's own ambivalent attitude to the past; her need to mock and debase its authority while retaining her sense of continuity within its heritage. Woolf herself grew up in a household where the lives of great men such as her father Sir Leslie Stephen and their guests Meredith, James and Hardy, influenced her childhood view. In 'A Sketch of The Past', she remembers the 'great men' who used to come to tea in the Stephen house, yet the idea of greatness seems to her in 1940 as eccentric and apart, 'something that we are led up to by our parents and is now entirely extinct' (MB, p. 136). In *Night and Day*, Woolf represents the Victorian tradition of great men in the process of disintegration. As Katharine talks ironically of her grandfather to Ralph Denham during his visit to the Hilbery house, for example, he reacts contemptuously: 'No, we haven't great men...I'm very glad that we haven't. I hate great men. The worship of greatness in the nineteenth century seems to me to explain the worthlessness of that generation' (p. 12).

It is the daughter Katharine who is represented as fulfilling the potential of her mother's reluctant ironic vision. It is Katharine Hilbery who espouses a radical rejection of past forms and determines to discover new modes of expression and experience, rather like the fictional Mary Carmichael in *A Room of One's Own* who writes a new kind of novel called *Life's Adventures*. Woolf writes that 'Mary is tampering with the expected sequence. First she broke the sentence; now she has broken the sequence' (ROO, p. 106). The 'tampering with the expected sequence' and 'sentence' suggests not only reaction against the narrative authority of patriarchal literary tradition, but also a new possibility and perspective of the future form of fiction by women writers in which they will explore the aspects of language and

narrative that have been missing so far. Mary Carmichael tries to find a female place and develop a new relation in the literary tradition by merging feminism and modernism together: '"Chloe liked Olivia", I read. And then it struck me how immense a change was there. Chloe liked Olivia perhaps for the first time in literature' (ROO, p. 106). The text suggests that Mary Carmichael represents for the first time the relationship between women, a relationship which has been given so far through patriarchal perspectives. In this respect, Mary Carmichael not only expands the scope of writing about women, but also challenges and transforms the norms of male and female values, rendering the 'obscure lives' of women by 'light[ing] a torch in that vast chamber where nobody has yet been' (ROO, p. 109). The narrator in *A Room of One's Own* wants 'to see how Mary Carmichael set to work to catch those unrecorded gestures, those unsaid or half-said words, which form themselves, no more palpably than the shadows of moths on the ceiling, when women are alone, unlit by the capricious and coloured light of the other sex' (ROO, p. 110). Thus, women writers, rather than cutting themselves off from the past, will enlarge the whole literary tradition by recovering the female tradition. The possibility gives new spaces to women and to female values in literature:

> Mary Carmichael might well have a look at that in passing, I thought, for it is a sight that would lend itself to the pen as fittingly as any snowy peak or rocky gorge in the Andes. And then there is the girl behind the counter too - I would as soon have her true history as the hundred and fiftieth life of Napoleon or seventieth study of Keats and his use of Miltonic inversion which old Professor Z and his like are now indicting (ROO, pp. 117-8).

The image of a woman walking in 'the street of London' implies the physical emancipation of women from the enclosure of the Victorian household as a new woman; 'the girl behind the counter' suggests the murder of the 'Angel in the House' ('Professions for Women' (1931), CE, II, p. 285), who has served 'all these centuries as looking glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting

the figure of man at twice its natural size' (ROO, p. 45). In *Night and Day*, Mary Datchet exemplifies one of these new types of woman. Although her father does not approve of her views, Mary Datchet leaves her parent's home and prefers her singleness, committing herself to the issues of women's rights. The torch that she lights becomes 'a sign of triumph' for future women 'not to be extinguished this side of [the] grave' (p. 431). These arguments suggest that women's fiction will not only synthesizes the whole literary tradition, but also introduce new forms and subjects for the future. In this diversity, therefore, women writers will no longer be limited, but render social, political and cultural aspects of society as well as women's 'relation to [the] world of gloves and shoes and stuffs swaying up and down among the faint scents that come through chemists' bottles down arcades of dress material over a floor of pseudo-marble' (ROO, p. 117).

Like Mary Carmichael, Katharine Hilbery in *Night and Day* has a natural antipathy to moribund convention. She particularly dislikes that 'perpetual effort to understand one's own feeling' and to 'express it beautifully, fitly, or energetically' as part of that Victorian moral sententiousness deriving from the tradition of writers like George Eliot and Tennyson (p. 32). Unlike her mother, she is 'inclined to be silent; she shrank from expressing herself even in talk, let alone in writing', preferring to use 'the small, inexpressive, commonplace words' for communication (pp. 32, 256). Through her silence, Katharine rejects 'a great many convenient phrases which launch the conversation into smooth waters' (p. 7). It is through silence that Woolf attacks the 'expected sequence' of the dominant narrative order and tries to build up a female critical stance towards the ideology inherent in the nature of narrative and language. Lucio P. Ruotolo suggests that silence is both a narrative strategy in Woolf's different novels and a theme, focusing on the cultural and political dimension of silence. For Ruotolo, silence is a sign, 'heralding

change, and the growing expectation that society is on the verge of radical transformation'.[6] Katharine, having excluded herself from the 'rounded structure of words' (p. 6), seeks her new language in the abstract, 'impersonal' and non-representational world of mathematics. She expresses her joy in life and love through a mysterious vision of 'algebraic symbols, pages all speckled with dots and dashes and twisted bars' (p. 254). 'The more profound reason was that in her mind mathematics were directly opposed to literature. She would not have cared to confess how infinitely she preferred the exactitude, the star-like impersonality, of figures to the confusion, agitation, and vagueness of the finest prose' (p. 34). By studying mathematics, Katharine, like Mary Carmichael, refuses what she feels is the limitation of the 'finest prose', the old books and words, conveying only a 'thin and inferior composition' of her existence (p. 32). Behind her quest for 'the exactitude, the star-like impersonality of figures', which is contrasted to 'the confusion, agitation, and vagueness of the finest prose', lies Katharine's distrust of the subjectivity and the arbitrariness of language. Through the self-indulgent 'process of self-examination', she thinks that 'everyone tells lies' or makes up 'stories to suit their own version' (pp. 73, 101). Thus, Katharine ignores literature in general and the literary heritage of her family in particular: 'Yes, I do hate books...[she tells Ralph] Why do you want to be for ever talking about your feelings? That's what I can't make out. And poetry's all about feelings - novels are all about feelings' (p. 120). It is not that Katharine lacks feelings, but Woolf's purpose in representing her in this way is to embody her own ambivalence towards the traditional modes of language. Moreover, Katharine's yearning for 'impersonality' through mathematics suggests her rejection of women's traditional domestic duties including her own role as 'angel in the house' to elderly parents:

> Circumstances had long forced her...to consider, painfully and minutely, all

> that part of life which is conspicuously without order; she had had to consider moods and wishes, degrees of liking or disliking, and their effect upon the destiny of people dear to her; she had been forced to deny herself any contemplation of that other part of life where thought constructs a destiny which is independent of human beings (p. 281).

Discussion of Woolf's views on the 'personal' and 'impersonal' is complicated by the fact that she does not employ these terms just to mean the relationship that an author establishes between herself or himself and the subject matter. Woolf, as she writes in *Moments of Being* (1976), intends by 'personal' to allude to the routine observation of individual characters and the analysis of their personal emotions (MB, pp. 69-70). Her view of impersonality, on the other hand, is integral to the state of mind most favourable to artistic creativity. Thus, Woolf uses 'impersonal' to refer to the poetic exploration of general abstract thought and feeling: 'We long for some more impersonal relationship. We long for ideas, for dreams, for imagination, for poetry' (MB, p. 70; 'The Narrow Bridge of Art' (1927), CE, II, p. 225). To achieve the highest level of creativity, she suggests, writers must release themselves 'from the cramp and confinement of personality', that is, must avoid 'the damned egotistical self'; which ruins Joyce & [Dorothy] Richardson to my mind' ('How It Strikes A Contemporary' (1923), CR, I, p. 302; D, II, p. 14, 26 Jan. 1920). Katharine Hilbery's yearning for 'impersonality', then, suggests a poetic quality and creativity in that she, unlike her mother, tries to find out her own sense of life without testing it according to any social and moral standards. Thus, I think the 'turn towards the impersonal' that Woolf argues for in both 'Women and Fiction' and *A Room of One's Own* is not only linked to women's increasing dissatisfaction with the repressive world of political, social and sexual relationships, but also to a shift from prose to poetry:

> The greater impersonality of women's lives will encourage the poetic spirit, and it is in the poetry that women's fiction is still weakest. It will lead them to be less absorbed in facts and no longer content to record with astonishing

> acuteness the minute details which fall under their own observation. They will look beyond the personal and political relationships to the wider questions which the poet tries to solve - of our destiny and the meaning of life ('Women and Fiction', CE, II, p. 147).

The 'poetic spirit' in *Night and Day* has never attracted critical attention, yet I believe that it is the impersonal quality of Katharine linked to the poetic spirit which helps Woolf to explore the part of life that we hardly speak about, a quality which Woolf calls 'non-being' in 'A Sketch of The Past' (MB, p. 70).

In my view, Katharine's impersonality associates closely with a visionary quality which comes to her through her mother, a visionary quality that enables her not only to discover a sense of continuity with the dominant literary tradition and carry it into the future, but also to transcend her confusion of life. In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf asserts that 'we think back through our mothers if we are women. It is useless to go to the great men writers for help, however much one may go to them for pleasure' (ROO, p. 99). This assertion becomes a strong model for the female literary tradition, in which Woolf intends to explore the unrepresented world of women which 'is all half lights and profound shadows like those serpentine caves where one goes with a candle peering up and down, not knowing where one is stepping' (ROO, p. 109).

Woolf does not represent Mrs Hilbery negatively in *Night and Day*, but as full of vision, passion and energy. As a fictional character, who finds it difficult to achieve harmony with the present, she appears to have been too much influenced by the rich literary heritage of the past, but her passionate desire is to pass it on to the younger generation. Moreover, Shakespeare plays a central role in Mrs Hilbery's visionary experience that unites the past and present together. She always talks, thinks, and dreams of Shakespeare, imagining that 'his very bones lay directly beneath one's feet' (p. 259). It suggests a vision that 'the heart of the civilized

world' stands on the bones of the poets of the past like Shakespeare's (p. 364). Mrs Hilbery, therefore, fancies 'a playhouse', where they, as she tells Katharine, could all play Shakespeare's characters: 'she'd be Rosalind...Your father's Hamlet, come to years of discretion; and I'm - well, I'm a bit of them all: I'm quite a large bit of the fool, but the fools in Shakespeare say all the clever things' (p. 260). Furthermore, she visits Stratford and brings back to Katharine a 'moving mass of green' leaves and flowers from Shakespeare's tomb (p. 408). The green leaves and flowers becomes a means by which Mrs Hilbery passes on symbolically the tradition of the past to her daughter, establishing a sense of connection between the past and the present.

Mrs Hilbery's visionary quality also influences Katharine's conception of life throughout *Night and Day*. Early in the novel, for example, Katharine names whimsically their visitors as:

> Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Shelley, and so on, who were, for some reason, much more nearly akin to the Hilberys than to other people. They made a kind of boundary to her vision of life, and played a considerable part in determining her scale of good and bad in her own small affairs (p. 28).

And it is this visionary quality that unites both mother and daughter and enables them to conceive life in a common way at the end of the novel. I link this visionary quality to Shelley as well as Shakespeare. Katharine's visionary quality suggests a particular similarity with Woolf's attitudes towards Shelley. Woolf tries to explore 'non-being' in *Night and Day* by representing Katharine as undomestic, uncompromising, but highly visionary, evoking a Shelleyan view of the self (MB, p. 70). Woolf's identifying Katharine with Shelley is, I believe, a complex issue, yet it reveals Woolf's strong awareness of his influence on her own aesthetic view.

Katharine's visionary experiences are represented in the Shelleyan language and imagery through which she desires to escape from the ceremonial 'atmosphere'

of the Hilbery house, yet she seeks her own form of idealism (p. 162). In representing Katharine as unhappy and fragmented between her domestic responsibility and private dream life, Woolf combines her own desire for Shelleyan lyrical flight and her determination not to submit to the binding values of the patriarchal order. From the beginning of *Night and Day*, for example, we perceive that Katharine engages in Romantic desires which allow her mind to escape from the social demands of her surroundings; that is, she withdraws into her own vision or silence, attending domestic affairs only 'with the surface skin of her mind', but the inner part of her mind enables her to leap over the 'little barrier' of her occupation (pp. 6, 3). By releasing herself from the 'little barrier', her mind flies to the 'American prairies' where she tames 'wild ponies', or she guides 'a vast ship in a hurricane round a black promontory of rock' (p. 34). This visionary flight gives her a space of pleasure and peace separate from her domestic duties and her deep involvement in her mother's social world.

The situation of Katharine recalls that of the poet which Shelley describes in *A Defence of Poetry* (1840): 'A poet is a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds'.[7] Like Shelley's poet, Katharine shuts 'her desires away from view and cherish[es] them with extraordinary fondness' by turning her attention to the world of abstracts unknown to her, to mathematics in the morning and stars at night alone in her room (p. 34).[8] Furthermore, by representing Katharine's preference for dreams rather than social realities, Woolf demonstrates her imaginative sympathy with Shelleyan concern for a means of transcending the limitation of the actual world. Katharine searches for 'a room of her own' outside the circle of what she must reject, but it is also ironic that she seeks it in the world of mathematical fact to flee her mother's social world that she does not approve of. As Alice van Buren Kelley argues, her conception of

mathematics is not as a 'pure, self-contained fact', but as a 'fact that sends out limitless waves of implications', not an 'objective, bounded truth', but an 'infinite vision'.[9] Within the 'infinite vision' of experience, therefore, Katharine yearns for 'the exactitude, the star-like impersonality' beyond the world of uncertain and vague relationships (p. 34).

The imagery of a star which Woolf employs in *Night and Day* is poetic and suggestive of the Shelleyan view of a star in terms of seeking a sense of stable identity in the face of the confusion of life. The fixed star for Shelley symbolizes a stable, unchangeable sense of identity that enjoys all the conditions which human individuals desire passionately, but which are impossible and futile when life is bound to 'change and Time' (*Adonais* (1821), 341). In Shelley's cyclical conception of life, there is no permanent progress in time and space; if 'the world's great age begins anew' (*Hellas*, (1822), 1060), it, too, will pass away, or be replaced by a return of 'hate and death' (*Hellas*, 1096). In *Adonais*, the star also symbolizes the soul of great poets of the past, 'the splendours of the firmament of time', who 'may be eclipsed, but are extinguished not' (*Adonais*, 388-390). Thus the unextinguished light of those great poets, are as the lights of stars that shine permanently, 'beacons from the abode where the Eternal are' (*Adonais*, 495). The stars offer consolation and become hope to human individuals in a transitory world by symbolizing universally permanent love and beauty.

However, one must approach Shelley's use of star imagery at two levels. At one level, he employs the visual images - the moon, cloud, sky as well as stars- to emphasise the idea of love and beauty in a loveless and barren world. In *To Jane* (1832), for example:

> The keen stars were twinkling
> And the fair moon was rising among them,
> Dear Jane.

The guitar was tinkling
But the notes were not sweet 'till you sung them
Again...
The stars will awaken,
Though the moon sleep a full hour later,
Tonight;
No leaf will be shaken
While the dews of your melody scatter
Delight (1-18).

'The keen stars were twinkling' evokes obvious physical delight and emotion as well as the imaginative experience of the poet. The rhythmical pauses - 'Dear Jane', 'again', 'tonight', and 'Delight' - become part of the spontaneous flow of his emotional feelings. The analogy between the moon, which takes its light from stars and Jane's voice, which supplies the guitar's notes with life, is a beautiful poetic expression. At a deeper level, Shelley's poetry moves from individual human beauty and love into the world of transcendental vision. He attempts to represent, through his poetic symbols, the universal ideals that arise in the poetic imagination: 'it is the province of the poet to attach himself to [ideas] which exalt and ennoble humanity'.[10] I believe Shelley's use of imagery such as stars to suggests his visionary sense of life is of great significance to Woolf. For both Shelley and Woolf, such images become the means of revealing a universal unity or harmony which is beyond our normal sense-impression:

> Though the sound overpowers
> Sing again, with your dear voice revealing
> A tone
> Of *Some world far from ours*,
> Where music and moonlight and feeling
> Are one (*To Jane*, 19-24, emphasis added).

Although the poem appears to be dealing with the present events of the scene such as the stars, the rising moon, the guitar, and Jane's voice in a delightful mood, the meaning beneath these events suggests the poet's desire for unity: 'Some world far from ours, / Where music and moonlight and feeling / Are one'. Shelley catches

'eternal proportions' that bring unity and harmony when the actual meaning of visual images is taken beyond the veil.[11] The poem reveals the hidden reality of love as that which Shelley calls 'the soul of all' which is transitory and deceptive in a world of ordinary appearances (*Lines written among the Euganean Hills* (1819), 316). The implication of 'the soul of all', as the later chapters of my thesis explore in detail, is related to the collective existence of all humanity.

In *Night and Day*, it is Mrs Hilbery who expresses a visionary sense of unity, crooning the word 'love' and 'riveting together...the shattered fragments of the world' and affirming that 'one age is linked to another, and no one dies, and we all meet in spirit' (pp. 412, 423). However, it is her daughter Katharine who is persistently associated with the star imagery. Woolf employs the imagery of the star in the same way as Shelley. Katharine's desire for the 'star-like impersonality' suggests her longing for escape, vision and peace as well as for stability in her life. She always looks at the distance, the sky, the silver moon and stars. Ralph makes a joke about her as 'star-gazing' (p. 48), and her cousin Henry Otway tells her: 'I understand that you rule your life by the stars' (p. 167), but she confides her meaning to him: '"I don't care much whether I ever get to know anything - but I want to work out something in figures - something that hasn't got to do with human beings' (p. 163). Katharine's world of figures, having nothing to with 'human beings', suggests an impersonal world beyond 'certain purely terrestrial discontents' (p. 161). Having found the 'little ceremonies' at home constricting and troublesome, therefore, she seeks consolation in the light of stars (p. 81):

> She changed the focus of her eyes, and saw nothing but the stars.
>
> Tonight they seemed fixed with unusual firmness in the blue, and flashed back such a ripple of light into her eyes that she found herself thinking that to-night the stars were happy...And yet, after gazing for another second, the stars did their usual work upon the mind, froze to cinders the whole of our short human history, reduced the human body to an ape-like, furry form...This stage was soon succeeded by another, in which there was nothing

> in the universe save stars and the lights of stars; as she looked up the pupils of her eyes so dilated with starlight that the whole of her seemed dissolved in silver and split over the ledges of the stars for ever and ever indefinitely through space (pp. 163-4).

Katharine's first response to the light of stars is similar to that of Shelley in *To Jane*; an immediate sensuous response to the sparkling stars as fixed objects in the actual world. But suddenly these stars as objects of the ordinary world move into an indefinable and complex meaning in relation to the state of Katharine's sensibility. Through the poetic language, the stars, human history, and human body change in value; they are connected poetically to each other in a quite different way from the ordinary meaning. In a moment of vision, Katharine goes beyond her actual existence, and her identity dissolves completely. There is a close similarity between Woolf's language here and what Shelley writes of his view about the external world and poetry in *A Defence of Poetry*. They both perceive the external world as chaotic and fragmented, but as Shelley writes, it is the real poetic expression that 'defeats the curse which binds us to be subjected to the accident of surrounding impressions'.

In doing so, poetry:

> ...withdraws life's dark veil from before the scene of things, it equally creates for us a being within our being. It makes us the inhabitants of a world to which the familiar world is a chaos. It reproduces the common universe of which we are portions and percipient, and it purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being. It compels us to feel that which we perceive, and to imagine that which we know. It creates anew the universe, after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration.[12]

Woolf's text above corresponds to some extent with Shelley's statements. Once poetry lifts the veil of familiarity from the world, the mind creates 'a being within our being'; we become the 'inhabitants' of a new world. In her essay 'A Letter to a Young Poet' (1932), Woolf advises the young poet to read and follow Shelley when she or he is in despair: 'if the actual life is thus extreme, the visionary life should be free to follow. Write then, now that you are young, nonsense by the ream.

Be silly, be sentimental, imitate Shelley' (CE, II, p. 194). What the young poet should imitate in Shelley is a visionary quality in which she or he would be 'trying honestly and exactly to describe a world that has perhaps no existence except for one particular person at one particular moment' (CE, II, p. 189). In *Night and Day*, Woolf, like Shelley, suggests that 'although human beings are woefully ill-adapted for communication' in a world full of fragments and chaos, there is still hope to have 'such communication...for each to have access to another world independent of personal affairs', a romantic world in which human individuals 'seemed to be sharing something, creating something, an ideal - a vision flung out in advance of our actual circumstances' (p. 414).

Another Romantic motif that Woolf employs in *Night and Day* is the imagery of dream, which helps her to unfold the inner lives of her chief fictional characters, particularly Katharine and Ralph. In their dream-like lives, they seek a semblance of reality about life rather than reality itself, that is, her characters try to discover 'things one can't say...the dive underground...the reality of any feeling', or to 'discover what aims drive people on, & whether these are illusory or not' (L, II, p. 400, letter to Janet Case, 19 Nov. 1919; D, I, p. 196, 18 Sept. 1918). As in the 'impersonal' world of mathematics and stars, Woolf evades the demands of realist form through the imagery of day-dreams. The dream has a transcendental meaning in which Katharine and Ralph attempt to find out their feelings towards and understanding of each other as well as the meaning of their lives, refusing to apply any worldly standard to their views. In the process of their discovery of each other, they acknowledge the fact that 'there may be nothing. Nothing but what we imagine' (p. 324). Their view of imagination recalls Wordsworth's 'pure imagination' which enables them 'to see / Great truths, then touch and handle little ones' (*The Prelude*, XIII, 50-3). Then 'Life, the process of discovering' might be nothing more than our

illusion (p. 106). In *The Sensitive Plant* (1820), Shelley pursues such an illusion of life. *The Sensitive Plant* gives the description of the plant in the garden, which appears endowed with a human quality in that the Sensitive-plant expresses the love and beauty it feels. The garden described is very much like a dream, 'undefiled Paradise' - a visionary landscape of perfection (I, 58), but the central concern of the poem suggests Shelley's poetic concept of 'a vision of abstract and perfectly harmonious love and beauty in terms of flowers, to which he secondarily attaches human qualities in order to elicit the reader's sympathy'.[13] When all the things in the garden fall into ruin after the lady's death, Shelley comments:

> I dare not guess; but in this life
> Of error, ignorance, and strife,
> Where nothing is, but all things seem,
> And *we the shadows of the dream...*
>
> That garden sweet, that lady fair,
> And all sweet shapes and odours there,
> In truth have never passed away,
> 'Tis we, 'tis ours, are changed; not they.
>
> For love, and beauty, and delight,
> There is no death nor change: their might
> Exceeds our organs, which endure
> No light, being themselves obscure (5-24, emphasis added).

Shelley suggests that life is 'the shadows of [our] dream' and illusion; we suffer 'error, ignorance, and strife' in the world of political and social relationships, but love and beauty defeat them. The central point that Shelley deals with in the poem is the power of vision, creating order and harmony which never fade and cease. Thus, the responsibility of the poet is to glorify those moments of life in which love, beauty and delight transcend death and change. If, when they take place, it appears like a dream, or if a dream come true, then that is one of the functions of imagination.

In *Night and Day*, the imagery of day-dreams also plays the same important

role in terms of keeping alive imaginative aspiration for ideals. When alone, for example, Ralph, who is in love with her, always makes up the figure of a 'phantom Katharine', but when walking with her, he becomes 'aware that the bulk of Katharine was not represented in his dream at all, so that...he was bewildered by the fact that she had nothing to do with his dreams of her' (p. 75). The 'phantom Katharine' that he conjures up in his mind suggests just a semblance of her, suiting and satisfying his vision in her absence, yet his dream appears full of mockery for him when he notices that 'she had nothing to do with his dreams of her'. Moreover, having learned of her engagement to William Rodney, Katharine seems to Ralph a disembodied ghost: 'All things had turned into ghosts; the whole mass of the world was insubstantial vapour, surrounding the solitary spark in his mind [which] burnt no more...He saw the truth. He saw the dun-coloured race of waters and the blank shore' (p. 130). Yet after struggling with this threatened destruction of his dream, he rejects that form of death of the imagination, reflecting that 'one may cast away the forms of human beings, and yet retain the passion which seemed inseparable from their existence in the flesh...this passion burnt on his horizons...His eyes were set on something infinitely far and remote' (pp. 130-1).

For Katharine, the day-dream state suggests idealism as well as transcendence, in which she finds the ideal life that other people are missing: 'There dwelt the things one must have felt had there been cause; the perfect happiness of which here we taste the fragment; the beauty seen here in flying glimpses only' (p. 116). She imagines that her life also belongs to 'another world, a world antecedent to her world, a world that was the prelude, the antechamber to reality' (p. 299). Looking out of the window, Katharine identifies her domestic life with 'lights and fires', beyond which she sees 'nothing more than darkness', but in a moment of illumination she seems 'physically to have stepped beyond the region where the light

of illusion still makes it desirable to possess, to love, to struggle' (p. 299). Through the dream-like life, Woolf endows her characters with the flight of Shelleyan transcendence.

Moreover, I think that Woolf also uses dream imagery to connect her self as a woman writer with Shelley's struggle, in that she, like Shelley, fights for freedom in private life or for a room of her own. In that sense Woolf, like her fictional characters, seeks to associate herself with an empowering inheritance within the patriarchal tradition of literature. Early in the novel, having felt that her marriage to William Rodney would help her secret ideal in no way, Katharine flies into a dream state in which she seeks impersonality away from the demands of the marriage plot. She becomes convinced that there is an 'imaginary world', where not only dwells 'the realities of the appearances which figure in our world', but feelings are also free from 'the constraint which the real world puts upon' us (p. 116). In a moment of her disturbed vision in which the barriers between the self and the world beyond are shattered, Katharine transforms into another person, dissolving in time and space. In the face of the divisions and discomfort, the agony and fragmentation of the actual world that are clearly embodied in her opposition to family tradition and the wisdom that her parents follow, she always attempts to find her 'magnanimous hero' in an unknown world, with whom she could live the 'perfect happiness', where there is no dim view of life, no restriction and imposition, no duty to act in a certain way (p. 116). If we consider Katharine's vision on a wider scale, what Woolf emphasizes is the idea that we shall awake to a greater reality once involved in the visionary life assumed as a dream. Reality, that is a broken reflection in the actual world, becomes boundless, timeless and unchanging in the visionary experience.

Although she studies mathematics alone, however, it becomes clear to

Katharine that her lack of property, restraints on her freedom of movement and demands on her time for other purposes prevent her from achieving a sense of independent identity, particularly a visionary identity at home. As Woolf emphasizes in *A Room of One's Own*, material conditions such as a separate room and money are crucially important to free women psychologically (ROO, pp. 4, 52-3). Despite the fact that she finds the conventions at home 'absurd', Katharine feels 'closely attached to them', and her attachment does not allow her to follow her own inclinations to achieve 'a separate being, with a future of her own' (p. 92; see also pp. 32-3). Secondly, although she is influenced very much by her mother's visionary quality, she is also very much under the influence of her mother's conventional moral views (pp. 34-5, 81). The mother-daughter relationship plays a significant role in Woolf's novels. For example, the relationship between Rachel and Helen in *The Voyage Out*, Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse* (1927), represents to some extent Woolf's own dilemma with her mother's 'invisible' presence in her life as she writes in 'A Sketch of the Past': 'The presence of my mother obsessed me. I could hear her voice, see her, imagine her what she could do or say as I went about my day's doings. She was one of the invisible presences, who after all play so important a part in every life' (MB, p. 81). When she examines the development of her own separate identity, therefore, Woolf is 'tugged about', 'pushed' and 'pulled' by her imaginary mother, remembering her mother's last words on her death bed: 'Hold yourself straight, little Goat' (MB, p. 84). Woolf achieves her full mental separation from the obsession with her mother when she writes *To the Lighthouse*, so that she never disturbs her psychologically again since then as Woolf writes in 'A Sketch of the Past': 'I expressed some very long felt and deeply felt emotion. And in expressing it I explained it and laid it to rest...I described her...and my feeling for her became so much dimmer and

weaker...' (MB, p. 81)[14]

Similarly, Katharine feels herself limited psychologically by her mother's projection of her own life. After examining her life with confusion, for example, she finds her existence a 'thick texture', which is so confined by 'the progress of other lives that the sound of its own advance was inaudible' (p. 86). Hence Katharine comes to realise that she must deny her mother's view of life other than its visionary quality:

> She reviewed her daily task, the perpetual demands upon her for good sense, self-control, and accuracy in a house containing a romantic mother. Ah, but her romance wasn't *that* romance. It was a desire, an echo, a sound; she could drape it in colour, see it in form, hear it in music, but not in words; no, never in words' (p. 243).

Later in the novel, the narrator tells us the meaning of her vision:

> She could not reduce her vision to words, since it was no single shape coloured upon the dark, but rather a general excitement, an atmosphere, which, when she tried to visualise it, took form as a wind scouring the flanks of the northern hills and flashing light upon cornfields and pools (p. 359).

Unlike that of her mother, the imagery of Katharine's vision as 'wind' and 'light' is rhythmic, simultaneous, poetic and incommunicable in words, but what is important for her is to assert herself whatever it is. Katharine refuses her mother's romance as well as her way of life as models for her own life which includes caring, feeling and involvement, so that she realises the need to escape her mother's world of conventions and morality as well as her own iconic image for others so as to assert herself.

Katharine intends to escape her conflict between the moral conventionality at home and her ideal dreams of freedom through marriage in the hope that it will eventually liberate her to lead a life of her own, studying mathematics in a room of her own without interruption and enjoying a wide range of experiences like going to lectures (p. 113). As it is in Woolf's other novels, however, the marriage based

on social conventions appears limiting in *Night and Day*. The marriage that Katharine's mother and aunts understand wants women to be an 'Angel'[15] at home, a phantom voice which orders that they are only 'half alive' without marriage (p. 52), that a wife must love and 'submit to her husband' (p. 177; see also p. 347); otherwise, it is advisable that 'a woman who wants to have things her own way' should not get married (p. 177). After examining all these remarks, Katharine realizes that 'the traditional answer would be of no use to her individually' (p. 265), and even her marriage to William Rodney will be of no use to her personality since he is also strictly 'alive to the conventions of society' (p. 206). Thus having put aside all the predetermined views attributed to woman and marriage, Katharine comes to the conclusion that 'the only truth which she could discover was the truth of what she herself felt - a frail beam when compared with the broad illumination shed by the eyes of all the people who are in agreement to see together' (p. 265). Katharine's interest in discovering her own intuitive truth has both modernist and Romantic implications. As a modernist view, Woolf represents Katharine as a non-conforming character, rebelling against all the social conventions and values, and she does not accept any truth other than her own. Her truth suggests a modernist view of consciousness symbolized as 'a frail beam' which cannot be defined, yet is vague, fragile and ambivalent. On the other hand, Katharine's interest in finding out her own truth through feeling suggests what Wordsworth calls 'a sensitive being, a *creative* soul' (*The Prelude* (1850), XII, 207). And it is through this feeling that she searches for what she could recognize and discover as 'a true feeling' among the chaos of her life and tries to bring it nearer to her desire and vision (p. 265). But there is a conflict between her attempt to seek her 'true feeling' and her recognition that she has no choice available at the moment but to follow the guidance of the 'dark masses' of the late Victorian society (p. 265). By representing Katharine's

confusion, Woolf shows us that women do not have the Shelleyan freedom to trace their own inclinations, since society still imposes its pressure on women. What Katharine needs, like Rachel in *The Voyage Out*, is to bring down all the traditional values before she goes ahead in the pursuit of her own voice.[16]

It is Ralph Denham, an intense, complex young lawyer, who offers her not 'the most sacred of all loves, the love of husband and wife' (p. 347), but a relationship which is based on friendship, respect, freedom and equality without any commitment. 'Neither is under any obligation to the other. They must be at liberty to break or to alter at any moment. They must be able to say whatever they wish to say' (p. 287). Their relationship is different from that of most people; it is not the fulfilment of fantasies of romance for her at all, but an unavoidable escape without love and ambition, 'as the thing one did actually in real life, for possibly the people who dream thus are those who do the most prosaic things' (p. 87). After breaking off her engagement to William Rodney in a farcical manner by helping him to establish an intimate relationship with her cousin Cassandra, Katharine accepts Ralph's offer. In accepting Ralph's offer of friendship, she pacifies the demands of society that she should be a normal woman, but she also escapes her mother's world of conventions and morals.

Ralph Denham is not conventional, and Katharine finds 'some symmetrical pattern' of her view in his view of life (p. 266). What is important is that he helps her to see the dual experience of life - fact and vision, night and day. For example, in Kew gardens, Ralph's talk to Katharine about the law of plant-life delights her (p. 281). The couple enter the Orchid House, whose plants 'peer and gape...from striped hoods and fleshy throats...In defiance of the rules she stretched her ungloved hand and touched one' (p. 282). The touch suggests physical realizing of the being of the plant, and this realization also makes her aware of materiality, removing her

from the solitary world of mathematics and stars to the actual world of living plants like the orchids. Such a step towards reconciliation of her visionary imagination with the outside actual world gives her for the first time a glimpse of the possibility that the 'perpetual disparity' of life might be avoided if she brings together 'the thought and the action...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?' (p. 288).

In Woolf's characterization as both modernist and Romantic, Katharine as a forerunner of Mary Carmichael in *A Room of One's Own* represents a new woman, who breaks the 'expected sequence' and develops the possibility of future feminine language and narrative based on women's subversion of conventional style and form in fiction. This subversion of language and narrative also alters the view of human identity in fiction. In *Night and Day*, Woolf embodies the first development of her modernist linguistic experimentation that pervades her style and form in later novels. In this second novel, her experimentation with language and narrative is signified by silences and by complex, unfinished and chaotic communicative relationships between characters, as well as by Romantic vision and relationships. For example, when Katharine and Ralph try to communicate within the petty social class differences, we learn that 'Ralph was disappointed by the completeness with which Katharine parted from him, without any attempt to finish his sentence' (p. 49). On their way home after leaving Mary Datchet's room, William Rodney strives to stammer out his feelings for Katharine, but he is not able to express them: 'But in the presence of beauty - look at the iridescence round the moon! - one feels - one feels -...He spoke these disconnected sentences rather abruptly' (p. 52). Similarly, later in the novel, Katharine and Ralph try to unite together, yet they are not able to explain their emotion and love to each other: 'I must explain to you - Yes. We

must explain - A long pause followed. Ralph began a sentence, which he cancelled with the word, Nothing' (p. 368). Thus the sense of meaning, order and continuity that language had in the past - the language of the literary tradition - is lost through silence, pause, unfinished and unarticulated sentences with short syllables suggestive of the modern chaotic experiences of characters in *Night and Day*. The novel is full of such characteristics of language which interrupt the linear movement of narrative. Katharine and Rodney after their engagement, for example, pay a short visit to Mary Datchet, but the way Katharine speaks and behaves puzzles Mary: 'There was something that carried her smoothly, out of reach - something, yes, but What?...this hidden impulse, this incalculable force - this thing [she] cared for and didn't talk about - oh, what was it?' (p. 147). I think this is how Woolf wants us to view her characters throughout her writing. The sharp utterance, 'something, yes, but What?' and 'what was it?' suggests Mary's ambivalent view, and equally we as readers do not know what motives make Katharine act in this way. In fact, there are many such instances, which keep us on the surface, because most of them are only half-told, half-finished and ambiguous sentences, bringing with them tropes of secrecy and silence. For example, '"I forget--"', '"but--"' (pp. 119-20), '"That is why I--' (p. 172), and `"well--?"' (p. 285) are indicative forms of a modernist sense of language that cannot hold, falls apart. Equally Woolf's use of dash (-) and three dots (...) indicates her modernist style of language in which she disrupts the 'imposing paragraphs' as well as the linear narrative form. As Woolf comments in *Three Guineas* (1938), such characteristics of language not only bring 'doubts and hesitations', but also subvert radically the narrative, tempting us to discover what is not told and written (TG, p. 237).

This subversive view of the text keeps us on the surface of meaning by suspending the full understanding of human identity as represented in *Night and*

Day. For example, when struck by Katharine's 'being...silent' and her frequent occupation 'with her own thoughts', Mary tries to find a word to classify Katharine (p. 46):

> Mary felt herself baffled, put back again into the position in which she had been at the beginning of their talk. It seemed to her that Katherine possessed a curious power of drawing near and receding, which sent alternate emotions through her far more quickly than was usual, and kept her in a condition of curious alertness. Desiring to classify her, Mary bethought her of the convenient term "egoist".
>
> "She's an egoist," she said to herself, and stored that word up to give to Ralph one day when, as it would certainly fall out, they were discussing Miss Hilbery (p. 47).

Mary first classifies Katharine as 'personality' (p. 39), and then as 'egoist', but this sudden shift of her view about Katharine does not satisfy us as readers. Within its immediate context of our knowledge about Katharine early in the novel, the word 'egoist' appears inadequate to describe her, telling us very little about her, yet it emphasizes a need of Mary's to soothe her discomfort caused by Katharine's behaviour. Later in the novel, Ralph accuses Mary of judging people: 'I doubt that one human being ever understands another...Such damned liars as we all are, how can we? But we can try...you can't judge people by what they do. You can't go through life measuring right and wrong with a foot-rule' (p. 213).

Not only has Mary been struck by the elusiveness of Katharine, but Rodney and Henry have also found it difficult to describe Katharine. During their talk, Henry confesses that he finds her different from most women, always drifting 'away from him for ever upon unknown seas' (p. 166). Rodney agrees with this view of her in that he himself is unable to describe Katharine, 'quite...she is', but unfortunately Henry is also unable to help him after summing up his thoughts about Katharine: '"I don't know", Henry hesitated cautiously..."Katharine hasn't found herself yet. Life isn't altogether real to her yet--I sometimes think--"' (pp. 171, 172). Finally, having collected all his impressions about her, Rodney thinks that

Katharine is a 'figure, the mistress of her little section of the world...she was the person of all others who seemed to him the arbitress of life' and thus 'to ask her...for certainty seemed like asking that damp prospect for fierce blades of fire, or the faded sky for the intense blue vault of June' (pp. 201-02). Here Woolf shows the crucial difference between a classic realist text and modernist one in the sense that the modernist text refuses final judgment and closure, insisting instead upon the always suspended, the unknowable, inexplicable so that 'any intercourse between people is extremely partial; from the whole mass of...feelings, only one or two could be selected' (p. 166):

> For the more [Katharine] looked into the confusion of lives which, instead of running parallel, had suddenly intersected each other, the more distinctly she seemed to convince herself that there was no other light on them than was shed by this strange illumination, and no other path save the one upon which it threw its beams (p. 266).

That Katharine is like a shadow, 'an illusion.....never to be certain...changing from one state to the other' suggests her intense and diverse life (p. 412). In its contradictions, ambivalence and visionary qualities, *Night and Day* embodies the idea that life is fictitious, 'the process of discovery - the everlasting and perpetual discovery, not the discovery itself at all' (p. 106). As Woolf shows us, 'life went on and on - life was different altogether from what people said' (p. 288). *Night and Day* suggests the great difficulty in discovering and expressing life, but Katharine and Ralph, like Shelley[17], are always searching for it with great energy and passion through their vision:

> She felt him trying to piece together in a laborious and elementary fashion fragments of belief, unsoldered and separate, lacking the unity of phrases fashioned by the old believers. Together they groped in this difficult region, where the unfinished, the unfulfilled, the unwritten, the unreturned, came together in their ghostly way and wore the semblance of the complete and the satisfactory. The future emerged more splendid than ever from this construction of the present (pp. 431-2).

In *Night and Day*, Woolf fuses a richly complex modernist view of life to

Romantic visionary qualities, using Shelleyan images of stars and dreams. In so doing, she rejects the heaviness of patriarchal language, viewing truth as a 'little dot with the flames round it' (p. 419). Woolf suggests at the end of the novel that it is hard to retain the truth; it appears only in 'moments, fragments, a second of vision, and then the flying waters, the winds dissipating and dissolving [it]' (p. 432). Katharine exclaims 'Reality - reality...I cease to be real to you [Ralph]. It is the faces in a storm again - the vision in a hurricane. We come together for moment and we part' (p. 402). Therefore, the only way to maintain the moment of vision in a world full of fragments and chaos is to cherish the image of our ideals enthusiastically for ever. *Night and Day* as a forerunner of *A Room of One's Own* might be placed somewhere between traditionalism and modernism, and it could be perceived as central to the whole projection of Woolf's later work as a woman writer.

Notes

1. In his biography of Virginia Woolf, for example, Quentin Bell defines *Night and Day* as 'a deliberate evocation of the past...a very orthodox performance' (*Virginia Woolf: A Biography*, vol. 2, London: The Hogarth Press, 1973), p. 69. Moreover, as recently as 1987, Andrew McNeillie calls the novel 'very traditional' in his 'Introduction' to *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Andrew McNeillie, vol. 2 (London: The Hogarth Press, 1987), p. xiii.

2. E. M. Forster, 'Virginia Woolf', in *Virginia Woolf: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Claire Sprague (Englewood, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971), p. 16.

3. Katherine Mansfield, 'A Ship Comes into the Harbour', in *Novels and Novelists*, ed. by John Middleton Murry (London: Constable, 1930), p. 111. Similarly, in a letter to John Middleton Murry on 10 November 1919, again Mansfield attacks *Night and Day*. For her, it is 'a lie in the soul', because *Night and Day* lacks 'new expressions, new moulds for our new thoughts and feelings' (*Katherine Mansfield's Letters to John Middleton Murry 1913-1922*, ed. by John Middleton Murry,

London: Constable, 1951), pp. 380-81.

4. Virginia Woolf, *Night and Day*, ed. by Julia Briggs (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), p. 7. Further references to this edition will appear in the text.

5. See, for example, Woolf's essay 'Women and Fiction' (1929), CE, II, pp. 141-48.

6. Lucio P. Ruotolo, *The Interrupted Moment: A View of Virginia Woolf's Novels* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), p. 16.

7. *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed by Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977), p. 486.

8. Similarly, in a letter to Vanessa Bell on 26 April 1927, Woolf writes that her 'only wish [is] to be allowed to stay [at home] for ever and ever - never to see a soul, but to buy a little paper and write a book, as Shelley did' (L, III, p. 367).

9. Alice van Buren Kelley, *The Novels of Virginia Woolf: Fact and Vision* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), p. 43.

10. *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, p. 478.

11. *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, p. 487.

12. *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, pp. 505-06.

13. Carlos Baker, *Shelley's Major Poetry: The Fabric of a Vision* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1948), p. 196.

14. For a similar view, see also D, III, p. 208, 28 Nov. 1928.

15. For more details, see Woolf's essays 'Women and Fiction' (1929) and particularly 'Professions for Women' (1931), CE, II, pp. 141-8 and 284-9.

16. Woolf does not accept any pressure on the human personality. Freedom is what she favours very much. In *A Room of One's Own*, she advises women writers: 'So long as you write what you wish to write, that is all that matters...But to sacrifice a hair of the head of your vision, a shade of its colour, in deference to some Headmaster with a silver pot in his hand or to some professor with a measuring-rod up his sleeve, is the most abject treachery...' (ROOM, p. 139)

17. Shelley continually attempts to find 'exquisite beauty' in his vision as he mentions in *Adonais*: 'Die, / If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek' (II, 464-5).

CHAPTER IV

The Delicate Transaction Between a Poet and the Spirit of the Age in *Orlando* (1928)

> It sprung upon me how I could revolutionise biography in a night (L, III, pp. 428-9, 9 Oct. 1927).
>
> I am not convinced that women need a specifically female language to describe female experience...A good writer's imagination should be bisexual or trans-sexual.[1]

Conventional biography is the definitive realist form for writing about identity. Hence Woolf's concern with character would not be complete without taking into account her fascination with the genre as part of her life-long questioning of human nature and the relation of the 'self' to larger reality.[2] Woolf herself enjoyed reading biography: 'the fascination of reading biographies is irresistible' ('I am Christina Rossetti' (1930), CE, IV, p. 54). However, her reading does not remain a fascination only, but develops into a life-long 'habit of getting full of some biography, & wanting to build my imaginary figure of [a] person with every scrap of news I could find about him' (D, I, p. 180, 7 Aug. 1918). Despite this apparently mimetic aim, her attempt to construct an 'imaginary figure' aims to challenge the 'appalling narrative business of the realist' as it informs the notion of identity in traditional biography (D, III, p. 209, 28 Nov. 1928). Written for 'fun' as 'fantastic', 'witty', 'an escapade', 'a writer's holiday', 'joke' and 'half laughing, half serious: with great splashes of exaggeration'[3], therefore, *Orlando* is Woolf's paradoxical use of fake biographical form - the traditional form for substantiating a coherent self identity - to suggest a way of escaping the limitation of self.

With regard to Woolf's plan to 'revolutionise' traditional biographical form, this chapter will focus on three aspects of biography which Woolf aims to invent as new ways of writing about identity. First, she ridicules the assumption, developed by Victorian biographers, that the living, always-changing person is not a proper

subject for biography. She develops a new way of writing about identity during the actual life-time of a person, stretching the boundaries of human life beyond what is supposed to be the normal sixty or seventy years. Woolf thus challenges traditional biographical form, which devotes itself to the linear time of clock and calender:

> It cannot be denied that the most successful practitioners of the art of life...contrive to synchronize the sixty or seventy different times which beat simultaneously in every normal human system so that when eleven strikes, all the rest chime in unison...Of them we can justly say that they live precisely the sixty-eight or seventy-two years allotted them on the tombstone. Of the rest, some we know to be dead, though they walk among us; some are not yet born, though they go through the forms of life; others are hundreds of years old though they call themselves thirty-six. The true length of a person's life, whatever the *Dictionary of National Biography* may say, is always a matter of dispute.[4]

Orlando lives more than three centuries, first as a man and then as a woman, but he/she is still alive and thirty-six in the present time. By representing Orlando as a living not a dead subject for biography over three hundred years of text-time, Woolf suggests her modernist perception of identity as indeterminate, unfinished, always a process of change. Secondly, by questioning the actual period of a person's life, she satirizes the closure of traditional biographical form because of the fact that traditional biographer sets out to describe his subject as cohesively and totally knowable from birth to death. Finally, and in relation to this rejection of knowability, Woolf romanticizes biography by fusing the 'soul' or visionary quality of consciousness with facts in the novel; she wants biography to be a creative work of art as opposed to the objective documentation in traditional realist biography.

Behind Woolf's concern with revolutionizing biography lies her dissatisfaction with traditional biographical form. She finds it limited and 'obdurate' ('The New Biography' (1927), CE, IV, p. 229): the biographer loses sight of the very person who is obviously his subject and sets out to tell the reader that a life can be described and summed up by analyzing and interpreting documents, recollections

and letters. Thus, the traditional biographer uses facts and authentic statements to represent a knowable personality from birth to death in chronological order. But Woolf complains that such observable aspects of the subject - the facts about dress, appearance, background and material circumstances - draw attention to a purely material, artificial and static view of character, to the surface, not to consciousness, to the 'spirit', the 'soul' or the inner life itself. Woolf sees it as a mistake to place everything in objective description, so she attacks traditional biography in the same way that she criticised Edwardian fiction while reviewing a new life of Christina Rossetti:

> Here is the past and all its inhabitants miraculously sealed as in a magic tank; all we have to do is to look and to listen and to listen and to look and soon the little figures - for they are rather under life size - will begin to move and to speak, and as they move we shall arrange them in all sorts of patterns of which they were ignorant, for they thought when they were alive that they could go where they liked; and as they speak we shall read into their sayings all kinds of meanings which never struck them, for they believed when they were alive that they said straight off whatever came into their heads. But once you are in a biography all is different ('I am Christina Rossetti', CE, IV, p. 54).

Woolf's criticism of traditional biography derives from an awareness of the new demands and shifting nature of reality and of life which came to the fore in the early decades of the twentieth century. This shift of perceptions has been caused by the major changes and innovations as well as by the apparent chaos and uncertainties of contemporary history - the wide range of social alienation in the metropolitan cities, the spread of the Freudian psychoanalytic movement, the terrifying effects of World War I, the invention of mass communication and the rise of experimentation within various artistic forms. These factors have affected not only the subject and ideas of the art of writing, but also its form and style, so that modernist writers have felt the need to develop new ways of expressing the nature of modern experience. Rather than accepting the outmoded conventions of their predecessors, they have

changed the direction of artistic expression, turning their artistic attention, not to the objective and documentary description of reality and of life as in a realist novel, but to the 'within', to the consciousness of their characters, representing the subjectivity of the individual as the central perception in their works. As a result of this new aesthetic perception, the fixity of material reality has dissolved, and the humanist self as autonomous and authentic has disintegrated, so that the view of an indeterminate, unfinished, complex and elusive human identity has generally occupied modernist literature.[5] In her 27 February 1927 diary entry, Woolf asks if the description of self is possible:

> As for the soul: why did I say I would leave it out? I forget. And the truth is, one can't write directly about the soul. Look at [it], it vanishes: but look at the ceiling, at Grizzle [the dog], at the cheaper beasts in the Zoo which are exposed to walkers in Regents Park, & the soul slips in. It slipped in this afternoon. I will write that I said, staring at the bison: answering L[eonard] absentmindedly; but what was I going to write? (D, III, p. 62)

The quotation suggests that the objective description of the 'soul', which is explicitly linked to subjectivity, 'vanishes' when one comes to write about it. Woolf's use of the term 'soul' is of importance not only in this entry, but also throughout her writing for her modernist perception and representation of identity as complex and indeterminate. The 'soul', intangible and abstract, cannot be completely described, and throughout her life, Woolf, I believe, tries to explore its obscurity, its hidden motives, 'its oddities and its whims, its fancies and its sensibilities' ('Phases of Fiction' (1929), CE, II, p. 92).[6] She therefore rejects 'objective realism' and detaches her writing from the restraints and certainties of traditional conventions from her first novel to the last.

In her effort to unfold and express the 'soul' or the consciousness by experimenting with various artistic forms, Woolf's utmost aim, though difficult, is to find out the mystery of life, what personality really is and what life really means:

'Why is there not a discovery in life? Something one can lay hands on & say "This is it?"...I'm looking; but that's not it - thats [sic] not it. What is it? And shall I die before I find it?' (D, III, p. 62, 27 Feb. 1927). As the diary entry indicates, the answer to these questions is not readily available, so that the desire to construct a recognisable identity and the effort to do so are both futile. Equally she invokes the same difficulty for the biographer as for the novelist: 'I have never forgotten...my vision of a fin rising on a wide blank sea. No biographer could possibly guess this important fact about my life in the late summer of 1926: yet biographers pretend they know people' (D, III, p. 153, 4 Sep. 1927).

Thus, Woolf makes a strong case for releasing biography from the restriction of its 'obdurate' form and for the development of new methods as to the form and style of biography to reveal this changed perception of identity in biography. As she points out metaphorically, biography should synthesise the 'granite' and the 'rainbow' of personality ('The New Biography', CE, IV, p. 229). For her, this perception of life could be expressed if biography, with its form and style, was understood as a creative work of art not as documentary truth. This is the only possible way in which biography could represent the 'soul' or visionary quality of character, along with the objective facts, because the writer's relation to his/her subject would then alter: he/she is no longer 'the serious and sympathetic companion, toiling even slavishly in the footsteps of his hero' (CE, IV, p. 231), but free to make his/her own independent judgment without following any fixed scheme of the world, no standard of morality to which he/she must confirm. As a result, the biographer is not a judge and 'chronicler' any more, but 'an artist', who selects and synthesizes the truth according to his/her own artistic vision (CE, IV, p. 231). Within this artistic perception, the writer invents the subject through his/her imaginative creativity, not through facts and documentation, and then the accuracy

lies only in the truth of his/her own artistic vision. Only by rejecting its traditional form, therefore, will biography be able to encompass constant changes in the perception of self, because 'a self that goes on changing is a self that goes on living', and thus as long as change goes on in lives, the writing about life cannot be completed ('The Humane Art' (1940), CE, I, p. 104). Moreover, 'habits gradually change the face of one's life as time changes one's physical face; & one does not know it' (D, III, p. 220, 13 April 1929). Furthermore, opinions are also changing continuously about what can be said about human character, so that the biographer must be a pioneer, going 'ahead of the rest of us, like the miner's canary, testing the atmosphere, detecting falsity, unreality, and the presence of obsolete conventions' ('The Art of Biography', CE, IV, p. 226). Woolf's views about these constant changes to the perception of self can be linked to the living subject in process, like Orlando's life over three centuries, as opposed to the dead subject of former biographies.

Woolf therefore abandons objective realism to represent her modernist perception of identity, concentrating on the subjective quality of self. However, she also believes that modernist representation of identity by some of her fellow writers is trapped wholly in subjectivity as opposed to being trapped in the factual closure of earlier biography. She came to believe that too much close attention to personality will narrow and restrict the artist's mind. In 'The Narrow Bridge of Art' (1927), therefore, Woolf accuses the psychological novelists of being 'too prone to limit psychology to the psychology of personal intercourse...' (CE, II, p. 225) She links this limitation to the male sex-consciousness of the age, which makes male writers feel 'an extraordinary desire for self-assertion' with 'an emphasis upon their own sex' (ROO, pp. 129-32). For example, Woolf discerns this failure in Joyce. She praises him for what she calls his attempts to come 'close to the quick of the

mind' and 'to reveal the flickerings of that innermost flame which flashes its messages through the brain' ('Modern Fiction' (1919), CR, I, pp. 190-1), but she also believes that his success in *Ulysses* (1922) lacks originality due to the fact that he is unable to go beyond the limitation of self. For Woolf, 'being' in *Ulysses* is like living 'in a bright yet narrow room, confined and shut in, rather than enlarged and set free', so that Joyce's fragmentary novel compels us to be 'centred in a self which, in spite of its tremor of susceptibility, never embraces or creates what is outside itself and beyond' (CR, I, p. 191). Thus this limitation in Joyce as a writer thwarts his creative power and capacity for expansiveness beyond self. In Woolf's aesthetic view, however, freedom from individual subjectivity is necessary for the artist to encompass what is outside and beyond self in writing, enlarging his/her horizon with a sense of infinite possibilities. Towards the end of 'Modern Fiction', she celebrates Chekhov's style in his story *Gusev*, in which she argues, he renders external things with a vision that allows the self and things to interact mutually and fuse together to create 'something new' (CR, I, p. 193). Behind her celebration of Chekhov's art lies her interest in other relations to the world beyond the confinement of self, since 'a large and important part of life', Woolf believes, 'consists in our emotions towards such things as roses and nightingales, the dawn, the sunset, life, death, and fate' ('The Narrow Bridge of Art', CE, II, p. 225). A novel, like poetry, would provide 'the outline rather than the detail', standing 'further back from life' to achieve a symbolic distance of anonymity, so that it would 'give the relation of the mind to general ideas and its soliloquy in solitude' (CE, II, pp. 224-5). Woolf's aesthetic views suggest a dehumanization of art, a constant elimination of the personal element, which is a predominant theme of Romanticism.

Woolf's 'solution' to the narrowness of both these forms - biographical realism and modernism - which each in their own way convey a limited sense of

identity cut off from circumambient reality, are the two concepts of anonymity/obscurity and androgyny, and both of these concepts derived from Woolf's development of Romanticism.

Romantic elements in *Orlando*, however, have received little critical attention. First of all, Woolf's own statement that *Orlando* will be 'an escapade' from her previous poetic experimental books might have discouraged critics (D, III, p. 131, 14 March 1927). Those critics who have explored the Romantic elements in Woolf's novels have overlooked *Orlando*.[7] Other critics have just mentioned her use of allusions in the novel. Beverly Ann Schlack, for example, describes it as a 'work brimming with allusions', but 'the Romantic poets suffer the fate of neglect'.[8] For her, Woolf's omission of the Romantics in *Orlando* derives from her dislike of the Victorian age, so that 'Woolf has thrown [out] the baby of Romanticism with the murky bathwater of Victorianism'.[9] James McGavran, however, argues that Woolf's dislike of the Victorian age has nothing to do with the omission of the Romantics in *Orlando*, yet 'her failure to include the Romantic era as part of the nineteenth century may result from an unwillingness, or even an inability, to subject Wordsworth and his contemporaries and immediate followers to such summary recapitulation'.[10]

It is true that Woolf discredits the Victorian age in her novels. In *Orlando* she describes it through the symbol of the 'great cloud', hanging 'over the whole of the British Isles' with its heaviness and oppression, but she does not treat all the Victorian writers in the same way (p. 217). For example, Woolf praises Thomas Carlyle, Christina Rossetti and Alexander Smith among the Victorians (pp. 265, 277); she also refers to Romantic writers like Wordsworth and Shelley by name (pp. 253, 249) and alludes to particular works such as Shelley's *The Triumph of Life* (1824): 'Life, life, what art thou?' (p. 257)[11] Thus Schlack and McGavran are not

completely correct in their argument that Woolf omits the Romantics, particularly Shelley, who, as we will see below, plays a significant role in Woolf's representation of Orlando as poet and romantic in *Orlando*.

Woolf's representation of Orlando not only as poet and romantic, but also first as a man and then as a woman, traces the shifting progress and changes parallel to the development of his/her poem *The Oak Tree* over three centuries. *The Oak Tree* becomes a complementary symbol to the overall meaning of the novel by characterizing and describing each historical period; it also suggests a sense of continuous thread of identity for Orlando throughout his/her long life. In each period, every change shows itself at once both in Orlando's personality and the relationship between him/her and his/her poem which becomes 'amorous and florid' in the Elizabethan age, 'gloomy' in the Jacobean period and 'sprightly and satirical' during the eighteenth century. Sometimes Orlando changes the form of the poem in that 'sometimes she had tried prose and sometimes she had tried drama' (p. 226). But despite all these changes throughout the long period of history, Orlando always remains the poet and *The Oak Tree* the same single work of art as a symbol of literary continuity: 'Yet through all these changes she had remained, she reflected, fundamentally the same. She had the same brooding meditative temper, the same love of animals and nature, the same passion for the country and the seasons' (p. 226). The continuity of literary tradition, as Woolf repeatedly argues and alludes to it in her fiction and critical writings, suggests a wider literary and historical perspective in her artistic view, a perspective which she traces back to the poets of the past and finds their 'voice' and 'figure' behind her as 'an immeasurable avenue, that ran to a point of other voices, figures, fountains which tapered out indisguishably upon the furthest horizon' ('Reading' (1925), CE, II, p. 13).[12] For Orlando, as for Shelley in *Adonais* (1821), the works of the past poets are:

> Like an incarnation rising from all parts of the room, from the night wind and the moonlight, rolled the divine melody of those words which, lest they should outstare this page, we will leave where they lie entombed, not dead, embalmed rather, so fresh is their colour, so sound their breathing (p. 78).

In 'A Letter to a Young Poet' (1932), Woolf describes the new poet as one 'in whom live all the poets of the past, from whom all poets in time to come will spring...an immensely ancient, complex and continuous character' (CE, II, p. 184). It is important to understand this continuously developing poem *The Oak Tree*, always in process like Orlando's life over three centuries, as not only encompassing a wide perception of the whole literary tradition, but as also suggesting that the artist as part of that continuity merges with it into a form of anonymity which allows for escape from the constriction of the personal self.

In this regard, Woolf's concept of anonymity illuminates a kind of detached and impersonal aesthetic theory which she uses as a poetic strategy in her writing, evading both factual being as well as the 'sex-consciousness' which she sees in her male contemporaries. For her, this male 'sex-consciousness' leads male writers toward a limitation of self-assertion as opposed to anonymity. In *Orlando*, Woolf first represents Orlando with a tendency toward such a male sex-consciousness early in his life. The novel opens sometime in the second half of the sixteenth century, and Orlando gradually steals 'away from his mother and the peacocks in the garden' and goes to his attic room, where he practices to be a man like his father by comically 'slicing at the head of a Moor', because he is too young to ride and fight like his ancestors outside England (p. 13). Woolf also represents Orlando as desiring and seeking a sexual partner of the opposite sex, since a woman of his own is necessary to assert his masculine identity. During the carnival to celebrate the coronation of the new king, for example, he, having divested himself of 'his boyish clumsiness' and filled himself with 'manly courtesy' (p. 40), falls in love with the

Russian princess, Sasha. Yet soon it becomes obvious that Orlando finds himself at odds with these masculine plots of adventure and love-making. Although he 'listen[s] to sailors' stories of hardship and horror and cruelty on the Spanish main' as well as to 'their songs of the Azores' (p. 28), Orlando becomes 'tired, not only of the discomfort of this way of life...but of the primitive manner of the people' (pp. 29-30). 'Killing', 'love-making', 'hunting and riding' seem to him futile, inadequate and limited, and what remains left from his ancestors, he thinks, is 'A skull; a finger' with 'dust and ashes' (pp. 78-9). Then the narrator sums up Orlando's weariness with the plot available to male and female:

> But when he had heard a score of times how Jakes had lost his nose and Sukey her honour - and they told the stories admirably, it must be admitted - he began to be a little weary of the repetition, for a nose can only be cut off in one way and maidenhood lost in another- or so it seemed to him (p. 30).

Unlike most of his peers, therefore, Orlando rejects love and war for poetry as he, comparing the achievement of his ancestors, finds 'a glory about a man who had written a book and had it printed, which outshone all the glories of blood and state' (pp. 79-80). From the outset of *Orlando*, in fact, Woolf endows Orlando with a passion to be a poet: 'How she had loved sound when she was a boy, and thought the volley of tumultuous syllables from the lips the finest of all poetry' (p. 168). Moreover, when the Elizabethan age despises the poet as 'shabby', 'sitting at the servant's dinner table' with a pen in his hand, he reveres him: 'Was this a poet? Was he writing poetry? "Tell me", he wanted to say, every thing in the world - for he had the wildest, most absurd, extravagant ideas about poets and poetry...' (p. 21). Orlando's 'boyish dream' to be a poet, which suffers difficult progress during changing historical periods, comes true when she completes her poem *The Oak Tree* at the end of the novel (p. 93).

The oak tree is not only a name for Orlando's poem, but it also becomes a

symbol of English national and literary identity through the long period of history. In addition, it is an object at the top of a hill, suggesting explicitly the presence of the world of nature in *Orlando*. Nature, in fact, becomes an ultimate source for Orlando's poetic aspiration, evoking a sense of the Wordsworthian 'love of nature...inborn in her' (p. 93). Having been abandoned by Sasha and disappointed by the poet Nick Greene's visit, so that 'love and ambition, women and poets were all equally vain', Orlando thinks that 'two things alone remained to him in which he now put any trust: dogs and nature; an elkhound and a rose bush' (p. 93). Despite the comic irony of tone, this trust recalls Wordsworth's belief 'that Nature never did betray / The heart that loved her' (*Tintern Abbey* (1798), 122-23). Together with the Gypsies on the mountain-top in Turkey after her sex change, therefore, it is not the gypsies but Orlando who, with her 'love of nature' or with her 'English disease', observes the landscape imaginatively (137):

> She likened the hills to ramparts...She compared the flowers to enamel and the turf to Turkey rugs worn thin. Trees were withered hags, and sheep were grey boulders. Everything, in fact, was something else. She found the tarn on the mountain-top and almost threw herself in to seek the wisdom she thought lay hid there...and...across the sea of Marmara, the plains of Greece...her soul expanded with her eyeballs, and she prayed that she might share the majesty of the hills, know the serenity of the plains...Then, looking down, the red hyacinth, the purple iris wrought her to cry out in ecstasy at the goodness, the beauty of nature; raising her eyes again, she beheld the eagle soaring, and imagined its raptures and made them her own. Returning home, she saluted each star, each peak, and each watch-fire as if they signalled to her alone (p. 138).

The quotation suggests the interaction between natural objects and imaginative vision; that is, internal and external inspire each other, stand for each other in a way that makes it difficult to speak of subject and object as divided opposites. This fusion between the living person and the natural object suggests two aspects of Orlando's identity as poet and Romantic. First, Woolf represents Orlando's self as expanded, and this expansion of visionary self, I think, could be linked to Woolf's

concept of anonymity, which liberates Orlando from the restriction of self-absorption, from the burden of personality. It is a Romantic perception of self, which modernist poetry, Woolf complains, lacks. In 'A Letter to a Young Poet', therefore, she scolds the modernist poet for his failure to describe the self as Romantic writers did in the universal sense. It is Woolf's use of anonymity which enables her to endow Orlando with such a poetic and romantic escape from the constriction of self, embracing the objective world of nature outside and beyond self. In this self-freedom, Woolf represents Orlando in a relation to nature which has no impediment, which allows him/herself to identify imaginatively with the rapture of the eagle soaring. Here and elsewhere, Woolf shows us as readers that although much modernist fiction and poetry lacks the poetic and romantic vision that frees the individual for creative power in its universal dimensions, anonymity provides a way of evading this limitation of self.

The second quality the quotation from Orlando in Turkey suggests is that Orlando as poet sees ordinary objects not in the actual sense but in a new way, associated with other ideas as 'something else' in her vision. It is the creative imagination that enables Orlando to conceive a vision of a reality behind appearances. When the boundary between the objective and subjective worlds shatters in a moment of perception, 'nothing is any longer one thing' (p. 290), yet the thing he/she looks at becomes another thing, which is more important than the thing itself. Later in the novel, for example, Orlando undergoes a similar visionary experience when she envisions 'a toy boat on the Serpentine' as the ship of her husband Shelmerdine off Cape Horn (p. 273). The perception of the ship at such a distance suggests a kind of triumphant and independent visionary identity for Orlando:

> 'Ecstasy! she cried. 'Ecstasy!'...And repeating 'A toy boat on the

> Serpentine'...'A toy boat, a toy boat, a toy boat,' she repeated, thus enforcing upon herself the fact that it is not articles by Nick Greene on John Donne or eight-hour bills nor covenants nor factory acts that matter; it's something useless, sudden, violent; something that costs a life; red, blue, purple; a spirit; a splash; like those hyacinths...free from taint, dependence, soilure of humanity or care for one's kind; something rash, ridiculous...a toy boat on the Serpentine - it's ecstasy that matters (p. 274).

Clearly the quotation recalls 'the pure ecstasy' of Woolf's childhood memories awakened by the visual description of the external scene at St Ives: 'I was looking at the flower bed by the front door; 'That is the whole', I said. I was looking at a plant with a spread of leaves; and it seemed suddenly plain that the flower itself was a part of the earth...and that was the real flower; part earth; part flower'. What Woolf means by 'That is the whole' is 'a discovery' of the wholeness of vision (MB, pp. 64-79). For Orlando, 'a toy boat on the Serpentine' becomes a means not only for visionary freedom, but also for capturing a vision of her husband's ship at Cape Horn although she does not know anything about it. This interaction between Orlando as a living person and the objective world of nature suggests an affinity between Woolf and Wordsworth in that they are both imaginatively energised by the sight of natural things. In her diary, Woolf describes how 'the look of things has a great power over [her]', going deeply 'to some nervous fibre or fan like membrane in [her] spine' (D, III, p. 191, 12 Aug. 1928), and similarly, Wordsworth also 'felt [this power] in the blood, and felt along the heart / And passing even into my purer mind' (*Tintern Abbey*, 28-9).

In Orlando's search of his/her own sense of identity as well as for the nature of reality 'whether it was in things themselves, or only in herself' (p. 139), the oak tree as a natural object, like one of Wordsworth's 'objects that endure' (*The Prelude* (1850), XIII, 32), becomes the symbol of Orlando's continuing identity, keeping its presence in the novel over three centuries: 'The tree had grown bigger, sturdier, and more knotted since she had known it, somewhere about the year 1588, but...still in

the prime of life' (p. 309). Orlando's attachment to the oak tree at the beginning and again at the end of the novel indicates his/her continuing identification with it:

> He...flung himself...on the earth at the root of the oak tree. He loved...to feel the earth's spine beneath him; for such he took the hard root of the oak tree to be; or...it was the back of a great horse that he was riding...it was anything indeed, so long as it was hard, for he felt the need of something which he could attach his floating heart to...To the oak tree he tied it and as he lay there...as if all the fertility and amorous activity of a summer's evening were woven web-like about his body (pp. 18-9).

> Flinging herself on the ground, she felt the bones of the tree running out like ribs from a spine this way and that beneath her. She liked to think that she was riding the back of the world. She liked to attach herself to something hard (p. 309).

What is suggested here is the relationship between the working of Orlando's mind and the natural object, so that Orlando's floating sense of identity fuses with it. Like Katharine in *Night and Day* (1919), Orlando seeks something permanent, to which he/she could attach his/her floating vision. It is the oak tree with its strength and immobility that gives Orlando a sense of stability in his/her continuing identification with it. That Woolf represents Orlando as identified with the natural object recalls what Wordsworth writes about the relationship between man and nature in his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). He considers 'man and nature as essentially adapted to each other, and the mind of man as naturally the mirror of the fairest and most interesting properties of nature'.[13] Moreover, in his Prospectus to the edition of 1814 of *The Excursion*, he also writes:

> How exquisitely the individual mind
> ...to the external world
> Is fitted: - and how exquisitely, too -...
> The external world is fitted to the mind;
> And the creation...which they with blended might
> Accomplish (63-71).

In my view, this fusion of objective and subjective worlds suggests that nature and art, rather than separating from, complete each other in the aesthetic theory of both Woolf and Wordsworth. As Wordsworth writes in *The Prelude*,

nature inspires art, and art humanises nature:

> From nature and her overflowing soul
> I had received so much, that all my thoughts
> Were steeped in feeling...
> Ye mountains! thine, O nature! Thou hast fed
> My lofty speculations (II, 397-448).

Similarly, for Woolf, as for Wordsworth, the essence of poetry lies in its 'secret transaction, a voice answering a voice' as a private communication between the poet and nature:

> What could have been more secret, she [Orlando] thought, more slow, and like the intercourse of lovers, than the stammering answer she had made all these years to the old crooning song of the woods, and the farms and the brown horses standing at the gate, neck to neck, and the smithy and the kitchen and the fields, so laboriously bearing wheat, turnips, grass, and the garden blowing irises and fritillaries? (p. 310)

As these quotations indicate, Woolf's view of nature is clearly linked to a Romantic perspective, in which she, like the Romantics, combines the objective world of things with the subjective world of mind. As to 'the relations of man to nature' ('The Narrow Bridge of Art', CE, II, p. 226), therefore, Woolf shows us that art must not be limited to the psychology of self as with Joyce. Moreover, Woolf's view of poetry as 'secret transaction, a voice answering a voice' also suggest an affinity between Woolf and Wordsworth and Shelley. Wordsworth writes in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* that the poet 'is a man speaking to men'[14]; Shelley concludes *A Defence of Poetry* (1840) with the view that 'poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world'.[15]

Woolf represents Orlando as further expanded beyond self-assertion when his poetic imagination grows, identifying him firmly with anonymity or obscurity, a condition which is practised by the great poets. Orlando has been deceived by Sasha, and his poetry has been mocked by the poet Nick Greene, both of which lead him to retreat to solitude and isolation. However, this 'soliloquy in solitude' brings

about a positive development of insight into poetic and romantic impersonality or anonymity symbolically expressed as 'brushing' his anger and confusion 'with a dark wing which rubs their harshness off and gilds them, even the ugliest and basest, with lustre, an incandescence' (p. 65). This detachment leads him out of his disturbance and anger, and he conceptualizes this newly discovered condition as 'obscurity':

> The pith of his phrases was that while fame impedes and constricts, obscurity wraps about a man like a mist; obscurity is dark, ample and free; obscurity lets the mind take its way unimpeded. Over the obscure man is poured the merciful suffusion of darkness. None knows where he goes or comes. He may seek the truth and speak it; he alone is free; he alone is truthful; he alone is at peace...the value of obscurity, and the delight of having no name, but being like a wave which returns to the deep body of the sea...obscurity rids the mind of the irk of envy and spite...it sets running in the veins the free waters of generosity and magnanimity; and allows giving and taking without thanks offered or praise given; which must have been the way of all great poets...for, he thought, Shakespeare must have written like that, and the church builders built like that, anonymously, needing no thanking or naming...(pp. 100-01)

The quotation, with its rhythm and tone, 'like a wave which returns to the deep body of the sea', suggests Woolf's modernist perception of identity as flux, vague and indeterminate, rejecting the fixity of identity as in Edwardian fiction; it is the way she conveys the nature and quality of modern experience in her fiction represented by most of her characters. Like Orlando's 'merciful suffusion of darkness', Mrs Ramsay also experiences such timeless solitude at the dinner party toward the end of the first part of *To the Lighthouse* (1927), in which she abstains not only from the entanglements of the actual world, but escapes from the burden of personality:

> To be silent; to be alone. All the being and the doing, expansive, glittering, vocal, evaporated; and one shrunk, with a sense of solemnity, to being oneself, *a wedge-shaped core of darkness*...When life sank down for a moment, *the range of experience seemed limitless...This core of darkness could go anywhere, for no one saw it...Losing personality*, one lost the fret, the hurry, the stir; and there rose to her lips always some explanation of triumph over life when things came together in this peace, this rest, this eternity...(FGN, p. 313, emphasis added)

In Mrs Ramsay's experience, Woolf implies that when life sinks down in this manner, the range of *obscure* experience is limitless, because the mind is allowed to wander in freedom when one abandons the effort to assert one's own self; it is 'obscurity' or 'anonymity' that gives both Orlando and Mrs Ramsay this freedom in their vision.

Woolf's concept of 'obscurity' or 'anonymity' has two implications as to the relation between a writer and writing. First, anonymity suggests a self that exists below the social surface. In her diary, Woolf describes herself, 'down there I can't write or read; I exist however. I am. Then I ask myself what I am? (D, III, p. 112, 28 Sep. 1926) It is as if identity itself became 'the thing that exists when we aren't there' (D, III, p. 114, 30 Oct. 1926). Throughout *Orlando*, Woolf also alludes constantly to the unconscious realm of self, 'a pool where things dwell in darkness so deep that what they are we scarcely know' (p. 308). In both diary entries and *Orlando*, she suggests a desire for anonymity, which enables one to escape from self when one forgets one's own 'sharp absurd little personality, reputation & the rest of it, one should read; see outsiders; think more; write more logically; above all be full of work; & practice anonymity' (D, III, pp. 168-9, 22 Dec. 1927). Thus, the writer as anonymous or obscure becomes more creative and productive outside and beyond him/herself. Similarly, Orlando as obscure refuses 'fame' and 'name', since he/she wants to create and write his/her poem in the way of all great poets like Shakespeare. Woolf, I think, represents Orlando as desiring to link herself to all the great poets of the past, merging into the impersonal continuity of literary tradition. This representation of Orlando as anonymous offers a pattern for modernist writers, enabling them not to bind themselves to any limiting aspect of personality, reputation, glory, sex-consciousness and self-assertion. In this expansiveness, therefore, they will 'take a wider, a less personal view of modern literature, and

look indeed upon...[individual recognition] as if they were engaged upon some vast building, which being built by common effort, the separate workmen may well remain anonymous' ('How It Strikes A Contemporary' (1923), CE, II, p. 161). Woolf shows us as readers that it is such collective anonymous enterprise that will keep the continuity of literary tradition alive.

In my view, however, Woolf's concept of anonymity suggests more than a passive retreat to the inner life and can be linked to her concept of androgyny in *Orlando*. Like anonymity, androgyny serves sexual ambiguity, sexual transgression or bisexuality as opposed to self-consciousness, self-assertion or heterosexuality. Thus androgyny, with its constant ambiguity and vacillation from one sex to the other, undermines the stereotypes of politically and culturally constructed gender identity.

Woolf's concept of androgyny has caused both celebration and indignation among her critics. Those who have celebrated it view it as a rejection of the biological basis of gender, seeing identity rather as constructed in and by language. They argue that androgyny deconstructs the internalised opposites of male and female in patriarchal politics and culture by oscillating constantly from one sex to the other. It is thus a challenge to the authority of the patriarchal establishment, suggesting that there is no essential and fixed gender identity as male and female, but that any identity can be changed and abandoned.[16] Other critics have read Woolf's concept of androgyny in a negative way, arguing that she is too diffident to confront the difficulties caused by patriarchal politics and culture, and thus she escapes the problem of female identity through the fantasy of androgyny. According to Elaine Showalter in *A Literature of Their Own* (1977), for example, Woolf's concept of androgyny, which is a 'full balance and command of an emotional range that includes male and female elements', is a 'myth that helped her evade

confrontation with her own painful femaleness and enabled her to choke and repress her anger and ambition'.[17] In Showalter's view, Woolf's weakness is that 'even in the moment of expressing feminist conflict, Woolf wanted to transcend it. Her wish for experience was really a wish to forget experience' through a 'serene androgyny'.[18] In her introduction to *Sexual/Textual Politics* (1985), however, Toril Moi accuses critics, like Showalter, of failing to 'produce a positive political and literary assessment of Woolf's writing'.[19] In her view, Showalter wants a literary text to give the reader a sense of certainty, but Moi argues that Woolf practices a 'deconstructive' style of writing which exposes 'the way in which language refuses to be pinned down to an underlying essential meaning'.[20] Thus Moi locates Woolf's concept of androgyny within the context of the deconstructive position in which Woolf shatters 'definitions of sexual identity to which society would have her conform'.[21]

Although neither Showalter nor Moi are totally inaccurate in their views, I would read Woolf's concept of androgyny in a more paradoxical way. I consider what Showalter terms Woolf's 'escapism' into androgyny not as a repression of her femaleness and anger, but as an artistic, poetic and romantic aspiration shared by Romantic writers like Coleridge and Shelley. Showalter wants Woolf to assert her femaleness and anger against the other sex, yet Woolf, as we have seen above, tries to avoid sex-consciousness as a woman writer, which, she claims, leads to self-assertion and thus to the limitation of self as with male writers. By using her concepts of anonymity and androgyny, therefore, she aims to produce an art that transcends the fixity of personality, and achieves the universality of Shakespeare and of Shelley. In its Romantic context, I believe that Woolf conceives androgyny as a fruitful amalgamation of contraries through the poetic imagination in the Shelleyan sense. As Shelley writes in *A Defence of Poetry*, poetry 'marries exultation and

horror, grief and pleasure, eternity and change; it subdues to union under its light yoke, all irreconcilable things. It transmutes all that it touches...'[22] Woolf, who knew much about Shelley's life and works, might well have been influenced in her aesthetic ideas by his view of the marriage of opposites. Like Shelley, she is haunted by such opposing forces in her own life as well as in her art, and thus she wants them to be reconciled and fused in fiction.[23]

Woolf's concept of androgyny in *Orlando* suggests the Shelleyan visionary marriage or synthesis of opposites, which she describes to G. L. Dickinson as 'the double soul' (L, 4, p. 106, 6 Nov. 1929).[24] She first takes the idea of androgyny from Coleridge: 'a great mind must be androgynous', and she considers him as androgynous 'even more than Shelley...a beautiful and ineffectual angel - a spirit imprisoned behind bars invisible and intangible to the tame hordes of humanity, a spirit always beckoned by something from without' ('Coleridge as Critic (1918), BP, p. 32). Woolf develops androgyny further in *A Room of One's Own* (1929). She comes to realize that her age is full of the 'stridently sex-conscious', which she sees especially in her male contemporaries (ROO, 129). This sex-consciousness, Woolf argues, prevents the freedom of mind of male writers; when men write 'only with the male side of their brains', their minds separated 'into different chambers; not a sound carried from one to the other', and their 'feelings [are] no longer communicated', so that they are incapacitated in their attempts to penetrate to the world beyond the intruding 'I' of sex-celebrity (ROO, p. 132). For example, 'neither Mr Galsworthy nor Mr Kippling', Woolf argues, 'has a spark of the woman in him', but Proust has 'a little too much of a woman' (ROO, pp. 133, 135). Instead, Woolf proposes a model of human consciousness, which fuses emotionally and psychologically the impulses of both 'man-womanly' and 'woman-manly' qualities of personality within a single self (ROO, p. 136).

Yet this raises a problem as to the nature of the fusion of male and female opposites within androgynous identity. It might seem to imply a form of unity which evades sexual difference completely. But as Woolf herself points out, sexual difference is not eliminated: in each person 'two powers preside, one male, one female'; in man's brain, the man predominates over the woman, and in woman's brain, the woman predominates over the man' (ROO, p. 128). What Woolf suggests in androgyny, I think, is that the artist brings together masculine and female elements into a fruitful collaboration and establishes a natural sympathetic communication between the sexes with a kind of romantic expansiveness beyond the limitation of self as opposed to the constrains of sex-consciousness. As a result, the artist has no 'special sympathy' with either of the sexes and thus 'is less apt to make [sex] distinctions than the single-sexed mind' (ROO, p. 128). In this fruitful collaboration and sympathetic relation, the artist produces an art that is 'resonant and porous' due to the fact that an 'androgynous mind' becomes 'naturally creative, incandescent and undivided' and thus conveys feeling without impediment (ROO, 128). For real creativity, therefore, Woolf argues that 'some collaboration has to take place in the mind between the man and the woman before the act of creation can be accomplished. Some marriage of opposites has to be consummated', because 'a mind purely masculine cannot create, any more than a mind that is purely feminine' (ROO, pp. 136, 128). As Woolf argues, this expansive 'sympathetic' collaboration between the sexes would benefit the novelist, who is now limited to single self-assertiveness: 'it remains obvious...that a man is terribly hampered and partial in his knowledge of women, as a woman in her knowledge of men' (ROO, 108). For this successful expansiveness beyond the limitations of self and the sympathetic relation, Orlando's transsexualism and her androgynous marriage to Shelmerdine are good examples.

Woolf constructs such an androgynous identity in *Orlando* by turning back to male Romantics like Coleridge and Shelley. Unlike that of her male contemporaries, she argues that a sentence of Coleridge 'explodes and gives birth to all kinds of other ideas, and that is the only sort of writing of which one can say that it has the secret of perpetual life' (ROO, p. 132). Besides Coleridge, Shelley is also the great androgynous artist in Woolf's aesthetic view. Unlike Wordsworth, who 'had a dash too much of the male', she considers Shelley 'sexless' in opposition of what she calls the 'single-sexed' mind (ROO, pp. 135, 128). In her view, therefore, Shelley has a fully fused mind which enables him not only to transcend all sense of gender opposition by expanding beyond self, but also to create the genuine visionary work. Shelley never uses the term androgyny in his work except in his translation of the *Symposium* (189D-190B).[25] Nathaniel Brown identifies androgyny in Shelley with his 'sympathetic communion between the sexes...in a perfect harmony'.[26] In *Laon and Cythna*, later *The Revolt of Islam* (1817), for example, Laon and Cythna, brother and sister, embody Shelley's desired sympathetic communion between the sexes. Although they are two different sexes, they share the same interest, 'weave a bondage of...sympathy, / As might create some response...' (II, xvi). What is important in this sympathetic combination for Shelley, as for Woolf, I think, is to reveal a sense of androgynous harmony as in the marriage of opposites. This is explicitly exemplified in the 'sympathetic' relation between Orlando and her androgynous husband, Shelmerdine in *Orlando*, which enables Orlando to finish her poem *The Oak Tree* when she is released from the restraints of time and sex. Although she develops her idea of androgyny in relation to art in *A Room of One's Own* published a year later, Woolf begins to explore it in *Orlando*.

Woolf represents Orlando's sexual ambiguity and constant vacillation from

one sex to the other throughout *Orlando*. As soon as his/her poetic imagination starts growing, Orlando's sexual ambiguity becomes more apparent. Although Woolf seems to be tracing the development of his 'boyish dream' in more than one hundred pages, the text of *Orlando* from the very first sentence onward appears ambivalent and uncertain as to Orlando's sexual identity: 'HE - for there could be no doubt of his sex, though the fashion of the time did something to disguise it - was in the act of slicing at the head of a Moor...' (p. 13) Even though the narrator assures us that there is nothing wrong about Orlando's sexual identity whatsoever, the interpolated sentence as well as the space and sudden change between the utterances linguistically undermine the sense of confidence and certainty.

The mystery of Orlando's ambivalent sexual identity is resolved when on the diplomatic mission as ambassador to Turkey; he falls fantastically into his second seven-day trance, and the narrator-biographer, like the traditional biographer, exclaims: 'Would that we might here take the pen and write Finis to our work! Would that we might spare the reader what is to come and say to him in so many words, Orlando died and was buried' (p. 129). Traditional biographical form always demands the truth about the subject's life 'without looking to right or left, in the indelible footprints of truth...till we fall plump into the grave and write *finis* on the tombstone above our heads' (p. 63). However, Woolf defies the truth that traditional biography insists upon when Orlando wakes up with 'complete nakedness', and 'we have no choice left but to confess - he was a woman' (p. 132). Here Woolf humorously parodies the notion of truth in the traditional biography as to Orlando's nakedness and the urgent search for the truth.

We have been told that Orlando has become a woman, but the narrator-biographer informs us that 'Orlando remained precisely as he had been' despite the obvious change in her naked body: 'The change of the sex, though it altered their

future, did nothing whatever to alter their identity. Their faces remained, as their portraits prove, practically the same. His memory...went back through all the events of her past' (p. 133), but the narrator-biographer contradicts itself at once:

> What was said a short time ago about there being no change in Orlando the man and Orlando the woman, was ceasing to be altogether true. She was becoming a little more modest, as women are, of her brains, and a little more vain, as women are, of her person (p. 179).

Such constant vacillation in the narrative account of Orlando's identity challenges the assumption of single identity, suggesting that there might be many possible identities within a single self:

> Different though the sexes are, they intermix. In every human being a vacillation from one sex to the other takes place, and often it is only the clothes that keep the male or female likeness, while underneath the sex is the very opposite of what is above (p. 181).

Woolf's use of clothes suggests that Orlando's identity is not a given and eternal essence, but a social construct in the sense that it is clothes that distinguish the appearance of male from that of the female even though Orlando has both of them. Thus, clothes function as a signifying system as Woolf emphasises: 'Thus, there is much to support the view that it is clothes that wear us and not we them' (p. 180). Moreover, the 'vacillation' of sexual appearance is obviously the method by which Woolf shows that it is not only Orlando, but also every human being who has both male and female qualities - the androgynous identity. As we have seen many times in the novel, this constant 'vacillation' from one sex to the other indicates that both male and female qualities are inseparably interdependent in Orlando. Thus, it is this 'vacillation' between two states of identity that allows Orlando to have an easy access to society from different positions:

> She had, it seems, no difficulty in sustaining the different parts, for her sex changed far more frequently than those who have worn only one set of clothing can conceive; nor can there be any doubt that she reaped a twofold harvest by this devise; the pleasures of life were increased and its experiences multiplied. From the probity of breeches she exchanged the seductiveness of

petticoats and enjoyed the love of both sexes equally (p. 211).

Orlando appears to be Woolf's fictional biography which is thoroughly dedicated to androgyny. In the beginning of the novel, the narrator-biographer has given us the first impression of ambiguity about Orlando's sexual identity even though he appears as a man, but 'in truth, his mind was such a welter of opposites...'(p. 22). Although Orlando's masculine way of 'knowing in terms of apartness' develops[27], he is amazed to find out that the poet Nick Greene 'did not know a geranium from a carnation, an oak from a birch tree, a mastiff from a greyhound...(pp. 88-9). It is after the sex change that androgyny in Orlando as a woman opens up new possibilities for the fixed gender identity. On her way back to England, when she thinks of women's domestic duties in patriarchal society, Orlando becomes dismayed to perceive that the polarization between the two sexes is very deep and complicated. Equally she also comes to notice terrifyingly that she is forming an opinion of the other sex as woman that she did have about female sex when she was man. However, 'it was [the] mixture in her of man and woman, one being uppermost and then the other' that allows Orlando to go beyond the limitation of her sex-consciousness as a woman and play various roles as man and woman in society without any restriction both in her thought and action (p. 181); she uses society as a means for satisfying her multiple desires rather than considering it as a block to them. Orlando as a woman, for example, finds mathematics 'intolerable' and holds some caprices which are common among women, and sometimes she, like a man, puts on man's clothes and 'rode well and drove six horses at a gallop over London Bridge' (p. 182); sometimes, with the same freedom, she meets prostitutes in the street. Orlando's multiple roles as 'man or woman' not only refute the traditional biographer, but also allow Woolf to develop a new kind of writing about human identity by showing the possibility of representing various positions without

being limited to any one. Thus, androgyny should not be regarded as simply a swing from one pole to another pole, but rather it provides one with the opportunity to play different roles according to multiple and shifting relations and perspectives in time and space. By employing the androgynous view of identity, therefore, Woolf shows us that there are many ways of talking about identity, rather than just two.

In these constantly shifting subject positions, Woolf mocks the linearity of traditional biographical form in *Orlando*, because it is very difficult for a biographer to decide what he is going to write about Orlando's identity: Orlando lives and changes continuously. In the novel, the narrator-biographer sometimes tends to take on the role of a traditional biographer self-consciously aiming to tell the truth about Orlando, yet Woolf's plot subverts it: 'For that was the way his mind worked now, in violent see-saws from life to death, stopping at nothing in between, so that the biographer must not stop either, but must fly as fast as he can and so keep pace' with 'change [which] was incessant, and change [which] perhaps would never cease' in Orlando's life (pp. 44, 168). In *Orlando*, Woolf indicates this constant change as part of Orlando's continuing indeterminate identity throughout his/her long life-span.

In Woolf's representation of Orlando, androgyny has provided him/her with such constantly shifting positions in social space without being exposed to any constriction, but the Age of Reason forces her to take sides with female values; she refuses the masculine actions of 'prancing down Whitehall on a war-horse' and 'sentencing a man to death':

> 'Better is it', she thought, 'to be clothed with poverty and ignorance, which are the dark garments of the female sex; better to leave the rule and discipline of the world to others; better be quit of martial ambition, the love of power, and all other manly desires if so one can more fully enjoy the most exalted raptures known to the human spirit, which are,' she said loud, as her

habit was when deeply moved, 'contemplation, solitude, love' (pp. 153-4). Here Woolf links the Romantic concepts of 'rapture', 'contemplation', solitude' and 'love' more specifically to female values than to male ones. Orlando gains these Romantic female values by retreating to anonymity, a condition in which she distances herself from the values of ambition and power which would confine her personality. By rejecting the values to which men give importance, their insistence on power and rule, she gains the freedom of obscurity in which to explore active creative imagination as a poet. Moreover, after arriving in England from Turkey, Orlando finds herself deprived of her legal status, and many suits and charges brought up against her by the Law Court reduce her satirically to being declared 'dead' or a 'nonentity' (p. 161). In Woolf's representation of Orlando as an androgynous poet, however, the implication of 'dead' or 'nonentity' has a positive effect on her poetic imagination, linking her to Woolf's belief in aesthetic anonymity. Orlando does not care whether she is dead or a 'nonentity', but what is of importance for her is to continue to write her poem, *The Oak Tree*. In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf argues that anonymity is associated with the women writers' position, in that Currer Bell and George Eliot, who were 'all the victims of inner strife' used the name of a man to mitigate the pressure of patriarchy on them, so that 'anonymity runs in [women's] blood. The desire to be veiled still possesses them' (ROO, p. 65). Thus she specifically links women's creativity more closely to anonymity as the state of mind practised by great poets like Shakespeare and Shelley. Woolf represents Orlando as evading egoistic self-assertion in recognition of the aspiration of the poet to the 'highest office of all':

> His words reach where others fall short. A silly song of Shakespeare's has done more for the poor and the wicked than all the preachers and philanthropists in the world. No time, no devotion, can be too great, therefore, which makes the vehicle of our message less distorting. We must shape our words till they are the thinnest integument for our thoughts (p.

166).

In the quotation, Woolf's view about the poet and the role of poetry explicitly recalls that of Shelley in *A Defence of Poetry*. For him, as for Woolf, poetry has a sense of universality within itself, including 'the germ of a relation to whatever motives or actions have places in the possible varieties of human nature' in all time.[28] Thus poets become not only guides for people, but they are also 'institutors of laws, and the founders of civil society and inventors of the art of life'.[29]

Yet Woolf represents Orlando as growing confused in the nineteenth century, because the extreme gender polarisation of the Victorian age prohibits her androgynous identity. This restrictive structure of the Victorian age not only limits multiple subject positions in social space, but it also imposes certain behaviour and values on Orlando as woman, in which she feels herself psychologically trapped and thwarted. Above all, Woolf represents Orlando as limited in her freedom of movement; she is not as free as before to 'stride through the garden with her dogs, or run lightly to the high mound and fling herself beneath the oak tree' (pp. 233-4). In these representations of Orlando, Woolf reveals her awareness of the woman writer's difficulty as well as the inequality of women in a patriarchal society. Under this political, cultural and moral oppression of patriarchy, therefore, the 'most desperate of remedies' for Orlando, as for most of Victorian women, is 'to yield completely and submissively to the spirit of the age, and take a husband' (p. 232).

Orlando finds her 'husband' in accordance with the demand of the age, yet Woolf represents it as an androgynous marriage between Orlando and Shelmerdine, like Shelley's representation of Laon and Cythna. In Woolf's representation, Shelmerdine is as androgynous and ambiguous as Orlando, and shortly after they have become engaged, the narrator-biographer discloses their double identity:

...an awful suspicion rushed into both their minds simultaneously.

'You're a woman, Shel' she cried.
'You're a man, Orlando' he cried (p. 240).

'Are you positive you aren't a man?' he would ask anxiously, and she would echo, 'Can it be possible you're not a woman?' and then they must put it to the proof without more ado. For each was so surprised at the quickness of the other's sympathy, and it was to each such a revelation that a woman could be as tolerant and free-spoken as a man, and a man as strange and subtle as a woman...(p. 246).

These quotations revealing the sense of uncertainty felt by both Orlando and Shelmerdine about the sexual identity of each other challenge the reader's expectance of stable gender identity as man and woman. Here Woolf's use of 'sympathy' is important, indicating that Orlando and Shelmerdine, like Shelley's Laon and Cythna, achieve a new kind of relationship and mutual understanding. In this 'sympathetic' relationship, they can communicate in a way which frees them from binary sex-consciousness as man and woman. What is important in Woolf's representation of Orlando's androgynous marriage is that it allows her to establish a 'happy position' between the two aspects of her personality as man and woman, liberating her from the cultural and psychological confinement of the age; that is, androgynous marriage enables her to remain an outsider in her relations with society: 'she need neither fight her age, nor submit to it; she was of it, yet remained herself' (p. 254). In this respect, Orlando's androgynous marriage suggests not a submission to, but a delicate 'transaction between a writer and the spirit of the age' - a fusion of subjective and objective worlds (p. 254).

Having established such a delicate 'transaction' between herself and the spirit of the age, by means of a Shelleyan androgyny, Woolf endows Orlando with the ability to continue to write her poem *The Oak Tree*: 'Hail it all!...Here goes!. And she plunged her pen neck deep in the ink...She drew the nib out. It was wet, but not dripping. She wrote. The words were a little long in coming, but come they did' (p. 252):

> And then I came to a field where the springing grass
> Was dulled by the hanging cups of fritillaries,
> Sullen and foreign-looking, the snaky flower,
> Scarfed in dull purple, like Egyptian girls - (p. 252).

Although the power of the age tends to affect and impede the artist's creativity, Woolf suggests that the poet might transcend this power through anonymity and androgyny, and Orlando 'had only escaped [it] by the skin of her teeth'; 'She had just managed...by putting on a ring and finding a man on a moor, by loving nature and being no satirist, cynic, or psychologist...to pass [her] examination successfully' (p. 253). In the relationship or tension between Orlando and the spirit of the age, Woolf underlines the way that society has cultural and psychological effects on a woman's creativity and writing. Each period affects Orlando not only personally as man and woman, but also in terms of the progress of his/her poetry throughout the long life-period, yet Woolf's use of anonymity and androgyny reduces these effects and enables him/her to complete his/her poem *The Oak Tree* at the end of the novel.

However, the completion of Orlando's poem does not suggest that Orlando finds whatever it is that he/she has been seeking all these years: 'the true self...the Captain self, the Key self', a self that would amalgamate Orlando's 'many thousand' selves and control them all as unified and finished (pp. 294-296).[30] Woolf not only defies such a unified and finished view of self, but she also shows us as readers the impossibility of constructing it when she ends *Orlando* suddenly with the appearance of 'the wild goose':

> 'Haunted! ever since I was a child. There flies the wild goose. It flies past the window out to sea. Up I jumped (she gripped the steering-wheel tighter) and stretched after it. But the goose flies too fast...always I fling after it words like nets (here she flung her hand out) which shrivel as I've seen nets shrivel drawn on deck with only sea-weed in them; and sometimes there's an inch of silver-six words-in the bottom of the net. But never the great fish who lives in the coral groves'(p. 299).

In Woolf's representation of Orlando's identity, the symbol of the 'wild goose' chase

is of importance for several reasons. First, although Orlando has been always haunted by the image of the 'Captain self' since childhood, Woolf's use of the soaring 'wild goose' out to sea shows that chasing such a self is futile, because identity is indeterminate, unfinished, always a process of change in 'fabrication' (p. 293). Hence it is impossible for a realist biographer to give a truthful account of Orlando's life, and 'only those who have little need of truth, and no respect for it - the poets and the novelists can give it...Nothing exists. The whole thing is a miasma - a mirage' (p. 184). Secondly, the allusion of the 'wild goose' chase confirms the continuity of literary tradition, so that the completion of Orlando's poem *The Oak Tree* suggests not an end in itself, but an opening to the wider visionary world of meaning which Orlando has been seeking since childhood. In this continuing chase, therefore, the flying 'wild goose' becomes the symbol of his/her constant search for an illumination, for the ultimate reality in his/her vision. This continuous search for a wider meaning and imaginary vision suggests not only the continuity of literary tradition, but also a strong Romantic perception of Orlando's identity in *Orlando*.

Notes

1. Anne Stevenson, 'Writing as a Woman', in *Women Writing And Writing About Women*, ed. by Mary Jacobus (London: Croom Helm, 1979), p. 174.

2. In her earlier passion, Woolf writes a number of short stories as biographical genre. For example, 'The Journal of Mistress Joan Martyn' and 'Memoirs of a Novelist' deal with the relationship between a woman biographer and her female subject as well as with private and public histories (CSF, pp. 33-62, 69-79).

3. D, III, pp. 131, 164-68, 14 March 1927; 20 Nov. 1927, 30 Nov. 1927, 1 Dec. 1927, 20 Dec. 1927.

4. Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography*, ed. by Rachel Bowlby (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 291. Further references to this edition will appear in the text.

5. For the extended argument of the modernist self, see Dennis Brown, *The Modernist Self in Twentieth-Century English Literature: A Study in Self-Fragmentation* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989; reprint (Wiltshire: Antony Rowe Ltd., 1993).

6. See also AWD, pp.13-14, 20 April 1919; pp. 64-66, 15 Aug. I924; pp. 89-98, 25 July 1926; pp. 101-02, 30 Sep. 1926; pp. 105-06, 14 March 1927; pp. 153-56, 16 Feb. 1930; p. 169, 7 Feb. 1931; pp. 253-54, 5 Sep. 1935.

7. Ralph Freedman, *The Lyrical Novel: Studies in Hermann Hesse, Andre Gide, and Virginia Woolf* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 185-270; Charles Schug, *The Romantic Genesis of The Modern Novel* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1979), pp. 189-225.

8. Beverly Ann Schlack, *Continuing Presences: Virginia Woolf's Use of Literary Allusion* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1979), p. 94.

9. Schlack, p. 94. For a similar argument, see also Jean Guiguet, *Virginia Woolf and Her Works*, trans. by Jean Steward (London: The Hogarth Press, 1965), p. 276.

10. James Holt, Jr. McGavran, '"Alone Seeking the Visible World": The Wordsworths, Virginia Woolf, and *The Waves*', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 42 (1981), p. 273.

11. *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977), pp. 470, 543. In another instance, Woolf alludes to Shelley's *The Triumph of Life* through Orlando's vision: 'What then, was life? (p. 269). Moreover, Woolf parodies Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind* (1820): 'The wind', cries Shelmerdine (p. 249).

12. For a similar argument, see T. S. Eliot's 'Tradition and The Individual Talent', in *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), pp. 13-22.

13. *Wordsworth: Poetical Works*, ed. by Thomas Hutchinson and Ernest De Selincourt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 738.

14. *Wordsworth: Poetical Works*, p. 737.

15. *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, p. 508.

16. See, for example, the following critics: Makiko Minow-Pinkney, *Virginia Woolf & The Problem of The Subject* (Brighton: Harvester, 1987), pp. 117-51; Christy L. Burns, 'Re-Dressing Feminist Identities: Tensions

Between Essential and Constructed Selves in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 40 (1994), pp. 342-64; Pamela L. Caughie, 'Virginia Woolf's Double Discourse', in *Virginia Woolf: Critical Assessments*, ed. by Eleanor McNees, vol. 2 (Sussex: Croom Helm, 1994), pp. 483-93; Ellen Carol Jones, 'The Flight of a Word: Narcissism and the Masquerade of Writing in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*', *Women's Studies*, 23 (1994), pp. 155-74; George Piggford, '"Who's That Girl?": Annie Lennox, Woolf's *Orlando*, and Female Camp Androgyny', *Mosaic*, 30 (1997), pp. 39-57.

17. Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of their Own: British Women Novelists From Bronte to Lessing* (London: Virago, 1977), pp. 263-4.

18. Showalter, p. 282.

19. Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London: Routledge, 1985), p. 9.

20. Moi, p. 9.

21. Moi, p. 13.

22. *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, p. 505.

23. For Woolf's desire to reconcile and fuse contraries of life in fiction, see, for example, D, III, p. 218, 4 Jan. 1929; Woolf's essays 'The Novels of E. M. Forster', CE, I, pp. 342-51; 'Phases of Fiction', CE, II, p. 101; 'The Narrow Bridge of Art', CE, II, pp. 218-29.

24. See also the following critics who argue the androgynous views in Woolf's work: Nancy Topping Bazin, *Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1973); Carolyn G. Heilbrun, *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973); Ellen Hawkes Rogat, 'A Form of One's Own', *Mosaic*, 8 (1974), 77-90, Marilyn R. Farwell, 'Virginia Woolf and Androgyny', *Contemporary Literature*, 16 (1975), 433-51.

25. Nathaniel Brown, *Sexuality and Feminism in Shelley* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 225.

26. Brown, p. 216.

27. Bazin, p. 3.

28. *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, p. 485.

29. *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, p. 482.

30. Woolf herself chases the same self in her short essay 'Evening Over Sussex: A Reflection in a Motor Car', CE, II, pp. 290-2.

CHAPTER V

The Political Geography of City Space and the Romantic Yearning for a 'New World' in *The Years* (1937)

Representation of the city in modernist fiction as 'all that is solid melts into air' can be linked to modernity as the accelerated process of social change and to modernism as a literary and artistic movement of constant experimentation.[1] In *The Years* (1937), Virginia Woolf uses the flow of new forms of transport - 'omnibuses', 'cabs' and 'vans' - to represent metaphorically this view of history as process.[2] Through repeated references to these new forms of transport in the novel, she challenges our view of the city represented as solid and static in nineteenth-century realist fiction. Moreover, her representation of the modern city as diverse and mobile associates with literary modernism - fluid characterisation and narrative, exploration of subjectivity and experiments with temporality, along with complex human relationships.[3] While writing *The Years*, Woolf describes its narrative in her diary as 'agile leaps, like a chamois' (AWD, p. 189, 2 Nov. 1932), as a narrative form that would keep 'a kind of swing and rhythm through...all' (AWD, p. 234, 30 Dec. 1934). This perception of narrative as 'swing and rhythm' illuminates both Woolf's argument with the substantiality of traditional narrative and her modernist concern with the form of fiction as something flowing and growing. The flexibility of narrative enables her to juxtapose different elements simultaneously in her writing.

In this fluid narrative, Woolf dissolves the stable view of the individual and collective identity. Thus, the issue of identity, of where one self ends and another begins, of 'what are we?' can never be fully resolved (p. 269). But she persistently

makes her readers perceive all forms of identity as constructed. *The Years* is permeated by the connections between the mobility of traffic in the city space and characters' repeatedly thinking and questioning the nature of their own identities: 'Where am I?' and 'Where am I going?' Kitty wonders as she checks her appearance in the mirror before running out to catch the night train (p. 216); Peggy asks herself, 'Where does she begin and where do I end? and what are we?' when she crosses London in a cab with Eleanor (p. 269), and similarly, North also questions his own self: 'What do I mean...?' (p. 330) Throughout the novel, Woolf represents her characters as interrogating the fixity of the egotistical individualistic self: 'What's "I"?' and 'What would the world be...without "I" in it?' (pp. 114, 195) Identity becomes 'little snapshot pictures' as if it were 'flying upwards like sparks up the chimney' (pp. 254-5). As the next chapter explores in detail, Woolf insists on eliminating the singular 'I' to achieve a communal view of life. The communal view, Woolf thinks as a woman writer, would evade the dichotomy of both the private and public space as well as gender and sexual difference in society, because the choral voice brings all the diversities into unity, yet her view of communal identity is also temporal, composed as in painting of 'lozenges of floating colours' or 'caught in a net of light' (p. 195).

Woolf is influenced by Romanticism in her use of the imagery of traffic as fluid and mobile within the modern urban space. Modernist writings on the city of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries tend to represent negative views of the urban space, deriving from a view of the human condition as isolated and anonymous in the midst of the mass of the crowd.[4] These views are linked to the representation of the city by Romantic writers. Traditionally, the city was the place where individuals came together in direct relationships, everyone knowing each other closely. After the Industrial Revolution, however, the city becomes crowded by

people moving in from rural areas in the hope of finding new employment and a new way of life. In Book VII of *The Prelude* (1850), Wordsworth describes the complexity of the city and presents an image of it as Hell:

> Rise up, thou monstrous ant-hill on the plain
> Of a too busy world! before me flow,
> Thou endless stream of men and moving things!
> Thy every-day appearance, as it strikes-
> With wonder heightened, or sublimed by awe-
> On strangers; of all ages; the quick dance
> Of colours, lights, and forms; the deafening din;
> The comers and the goers face to face,
> Face after face; the string of dazzling wares;
> Shop after shop, with symbols, blazoned names...(VII, 149-58)

Wordsworth sees the city not only as disorderly, but also as indifferent, lacking in real relationships among people and between people and society. Everyone becomes a stranger to each other, and each person is cut off from their neighbours in a crowded solitude: 'One thought / Baffled my understanding: how men lived / Even next-door neighbours...yet still / Strangers, not knowing each the other's name' (*The Prelude*, VII, 115-8). What is emphasized in the quotation is that normal relationships between individuals in the urban space collapse. Wordsworth describes this loss of familiar life and strangeness as 'mystery':

> How oft, amid those overflowing streets,
> Have I gone forward with the crowd, and said
> Unto myself, 'The face of every one
> That passes by me is a *mystery*!'
> Thus have I looked, nor ceased to look, oppressed
> By thoughts of what and whither, when and how,
> Until the shapes before my eyes became
> A second-sight procession, such as glides
> Over still mountains, or appears in dreams;
> And once, far-travelled in such mood, beyond
> *The reach of common indication, lost*
> *Amid the moving pageant*, I was smitten
> Abruptly, with the view (a sight not rare)
> Of a blind beggar, who, with upright face,
> Stood, propped against a wall, upon his chest
> Wearing a written paper, to explain
> His story, whence he came, and who he was.
> Caught by the spectacle my mind turned round (*The Prelude*, VII, 626-43,

emphasis added).

The quotation emphasizes the theme of the human condition as alienated, symbolized by the figure of a blind beggar whose identity is known only by the label on his chest. The blind man is an image by which Wordsworth shows us people's isolation in the urban world. It is simply the loss of human identity within the 'monstrous ant-hill'. We can notice that these Romantic themes continue in the modern era: the general perception of mystery and of extreme forms of consciousness and the intensity of self-awareness in solitude.

Woolf also represents a negative view of the city in her writing, but she, as a woman writer, sees it as patriarchal space, linking it to her acute and often uneàsy awareness of time and history. In her works in general, and in *The Years* in particular, Woolf thus uses the city to explore the cultural and historical significance of her experience as a woman in a patriarchal society. Her criticism of culture as a whole represents not only her own personal experience, but also her developing understanding of the political and psychological importance of gender and sexual difference - the exclusion and silencing of women - in the public space.

Traditionally, there has been a strong identification between a dominant masculinity and the city space as a location of power within a patriarchal society. This identification has served to construct a particular pattern of sexual and gender relations by suppressing and controlling women's lives, because, as James Donald argues, men view the geographical space of the city as a 'territory' designed for their own view of the world - an 'overweening dream of Enlightenment rationality: to render the city transparent, to get the city right, and so to produce the right citizens' as man and woman.[5] The masculine identification with 'Enlightenment rationality' throughout history has allowed men to take for granted that they exist at the centre of meaning. It is in this perception that gender and sexual difference

starts, based upon the working of heterosexuality as a relationship of power and subordination. Hence there are two separate worlds for the heterosexual relationship in the life of society - the public world of men and the private world of women, in which there is not only a rigid division as to gender but also of social relationships between men and women. The public space has been constructed historically and culturally as men's place while private homes have been perceived as the real places of women. In this positioning, men and women are defined according to their heterosexual relation to the public or private place. As Doreen Massey asserts in *Space, Place and Gender* (1994), the city space and home 'are thus gendered in a myriad different ways, which vary between cultures and over time', and this gendering of space 'both reflects and has effects back on the ways in which gender is constructed and understood in the societies in which we live'.[6]

Similarly, in *The Years*, Woolf encourages us to see various aspects of the relationship between history, politics and culture in terms of the geographical space of the city in its perpetuation of gender divisions. As Doreen Massey suggests, there are 'deep and multifarious' influences between gender formation and geographical space, because 'geography in its various guises influences the cultural formation of particular genders and gender relations'.[7] In *The Years*, the city space is central to Woolf's fundamental criticism of dominant patriarchal politics and culture, based on authority and submission, force and exploitation. She, as a woman writer, explores within the half a century of novelistic time the political and cultural perspectives of masculinity and masculine values upon which the social structure of English society is founded. As part of her criticism of patriarchal perspectives and values, Woolf uses the symbol of a pillar-box, which she links explicitly to patriarchal domains in the urban space. The dinner party is likewise represented as a politicized gendered social location. The pillar-box and the dinner party function

within the narrative to map out the space available and accessible to men and to women, and also they mediate the complex temporal relationship of past, present and future which structures the novel.

In the sections of the novel, leading up to World War I, Woolf represents her female characters as marginalized and excluded from the public places of life. This derives mainly from the unequal social system of patriarchy and its moral values which cripple women's sexual and social freedom, enforce rigid gender definitions and impose certain patterns of behaviour between men and women. In the 'Present Day' section of *The Years*, she represents major changes in the lives of the Pargiter women, who move from the protection of the Victorian home to the freedom of the modern street, there to struggle with men for their rights of public place. But the internalized cultural and psychological effects of their earlier confinement and suppression deeply influence their adult identities and define their relationships with one another both in private and public life. Hence Woolf attacks patriarchy and its political, cultural and moral constrictions on women not through a single point of view, but through the views of a 'many-sided group' of outsiders, who turn 'towards society, not private life' (L, VI, p. 116, letter to Stephen Spender on 7 April 1937).

This is Woolf's new narrative strategy in *The Years*, depending on the multiple perspectives of a group without having a central and dominant character as in her earlier novels. She lets her characters debate issues of patriarchal politics and culture, of gender and sexual difference through their group views in a progressing conversation, which constitutes the narrative. By representing her debate as the 'natural dialogue' of a conversation in continuous progress (AWD, p. 239, 26 Feb. 1935), Woolf brings the stability of patriarchal order into question. Moreover, through these group views, she avoids her fear of falling into didacticism and propaganda. Despite the fact that she gives some historical evidence, Woolf does

not attempt to assert any one view as 'the truth' in the novel, but *The Years*, as she describes it in her diary, deals with 'millions of ideas but no preaching - history, politics, feminism, art, literature - in short a summing up of all I know, feel, laugh at, despise, like, admire, hate & so on' (AWD, pp. 197-8, 25 April 1933).

As for her argument of 'history, politics and feminism' in *The Years*, Woolf explores social relations available to both men and women over the fifty year time span of the story. In *The Years*, Woolf represents the patriarchal system as forceful and intact; it not only cripples women's sexual freedom both in private and public life, but it also bars them from education and professional status and power. While society puts restrictions on women's lives, especially upon their sexual behaviour, men are allowed to enjoy a vast range of freedom in all areas of life. Women could contribute to society only by producing heroic sons, who would be either soldiers or civil servants to safeguard the continuity of patriarchal culture, or by being the chaste image of the 'Angel in the House' as an iconic image for men. In her paper addressed to the National Society for Women's Service on 2 January 1931, and published later as 'Professions for Women', Woolf reveals the difficulty that a woman writer faces in a patriarchal society when she comes to write about her own experience. Her freedom of expression is thwarted by the internalized symbol of Victorian womanhood, 'the Angel in the House', who guides her pen and demands her to 'flatter', 'deceive' and 'use all the arts and wiles of our sex', but 'never [to] let anybody guess that you have a mind of your own' (CE, II, p. 285). If a woman wants to continue her writing as a profession, Woolf argues, the 'Angel in the House' must be destroyed: 'Had I not killed her she would have killed me' (CE, II, p. 286). One of the most powerful impediments imposed by patriarchal values is the psychological constriction which men impose upon women's knowledge of sexuality. The woman writer's 'imagination...sought the pools, the depths, the dark

places where the largest fish slumber. [But] there was a smash. There was an explosion. There was foam and confusion. The imagination had dashed itself against something hard' (CE, II, p. 287). In her speech, Woolf makes it clear that the 'extreme conventionality of the other sex' not only impedes women's free speech, expression and creativity, but it also prevents them from 'telling the truth about [their] own experiences as a body' (CE, II, p. 288).

She had already referred to this difficulty in her account of the life of her fictional poet Judith Shakespeare in *A Room of One's Own* (1929). Judith Shakespeare, an ambitious writer, who flees her private home in the country for the stimulation of London, becomes an archetype for the woman writer's experience in male-dominated city space. Like her brother William Shakespeare, she goes to London with the purpose of writing and acting in the theatre, because she is 'as adventurous, as imaginative, as agog to see the world' as her brother is (ROO, p. 60). However, her adventure in London ends not with fame and prosperity as a playwright but with disgrace, pregnancy and eventually suicide. Judith's attempt to create a position as a writer is thwarted, since her 'poet's heart' is 'caught and tangled in a woman's body' (ROO, p. 62). Judith Shakespeare's artistic self-expression is thwarted by existing intellectual, professional, cultural and moral values. Hence all these obstacles cripple a woman writer's life and creativity when she attempts to pursue her own way alone in a male-dominated professional space. The resulting lack of a female tradition as well as the lack of freedom of speech and expression, Woolf argues in 'Professions for Women', makes it impossible for women to know themselves: 'I mean, what is a woman? I assure you, I do not know. I do not believe that you know. I do not believe that anybody can know until she has expressed herself in all the arts and professions open to human skill' (CE, II, p. 286). In *The Years*, Woolf suggests the same difficulty for women in telling

the truth of their own experiences as women. To do so, she subversively uses the political geography of the city space to convey her awareness of women's lack of sexual freedom in a patriarchal society.

For this purpose, Woolf weaves a number of subplots in *The Years* as ways of representing her major theme of women's marginalization in the public and private spheres. The novel opens in 1880 with the male-dominated Pargiter family in Abercorn Terrace, where resentment pervades everyday activities of life. In the Pargiter family, men dominate and control women, enjoy to the full intellectual and professional opportunities, whereas the women are trained to serve men, trapped and limited to boring domestic responsibilities in the private home. Moreover, strict moral values such as the ideal of female respectability and chastity silence women, preventing them from having easy access to social space. The Pargiter girls could not possibly go for a walk alone without having a brother with them except in the streets round about Abercorn Terrace, and even then they have to be back before sunset. Thus, the Pargiter girls are confined; they hardly go outside and 'stay at home too much' (p. 28). Although they have their own 'dreams' of life (p. 27), they are unable to pursue them. Even moral values at home suppress them; they are afraid of looking out of the window as if they could 'be caught looking' at a young man in the street (p. 17).

In *The Years*, Woolf uses the image of the pillar-box to mark this boundary between the public and private world. It becomes a symbol for her representation of male sexual violence and threat against women's social and sexual freedom in the public space. Rose Pargiter, the youngest of the Pargiter girls, experiences this danger one night when she disobeys the rules of her family. She ventures to go out alone at night to Lamley's shop. In her militaristic and masculine fantasy as 'Pargiter of Pargiter's Horse', she imagines herself a rescuer of the 'besieged

[British] garrison', but when she sees a man by the pillar-box, she is frightened and bewildered, so that her fantasy is shattered at once: '"The enemy!" Rose cried to herself...looking him full in the face as she passed him. It was horrid face: white, peeled, pockmarked; he leered at her. He put out his arm as if to stop her. He almost caught her. She dashed past him' (p. 24). On her return home down Melrose Avenue, 'as she passed the lamp-post she saw the man again. He was leaning with his back against the lamp-post...As she passed he sucked his lips in and out...But he did not stretch his hands out at her; they were unbuttoning his clothes' (p. 25). Rose hurries to her home, and when she is safely in bed, 'she was herself again, a little girl who had disobeyed her sister, in her house shoes...' (p. 25). Woolf identifies the man with the pillar-box, which becomes a phallic symbol within the city space, representing the male sexual threat against women. The city immediately dismays Rose by its hostility to her freedom. Like Rachel after Richard Dalloway's kiss in *The Voyage Out* (1915), therefore, the aftermath of this masculine sexual violence haunts Rose in her sleep and keeps her awake, yet moral prohibitions preclude her from telling her sister Eleanor 'what she had seen. She had a profound feeling of guilt; for some reason she must lie..."I had a bad dream," she said. "I was frightened."' (p. 35). Eleanor wonders whether there is something important that Rose is hiding from her, but she is unable to make Rose say it. '"I saw..." Rose began. She made a great effort to tell her the truth; to tell her about the man at the pillar-box. "I saw..."' (p. 36). Rose is unable to tell her experience of the man, so that she suppresses it, and the sentence is left unconcluded with three dots.

Here and elsewhere in her writing, Woolf's use of three dots is of importance: it is a formal devise for inviting the reader to read what is not said and written in the text. She explains her use of ellipses in *Three Guineas* (1938): 'But...here again, in those dots, doubts and hesitations assert themselves' (TG, p.

237). The 'doubts and hesitations' become the trajectory for her modernist narrative strategy in her fiction, introducing lapse and space. Thus, the 'true story' remains unsaid and incomplete on many occasions in her novels. However, in *Three Guineas*, Woolf links her use of three dots to fear and guilt that repress communication between people: '...Again there are three dots; again they represent a gulf - of silence this time, of silence inspired by fear' (TG, p. 331). As in the case of Rose in *The Years*, this use of three dots is associated with women's fear and repression caused by both the male threat and internalized moral taboos against their sexual emotion. Woolf goes on to point out in *Three Guineas*: 'But...these three dots mark a precipice, a gulf so deeply cut between us that three years and more I have been sitting on my side of it wondering whether it is any use trying to speak across of it' (TG, p. 155). As she explains in 'Women and Fiction' (1929), 'law and custom were of course largely responsible for these interruptions of silence and speech' (CE, II, p. 142). Similarly, law and custom prevent Rose from ever talking about her experience of the man she saw at the pillar-box, and this suggests the general condition of women in a patriarchal society: women are vulnerable, silenced and controlled.

However, the pillar-box in the city space does not suggest sexual violence and fear for men when they go outside. In my view, this mobile freedom for men means that the political geography of the city space depends upon the construction of gender distinction, positioning men and women in a particular way within the space of everyday life. In this positioning of sexual roles, women are certainly subordinate to men. When Eleanor writes a letter to her brother Edward in Oxford about her mother's condition, for example, Morris offers to post it for her:

> He got up as if he were glad to have something to do. Eleanor went to the front door with him and stood holding it open while he went to the pillar-box...as she stood at the door...Morris disappeared under the shadows round

> the corner. She remembered how she used to stand at the door when he was a small boy and went to a day school with a satchel in his hand. She used to wave to him; and when he got to the corner he always turned and waved back. It was a curious little ceremony, dropped now that they were both grown up. The shadows shook as she stood waiting; in a moment he merged from the shadows. He came along the street and up the steps (pp. 37-8).

In the quotation, the pillar-box image implies two related issues for women. First, Woolf links it to the contrasting degrees of sexual freedom available to men and women in social space, within which men, like Morris, can go out alone at night and come back without being exposed to any violence. That Morris disappears under the shadows round the corner suggests the difference of space accessible for men and women. Thus, years after, Eleanor accepts her place in the private house, and she will take on the role of the 'housekeeper' when her mother dies (p. 75). This separation between these two worlds of home and outside space not only brings marginalization and exclusion for women, but it also produces rigidly hierarchial relationships between the two sexes. This can be easily seen in the relationship between Morris and his sisters. He feels himself 'suppressed' when he is 'cooped up with all these women in an atmosphere of unreal emotion' (p. 37). As they grow up, the relationship between Eleanor and Morris gradually becomes distant:

> She never told him about the Levys...except by way of a joke. That was the worst of growing up, she thought; they couldn't share things as they used to share them. When they met they never had time to talk as they used to talk - about things in general - they always talked about facts- little facts (p. 29).

In the second place, Woolf links the image of the pillar-box to the issue of women's education. Men, like Edward and Morris, can go to public schools and take formal education. Through this education, they enter a variety of professional positions in patriarchal society - Morris is a lawyer and Edward an Oxford don. However, the Pargiter girls, like Eleanor, are self-educated at home. She is lucky that she goes to 'her Grove day' and joins 'Committee' meetings (pp, 13, 75), but it is a charitable job, not a professional one. In a sense, Eleanor's condition expresses

Woolf's own experience of her confinement and education. Compared with her brothers, Woolf was confined to domestic responsibilities, and she was not expected to work and travel in the world like men. Moreover, she was not able to take a formal university education, and her experience was therefore supposed to be limited and narrow. In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf feels keenly that education, space and financial independence are of vital importance for a woman writer to succeed.

What is also significant in Woolf's use of the pillar-box in *The Years* as an image of male sexual violence is that it causes an internalized repression and psychological inferiority in the consciousnesses of the Pargiter women. These conditions affect their adult identities deeply and their relationships with one another both in private and public life, because they are incapacitated and unable to talk about their feelings freely. In the 1910 section, for example, Rose visits her cousins Maggie and Sara at their home. Now they live an independent life in modern London, and they 'can walk over Waterloo Bridge at any hour of the day or night...and nobody notices' them (p. 140). For this reason, they might be supposed to talk openly about their own feelings and sexual experiences. But the adult Pargiter women are unable to assume this verbal freedom, since earlier socialization has made them afraid of speaking freely. Sara wants Rose to talk about Abercorn Terrace and the Pargiters. While talking, Rose remembers saying to Eleanor, 'I want to go to Lamley's' (p. 135), and the memory of Lamley's reminds her at once of her experience of the sexual trauma caused by the man at the pillar-box. She desperately wants to tell them about this childhood experience: 'Her past seemed to be rising above her present. And for some reason she wanted to talk about her past; to tell them something about herself that she had never told anybody- something hidden' (p. 135). But Rose is unable to speak of her past experience and thus curses the man inwardly, 'damn your eyes!' (p. 137). Like many Victorian women, the

Pargiter women cannot express their own feelings owing to the cultural intimidation of their minds, so that they always tend to avoid each other either by being silent, telling lies or by changing the subject suddenly. In their conversation, Rose thinks that 'she [Maggie] wants to hide herself from me...as I want to hide myself from her' (p. 137). When the narrator takes us to a suffrage meeting in the 1910 section of the novel, we can see again that women fail to communicate freely with each other. Eleanor's rebellious cousin, Kitty Malone, becomes very angry with Martin's sarcastic laughing at her for having a car. She does not like his despising and domineering attitudes towards her, and thus she defines men furiously: '"what a pig-headed set they are! said Kitty, turning to Eleanor. "Force is always wrong - don't you agree with me?"' (p. 145). However, Kitty, like Rose, is unable to express her own feelings openly due to the restriction imposed on her by patriarchal conventions and moral values under which she was brought up: 'she wanted to talk to Eleanor. They met so seldom; she liked her so much. But she was shy, sitting there in her absurd clothes, and she could not jerk her mind out of the rut of the meeting in which it was running' (p. 145). Similarly, Eleanor avoids speaking to Kitty and the others in a different way, always saying, 'Papa's expecting me' (p. 146).

Moreover, this psychological intimidation focused around the image of the pillar-box continues to haunt the adult Pargiter women in the final 'Present Day' section of *The Years* even though fifty years on, things have changed a lot in their favour. For example, Eleanor and Peggy pass Abercorn Terrace in a taxi on the way to a family party at Delia's home. Eleanor thinks of her childhood, of 'the imposing unbroken avenue with its succession of pale pillars and steps..." Abercorn Terrace," said Eleanor; "the pillar box,"' (p. 267). Peggy wonders why her aunt links the pillar-box to her childhood. Eleanor talks little about her experience in Abercorn Terrace, yet the way she speaks makes Peggy ask, 'Was it that you were

suppressed when you were young?' (p. 269). Woolf's representation of Eleanor shows that she is still under the psychological restraint she experienced when she was young. Woolf establishes relations between the pillar-box and women's sexual experience, so that the word 'suppressed' suddenly takes Eleanor back into her earlier memories at Abercorn Terrace. She remembers 'a picture - another picture [which] had swum to the surface. There was Delia standing in the middle of the room; Oh my God! Oh my God! she was saying; a handsome cab had stopped at the house next door; and she herself was watching Morris - was it Morris? - going down the street to post a letter' (p. 270). Although Eleanor knows nothing about Rose's experience of sexual trauma, Woolf links the pillar-box to the suppression and limitation of Eleanor's freedom in another way. The pillar-box reminds Eleanor of her past, her childhood at Abercorn Terrace, so that her past disturbs the present as she recalls her memories of the pillar-box, Morris and the letter. These memories associate in her mind with her confinement and limitation at home as well as with her exclusion from the right to education although she was interested in law more than her brothers.

Memory of the past, as we will see below, remains vigorously alive when Eleanor is adult. Memory, as Woolf implies, works in connection with Eleanor's growing sense of her identity over time. Memory, chiefly as a visual form, expands and unites Eleanor sensuously with her past as a continuing identity stretching out beyond the present. This is a backward and forward movement of subjectivity in time. The narrative does not provide an objective image of the pillar-box and Abercorn Terrace, rather they are projections of multiple and variable selves - of past, present and imaginary future selves. Yet the pillar-box is part of a psychological geography which shapes and controls women's sexual lives and subjectivity. Even though the Pargiter women have easier access to social space in

the 'Present Day' section of *The Years*, the long-lasting effects of patriarchal repression make them dumb and unable to express openly their own feelings and experiences. The character Kitty has similar memories of an early repressed sexual experience:

> He reminded her of Alf, the farm hand up at Carter's, who had kissed her under the shadow of the haystack when she was fifteen, and old Carter loomed up leading a bull with a ring through its nose and said 'Stop that!' She looked down again. She would rather like Jo to kiss her; better than Edward, she thought to herself suddenly (p. 59).

The quotation suggests that although the kiss was pleasurable as opposed to the threat of the man at the pillar-box, Kitty was prevented from expressing her response. In her later life, she is still shy of speaking of it, and she just imagines Jo kissing her, rather than expecting to experience sexual love. Her eventual marriage confers status but not intimacy or affectionate companionship.

Woolf uses Kitty's grand political dinner party in the 1914 section of *The Years* to present women's alienation in London society and culture. Like Katharine Hilbery in *Night and Day* (1919), Kitty, now Lady Lasswade, hates her social duty as hostess at powerful social gatherings - a role expected of her as wife of a distinguished public man. During her party, she scorns rich society women, who 'paid each other compliments about their clothes or their looks' (p. 207); she finds herself isolated among their 'intrigues' and 'gossips' (p. 209). Kitty hates such behaviour of women, because these manners and habits are useless and trivial like their lives. Kitty performs her part as hostess at the party and is respected by the others, yet Woolf represents her as longing to escape from the city to the countryside. As soon as the party is over, therefore, she takes the night train alone to her country house in the heart of nature. In the countryside, Kitty feels herself released from social responsibilities and tension: she is alone with herself. Nature soothes her as she walks among the trees and colourful flowers and listens to the

birds singing and the water flowing:

> She was in the prime of life. She was vigorous. She strode on. The ground rose sharply; her muscles felt strong and flexible as she pressed her thick-soled shoes to the ground. She threw away her flower. The trees thinned as she strode higher and higher. Suddenly she saw the sky between two striped tree trunks extraordinarily blue. She came out on the top. The wind ceased; the country spread wide all round her. Her body seemed to shrink; her eyes to widen. She threw herself on the ground, and looked over the billowing land that went rising and falling, away and away, until somewhere far off it reached the sea...Then as she watched, light moved and dark moved; light and shadow went travelling over the hills and over the valleys. A deep murmur sang in her ears - the land itself, singing to itself, a chorus, alone. She lay there listening. She was happy, completely. Time had ceased (p. 224).

Woolf's representation of Kitty in such a way is of importance for two reasons. First, Kitty's escape is linked to Woolf's association of male power with urban space. Kitty loathes the city, so that her escape to the countryside suggests a refusal of the oppressive social relations located in the city. Secondly, Woolf represents Kitty as a Wordsworthian character, who both desires solitude and silence away from the crowded alienation of the city and longs for freedom, peace and expansion through her imaginary vision. Kitty upholds the fulfilment of her desires by refusing the constriction and limitations imposed upon her life in the city. Like the poet of *The Prelude*, she finds a 'beauty' and 'change' in 'solitude / More active even than "best society"' of patriarchy (II, 294-5) - a pattern of vision that Kitty discovers in nature and solitude.

However, Woolf, unlike Wordsworth, does not see the modern city as Hell; she develops his other perception of the city as offering also possibility, energy, mystery and anonymity. For women particularly, moving into the public places of the city as outsiders brings freedom from restriction in the domestic sphere. In *Night and Day* (1919), for example, as opposed to the atmosphere at home, Katharine Hilbery likes the street, shops and 'the spinning traffic' of London when she walks up Kingsway, and 'a shop', she thinks, 'was the best place in which to

preserve this queer sense of heightened existence' (ND, p. 67). At the end of the novel, when Katharine and Ralph 'mount to the very front seat' of an omnibus, 'they were victors, masters of life...giving their life to increase its brightness, to testify to their faith' (ND, pp. 428, 430). The streets of London also free Mrs Dalloway's daughter, Elizabeth, in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925). Elizabeth and her history tutor Miss Kilman are taking tea at the Army and Navy Stores in Victory Street. After tea, escaping from Miss Kilman's control, Elizabeth, rather than going home, decides to take an omnibus up Whitehall:

> Suddenly Elizabeth stepped forward and most competently boarded the omnibus, in front of everybody. She took a seat on top. The impetuous creature - a pirate - started forward, sprang away; she had to hold the rail to steady herself, for a pirate it was, reckless, unscrupulous, bearing down ruthlessly, circumventing dangerously, boldly snatching a passenger, or ignoring a passenger, squeezing eel-like and arrogant in between, and then rushing insolently all sails spread up Whitehall. And did Elizabeth give one thought to poor Miss Kilman who loved her without jealousy, to whom she had been a fawn in the open, a moon in a glade? She was delighted to be free (FGN, p. 225).

London fascinates Woolf as a writer throughout her life, and it serves as a means of exploring and combining various realms of experience. It is linked to specific personal meanings in Woolf's own memories from her childhood walks in the Kensington Gardens to the urban roamings of her adulthood.[8] As her diaries, letters, essays and novels show, she is excited by the streets and cultural life of London, rather than its polite drawing-rooms. While at work on *Mrs Dalloway*, for example, Woolf notes in her diary:

> London is enchanting. I step out upon a tawny coloured magic carpet, it seems, & get carried into beauty without raising a finger. The nights are amazing, with all the white porticoes & broad silent avenues. And people pop in & out, lightly, divertingly like rabbits, & I look down Southampton Row, wet as a seal's back or red & yellow with sunshine, & watch the omnibus going & coming, & hear the old crazy organs (D, II, p. 301, 5 May 1924).[9]

In the same entry, she continues to feel the same charm of London in her mind: she

'like[d] London for writing it [*Mrs Dalloway*]...I can dart in & out & refresh my stagnancy' (D, II, p. 302). In *Mrs Dalloway*, Clarissa Dalloway is also fascinated by the life of the urban space when she leaves the domestic sphere to buy flowers for herself:

> In people's eyes, in the swing, tramp, and trudge; in the bellow and the uproar; the carriages, motor cars, omnibuses, vans, sandwich men shuffling and swinging; brass bands; barrel organs; in the triumph and the jingle and the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead was what she loved; life; London; this moment of June (FGN, p. 138).

The city is of importance in Woolf's writing for several reasons. First, it associates with her political and cultural analysis of patriarchal society with regard to her own experience as a woman writer. As Woolf points out in *A Room of One's Own*, London in the sixteenth century was hostile to her fictional poet Judith Shakespeare and her creativity, yet even in the twentieth century women's presence in modern London is unexpressed. Hence the duty of her imaginary contemporary novelist Mary Carmichael, Woolf asserts in *A Room of One's Own*, is to put that female presence into words:

> All these infinitely obscure lives remain to be recorded, I said, addressing Mary Carmichael as if she were present; and went on in thought through the streets of London feeling in imagination the pressure of dumbness, the accumulation of unrecorded life, whether from the women at the street corners with their arms akimbo, and the rings embedded in their fat swollen fingers, talking with a gesticulation like the swing of Shakespeare's words; or from the violet-sellers and match-sellers and old crones stationed under doorways; or from drifting girls whose faces, like waves in sun and cloud, signal the coming of men and women and the flickering lights of shop windows. All that you will have to explore, I said to Mary Carmichael, holding your torch firm in your hand (ROO, pp. 116-7).

Secondly, the city is linked to the issue of women's liberation. Walking in the city street gives women an imaginative freedom. In her essay 'Street Haunting: A London Adventure' (1930), for example, Woolf writes of the myriad imaginative pleasures of 'rambling the streets of London' in winter (CE, IV, p. 155). When her narrator, like Clarissa, walks in the streets of London to buy a pencil, the streets

become a female narrative space, offering a sense of freedom and escape for women from the 'sheltered' surroundings of the domestic place: 'We are no longer quite ourselves. As we step out of the house...we shed the self our friends know us by and become part of that vast republican army of anonymous trampers' (CE, IV, p. 155). Once women leave the shelter of the home where possession and suppression surround and limit their lives, 'the shell-like covering which our souls have excreted to house themselves, to make for themselves a shape distinct from others, is broken, and there is left of all these wrinkles and roughnesses a central oyster of perceptiveness, an enormous eye' (CE, IV, p. 156). Finally, Woolf's floating view of the streets of the modern city associates with her modernist perception of identity as fluid and unstable, and she represents it through women's aesthetic and imaginary realization of freedom in the streets. In the midst of the republican anonymity of the London crowd, the self is no longer defined against the other, but its fixed boundaries dissolve and disperse into a multitude of fragmented selves: 'Am I here, or am I there? Or is the true self neither this nor that, neither here nor there, but something so varied and wandering that it is only when we give the rein to its wishes and let it take its way unimpeded that we are indeed ourselves' (CE, IV, p. 161).

The sudden shift from 'I' to 'we' in the quotation above suggests a communal view of identity in the urban space. This sense of communal experience is intensified in a description of a street performance when a female dwarf whirls 'in yellow shoes, in fawn shoes, in shoes of lizard skin', giantesses watch, and a child leads a procession of the blind (CE, IV, p. 158). In this company, the street becomes a place of carnival:

> The dwarf had started a hobbling grotesque dance to which everybody in the street now conformed: the stout lady tightly swathed in shiny seal-skin; the feeble-minded boy sucking the silver knob of his stick; the old man squatted

> on a door step as if, suddenly overcome by the absurdity of the human spectacle, he had sat down to look at it - all joined in the hobble and tap of the dwarf's dance (CE, IV, p. 159).

As the quotation suggests, Woolf sees the urban space as a potential party - a coming together as community. In 'Street Haunting', the experiences of other lives merge into each other to form a new relationship: 'Into each of these lives one could penetrate a little way, far enough to give oneself the illusion that one is not tethered to a single mind, but can put on briefly for a few minutes the bodies and minds of others. One could become a washerwoman, a publican, a street singer' (CE, IV, p. 165). In this anonymity of selves, Woolf dissolves the boundaries of hierarchal relationships. Her view of communal urban identity suggests a perception of a classless and multiple identity constituted in the city streets as opposed to the identity known exclusively through hierarchal relations, yet Woolf shows the uncertainty of modernist consciousness in the diversity of the anonymous crowd as 'neither here nor there, but something so varied and wandering' in the city streets (CE, IV, p. 161).

In *The Years*, the urban space also performs the function of liberating women psychologically. When she left home for the 'committee' meeting, Eleanor, like Katharine Hilbery and Elizabeth Dalloway in earlier novels, finds 'relief' in the streets (pp. 75-7). On top of the bus, she 'breathed in the soft London air' and watches with 'pleasure' the sight of moving cabs, vans and carriages as well as the rhythmical wandering of the crowd along the streets; she feels London 'her world', where 'she was in her element' herself (p. 77). Sara also watches the windows in the street with 'rapture', which Martin is unable to understand (p. 191). Moreover, the streets of London expand Eleanor imaginatively. For example, after leaving the fuggy and dim atmosphere of the Law Courts, where she has watched Morris's case, 'the space of the Strand came upon her with a shock of relief':

> She felt herself expanded...It was as if something had broken loose - in her, in the world. She seemed, after her concentration, to be dissipated, tossed about. She wandered along the Strand, looking with pleasure at the racing street; at the shops full of bright chains and leather cases...The wind blew in her face. She breathed in a gulp of fresh wet air. And that man, she thought, thinking of the dark little Court and its cut-out faces, has to sit there all day, every day...How could Morris stand it? (p. 91)

The street scatters Eleanor's identity as free and fluid when she passes from one view to another. Woolf represents the modern city space with a cinematic quality and feminizes it as women's place for freedom as opposed to patriarchal institutions, like the Law Courts, whose solemnity she mocks through Eleanor's views.

Woolf's liberation of women in the street from psychological constrictions illuminates the view that they do not inhabit the urban space in the same way as patriarchal men. Rather than becoming part of patriarchal civilization, they remain outside and thus critical of it. As outsiders, women, Woolf argues in *Three Guineas*, do not integrate into the institutions of patriarchy, but they reject the masculine values of hierarchy and authoritarianism located in the urban space. Such values are associated not only with patriarchal politics, but also with the so-called 'enlightened' practices of bourgeois liberalism. Moreover, outsiders are also disinterested in rituals and moral values which limit their lives. But Woolf's views do not imply a turning away from the politics and social issues of her own time. When her female characters gain more freedom psychologically and become bolder in their minds, they turn round on politics to question the status quo and its social code that controls them. Woolf endows her characters with this expansion of their views by directing their passion and energy towards another quality of life, a quality which I link to the Romantic vision in *The Years*. This Romantic quality of the visionary outsider enables her female characters particularly to expand and go beyond a psychologically restricted sense of life. The intellectual freedom, provided by the Romantic imagination, allows them to see their social marginalization and

separation not as the product of an essential 'femaleness' but as the product of an unequal patriarchal social system. When they awaken from the lethargy of the 'Angel in the House', therefore, women yearn for a different life, a 'New World', in which they can resist the effect of their marginalization and exclusion from public life (p. 235).

Woolf's view of a 'New World' rejects the perpetuation of gender and sexual divisions, but she remains outside of the dominant patriarchal order, seeking instead alternative forms of social relationships. This utopian dream Woolf points out in *Three Guineas* brings men and women to work together for the same cause. She explains that such a cause 'was no claim of women's rights only...it was deeper; it was a claim for the rights of all - all men and women - to the respect in their persons of the great principles of Justice and Equality and Liberty' - an egalitarian view of life (TG, p. 303). In *The Years*, the Romantic yearning for such a utopian 'New World', which would be available and accessible for both the sexes without hierarchical relationships, becomes a common dream of change for Woolf's outsiders, for Eleanor, Delia, Sara, Maggie, Renny and Nicholas, Peggy and North as a 'many-sided group'. During the air raid in the 1917 section of *The Years*, for example, these outsiders come together at an informal party in stark contrast to Kitty's alienating dinner party. Brought close together by the danger of imminent bombing, they begin to envision a new life when it 'was the light after the dark; talk after silence; the war, perhaps, removing barriers' between them (p. 229). Renny decries the present under the air raid, 'Whereas now...this is how we live, screwed up into one hard little, tight little - knot?...Each is his own little cubicle; each with his own cross or holy book; each with his fire, his wife...' (pp. 238-9), yet Eleanor gives a positive response to the situation by aspiring imaginatively for a better and different life in the future. She is fascinated by Nicholas's view of 'the soul - the

whole being', of expansion, of adventure and of 'new combinations' in life (p. 238): 'He seemed to have released something in her; she felt not only a new space of time, but new powers, something unknown within her...a shower of red-eyed sparks went volleying up the chimney. We shall be free, we shall be free' (p. 239). What the desire for 'a new space' suggests in Woolf's representation of the city is her desire to get rid of mental separation, restriction and exclusion. Eleanor's romantic imaginary space, with its new social relationships in a free world, projects an image of another life in a perfect future which would 'enclose the present moment...make it stay...fill it fuller and fuller, with the past, the present and the future, until it shone, whole, bright, deep with understanding' (p. 344).

However, we do not have any critical support for such a Romantic reading of *The Years*. E. M. Forster, for example, complains that in it Woolf breaks with her experimentation with the poetic style of fiction and turns back to 'realist tradition' by 'chronicl[ing] the fortunes of a family through a documented period. As in *Night and Day*, she deserts poetry, and again she fails'.[10] Similarly, Josephine O'Brien Schaefer sees *The Years* as 'an unmistakable break' in Woolf's lyric development, arguing that she abandons poetry and moves from 'the inner life back to the local geography of social situation' by ignoring 'the possibility of heightened states of consciousness'.[11] For other critics, however, *The Years*, though less experimental in technique appears at odds with the conventions of realist fiction. Susan Dick, who does not view it as a traditional 'realist novel', points out that the narrative structure 'is divided into sections, each dated and each introduced by a few paragraphs in which the month or season of the year is described', but 'they don't in themselves suggest... any plot, give meaning to those lives'.[12] Moreover, James Hafley, considering *The Years* one of Woolf's most interesting novels, locates it in a modernist context which represents the 'gradual decay of

Victorian culture' as well as the 'gradual shift from the nineteenth-century' safety to 'contemporary confusion', so that 'characters who are most aware wonder whether there can be any valid standard, any rule for conduct, in the midst of this confusion'.[13]

In seeking a 'valid standard' among the chaos and uncertainties, I believe that the Romantic creative vision plays an important role in Woolf's thinking in the 1930s as in previous decades. In my view, she does not abandon the 'poetic' style in *The Years*, rather she suggests that 'there is no break, but a continuous development, possibly a recurrence of some pattern...' (L, VI, p. 116, letter to Stephen Spender on 7 April 1937). Woolf's view of *The Years* as 'continuous development' is of importance for several reasons. First, it is linked to Woolf's constant artistic experimentation and renewal in her writing practice. Secondly, it associates with the poetic quality she achieves in previous fiction, and finally, the view of 'continuous development', as a uniting of the past, present and future is the formal means of endowing her fictional characters with the ability to expand beyond themselves and beyond the limitation and confusion of the present.

Woolf first perceives *The Years* as an 'Essay-Novel' (AWD, pp. 197-8, 25 April 1933), yet the essay part, which she works out in *Three Guineas* published a year later, disappears gradually. What we are left with then is 'a creative, a constructive book' (AWD, p. 278, 14 March 1937). In fact, she desires to explore whether it could be possible 'to give ordinary waking Arnold Bennett life the form of art' or to 'lyricize the argument' in the intellectual sense (AWD, p. 208, 31 May 1933, p. 238, 23 Jan. 1935). As she describes in her diary on 25 April 1933, Woolf's aim in the novel is to fuse fact and vision poetically:

> I think this will be a terrific affair. I must be bold & adventurous. I want to give the whole of the present society - nothing less: *facts*, as well as the *vision*. And to combine them both. I mean, *The Waves* going on

> simultaneously with *Night & Day*...Lord knows how - while keeping the march of events. This should give I think a great edge to *both of the realities- this contrast* (AWD, p. 197, emphasis added).[14]

While representing the undesirable facts of patriarchal life in the tradition of the realist chronicle, Woolf, as the diary entry illuminates, simultaneously evokes a Romantic vision of 'another life', of another 'state of being' in *The Years* which is deliberately set in opposition to the fixity and violence as symbolized by the pillar-box image (pp. 343, 313).

In pursuing 'another life', Woolf does seek a break with the past, yet she understands the present moment through the past; she tries to envision the future whole and bright by means of this understanding. As in Wordsworth, therefore, continuity of consciousness is of prime importance in Woolf's view of the future. She constructs a past and present subjectivity or double awareness of history through the memories of the 'outsiders', because memory enables the mind to imaginatively unite its various selves.

The past must be kept alive in the present for the future. For both Wordsworth and Woolf, memory is thus an active function of the mind, forward-moving rather than backward-looking. In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth writes about his childhood memories:

> Thus oft amid those fits of vulgar joy
> Which, through all seasons, on a child's pursuits
> Are prompt attendants, 'mid that giddy bliss
> Which, like a tempest, works along the blood
> And is forgotten; even then I felt
> Gleams like the flashing of a shield; - the earth
> And common face of Nature spake to me
> Rememberable things; sometimes, 'tis true,
> By chance collisions and quaint accidents
> (Like those ill-sorted unions, work supposed
> Of evil-minded fairies), yet not vain
> Nor profitless, if haply they impressed
> Collateral objects and appearances,
> Albeit lifeless then, and doomed to sleep
> Until mature seasons called them forth

To impregnate and to elevate the mind (I, 581-96).

As the quotation suggests, the mind is responsive to memory: memory is not inactive or nostalgic, but self-animating and self-regulative. The growing mind becomes conscious of its sources; the present moment restores and re-animates the past:

Those recollected hours that have the charm
Of visionary things, those lovely forms
And sweet sensations that throw back our life,
And almost make remotest infancy
A visible scene, on which the sun is shining (*The Prelude*, I, 631-5).

When the poet of *The Prelude* calls back his memories of childhood, he brings vividly with them all his 'remotest' experiences and sensations, which provide him with an awakening sense of unity in his vision - a sense of the past which makes understanding of the present possible.[15] By the force of memory, sensual as well as intellectual, Wordsworth identifies himself, his present emotion with the scenes of his childhood. These memories are captured in a moment of vision through the flashbacks of the mind accompanied with 'sweet sensations'.

Flashbacks, provided by memory, also occur frequently in *The Years* as Woolf's major theme. They provide us with some important views about the Pargiter women's lives in the 'Present Day' section of the novel, but these flashbacks also represent the complexity of the relationship between the past and present. Indeed, recollections of the past are so frequent that the action of *The Years* may be considered as taking place on two different levels: the past in Abercorn Terrace years before and the present when the Pargiter girls are adult. In his Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), Wordsworth's statement about the nature of poetry makes clear the working of memory and accounts for its importance: 'the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of re-action, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of the contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind'.[16]

In a similar way, Woolf's perception of memory as re-activating past feelings is what enables her characters in *The Years* to live in both the experience of the past and in the here and now as one continuous process. For example, Rose recaptures the subjective feelings of the sexual trauma she experienced as a child at the pillar-box while going, many years later, to visit Maggie and Sara. When she pauses at the bridge and looks down at the water, her 'buried feeling' comes to the surface:

> She remembered how she stood there on the night of a certain engagement, crying; her tears had fallen, her happiness, it seemed to her, had fallen. Then she had turned - here she turned - and had seen the churches, the masts and roofs of the city. There is *that*, she had said to herself...A queer expression, half frown, half smile, formed on her face and she threw herself slightly backwards, as if she were leading an army (p. 131).

The physical objects of the city such as the bridge and churches remind Rose of her painful experience, yet she transfers these painful impressions to the whole of her past experience. Like Wordsworth in *Tintern Abbey* (1798), here Woolf unifies thought and image, subject and object in that sensuous continuity of being. Rose remembers the night she was frightened in this place, and the objects become part of her visionary recollections of the past experience. Later, when she enters her cousins' house, Rose finds various scenes she never imagined before she came: 'Everything was different from what she expected...Maggie too looked different from what she had looked in the shop...But there was the crimson-and-gilt chair; she recognized it with relief' (p. 134). When Sara and Maggie talk of the Pargiter family as well as of the scenes of Abercorn Terrace which they recall from their childhood, Rose thinks:

> They talked...as if Abercorn Terrace were a scene in a play. They talked as if they were speaking of people who were real, but not real in the way in which she felt herself to be real. It puzzled her; it made her feel that she was two different people at the same time; that she was living at two different times at the same moment...What is the use, she thought, of trying to tell people about one's past? What is one's past? (pp. 135-6)

In this quotation, as in the others, 'scene-making' is central to Woolf's art of

writing. In her diary entry, she writes: 'I keep thinking of different ways to manage my scenes; conceiving endless possibilities; seeing life, as I walk about the streets, an immense opaque block of material to be conveyed by me into its equivalent of language' (D, I, p. 214, 4 Nov. 1918). Woolf's 'scene-making' in both the past and present suggests a continuing existence of the self as two different beings at the same moment - the one in the past and the other in the present. Woolf's view of 'two different beings' recalls Wordsworthian memory. While contemplating his earlier days, the poet of *The Prelude* also sees himself as 'two consciousnesses, conscious of myself / And of some other being'- the person he is and the person he was (II, 32-33).

For Woolf, as for Wordsworth, memory becomes a great synthesizer of the mind, an instrument of transforming power, in which her characters discover the continuity of their identities when the mind receives the picture of the past and keeps it alive in the present. In *The Years*, most of the characters frequently recall the significant moments of their past lives, so that the emotions, which are associated with those moments, get more complex as the years pass. Such emotions are so intensified once they are re-awakened by familiar scenes that they erase the distinction between the past and the present. The implication of a simultaneity of seeing with 'two consciousnesses' at the same time suggests a sort of fleeting vision, but it is constantly interrupted by the sounding of music, a bell ringing, a car hooting and a man shouting outside. Hence this oscillation between the past and the present again brings about a complex sense of life. Such a perception of the narrative pattern of *The Years* - a meditation caused by many fragmented visual scenes, between what was and what is - suggests a similar sense of poetic form to that which M. H. Abrams calls 'the greater Romantic lyric', deriving its implication from Wordsworth's 'persisting double awareness of things as they are and as they

were'.[17] This 'double awareness' of the past and present is important for Woolf's view of history in *The Years*. She shows us history not as a fixed discipline of patriarchy, but as always changing experience and feeling as process. Memory enables Woolf to establish a continuity between past and present, and thus she re-defines history according to the view of outsiders in a feminist postpatriarchal age.

The 'double awareness' of memory also drives Eleanor into the mystery of her own being more than fifty years later in the 'Present Day' section of *The Years*. In a moment of vision, she perceives that her understanding of her life is that of constant change rather than of solidity. When Sara asks her at the dinner party to talk about her life, Eleanor thinks:

> My life...I haven't got one, she thought. Oughtn't a life to be something you could handle and produce? - a life of seventy odd years. But I have only the present moment, she thought. Here she was alive, now, listening to the fox-trot. Then she looked round...Yes, things came back to her. A long strip of life lay behind her. Edward crying; Mrs Levy talking; snow falling; a sunflower with a crack in it...Millions of things came back to her. Atoms danced apart and massed themselves. But how did they compose what people call a life? She clenched her hands and felt the hard little coins she was holding. Perhaps there's "I" at the middle of it, she thought; a knot; a centre; and again she saw herself sitting at the table drawing on the blotting paper, digging little holes from which spokes radiated. Out and out they went; thing followed thing, scene obliterated scene...My life...I can't find words; I can't tell anybody...My life's been other people's lives, Eleanor thought- my father's; Morris's; My friend's...(pp. 294-5)

As the quotation suggests, Eleanor's earlier memories create emotion, work within her, and in working, enlarge understanding and the sense of her existence. Moreover, this quotation, like the others Woolf expresses throughout *The Years*, also highlights the problem of individual characterization. She represents Eleanor in such a way that her life cannot be described, because her life is not only her own, but 'other people's lives'. The view of 'other people's lives' is linked to Woolf's utopian impulse to merge separate identities in a communal sense of being. In her modernist perception of identity, therefore, 'nothing was fixed; nothing was known;

life was open and free' as a 'perpetual discovery' (pp. 307, 308). She represents Eleanor as seeking a romantic unity and harmony beneath all the diversities and openness of life. To convey such a poetic view of life, Woolf uses memory to efface factual self and objective reality.

In the quotation above, Woolf fuses together both the Romantic and modernist view of the self when she focuses explicitly on the subjective experience of Eleanor which transforms life into art. Eleanor, having moved outside herself and the events of her life in a moment of vision, gives her life a pictorial and visual shape. She perceives her life imaginatively as 'atoms [that] danced apart and massed themselves'. By this metaphor, Woolf conveys the creative process itself activated by memory. As Eleanor loses consciousness of the external things, energy is vigorously transformed in her creative mind, which keeps going back into scenes, names, sayings and memories of her childhood. In 'The Narrow Bridge of Art' (1927), Woolf writes, 'every moment is the centre and meeting-place of an extraordinary number of perceptions which have not yet been expressed. Life is always and inevitably much richer than we who try to express it' (CE, II, p. 229). In Eleanor's perception of 'millions of things' as fluid and spontaneous, Woolf not only undermines the basis of a fixed self, but she also represents the richness of personality - a richness in which the self transcends itself in the complex process of time's fluidity when the experiences of the past score themselves in our memories by flickering into the present consciousness. Thus, consciousness is constituted as 'being two people at the same time' (p. 137) or as 'living at two different times at the same moment' (p. 135). Woolf's sense of past memories coming to the surface of the present consciousness recalls Wordsworth's:

> ...a shy spirit in my heart,
> That comes and goes will sometimes leap
> From hiding places ten years deep;

> Or haunts me with familiar face,
> Returning, like a ghost unlaid,
> Until the debt I owe be paid (*The Waggoner* (1819), IV, 210-15).

When the 'shy spirit' comes back from 'ten years deep' and visits us 'with familiar face', it 'binds the perishable hours of life':

> Each to the other, and the curious props
> By which the world of memory and thought
> Exist and is sustained (*The Prelude*, VII, 462-65).

However, although Eleanor, like Orlando, thinks that 'perhaps there's an '"I" at the middle...a centre', she faces questions of 'how did they compose what people call a life?' and what, if anything, gives life a shape and meaningful pattern? In the midst of this confusion, she strives to find meaning for her life, but she experiences only the fleeting image of the "I", vacillating backforwards and forwards in time under the myriad impressions she receives. The possible centre thus radiates 'out and out'. What she is left with then is a dissolved, decentered and elusive sense of identity. Thus, Woolf frees Eleanor from the limitation of self, enabling her mind to receive millions of things simultaneously.

In *The Years*, the only unity Woolf strives to convey is that of the choral consciousness of the visionary outsider characters of the story. From the very beginning of *The Years*, Woolf represents the Pargiter women as wanting such unity as opposed to the social divisions created by patriarchal society and culture. In society, as Woolf represents it, harmony is continuously frustrated; especially in the early sections of the novel, one can see a battle between characters' desires and the social forms which govern their behaviour.

Thus, a Shelleyan yearning for a new life becomes a common aim of the Pargiter women in *The Years*. In the section 1910, Sara imagines a new world which would entirely refuse the violence in the present. After watching a drunk man in the street, she anticipates: 'In time to come...people looking into this room - this

cave, this little antre, scooped out of mud and dung, will hold their fingers to their noses...and say, "pah! They stink!"' (p. 153). The drunk man, leaning against the lamp-post, recalls the man at the pillar-box as a symbol of male sexual violence against women. Maggie agrees with her sister's rejection of the present world order based upon the violence and inequality: 'it was true...they were nasty little creatures, driven by uncontrollable lusts. The night was full of roaring and cursing; of violence and unrest, also of beauty and joy' (p. 153). In the 'Present Day' section of *The Years*, Woolf intensifies this romantic longing for a new world among her characters who disparage the patriarchal past and favour more sexual freedom in the present and future. Kitty condemns her childhood: 'But speaking for myself, the old days were bad days, wicked days, cruel days' (p. 322), and then she praises the present: 'How nice not to mind what people think! Now one can live as one likes...now that one's seventy' (p. 338). Delia agrees with Kitty: 'It was Hell...speaking quite simply' (p. 335), and she also celebrates the new world: 'But not the past- not memories. The present; the future- that was what she wanted' (p. 339).

It is Woolf's visionary outsiders speaking as a chorus who can envision such a future society, questioning the substantiality of patriarchy. In the choral form of the novel's conversations, Woolf rejects and dissolves individual solidity. Meaning is gradually constructed through each character's changing response, since each character continues to criticise, comment, add to and modify the others' views:

> 'About the new world...' [Eleanor] said aloud. D'you think we're going to improve?' she asked.
>
> 'Yes, yes,' [Nicholas] said, nodding his head.
>
> 'But how...' she began, '...how can we improve ourselves...live more...' - she dropped her voice as if she were afraid of waking sleepers - '...live more naturally...better...how can we?'
>
> 'It is only a question,' he said - he stopped. He drew himself close to her - 'of learning. The soul...' Again he stopped.
>
> 'Yes - the soul?' she prompted him.
>
> 'The soul - the whole being,' he explained. He hollowed his hands as if to enclose a circle. 'It wishes to expand; to adventure; to form - new

combinations?' (p. 238)

The fullest choral expression of utopian belief in a new world emerges at Delia's final dinner party in the 'Present Day' of the novel set in artistic opposition to the earlier high society dinner party given by Kitty as Lady Lasswade. At Delia's party, symbolically are 'gathered in a group...the old brothers and sisters', the young generation and other people (p. 347). It takes place not in the private space of a great London home, but in a flower-bedecked estate agent's office, with people sitting on stools or on the floor, dining at every kind of table. Delia thinks that this 'had always been her aim...to do away with the absurd conventions of English life' (p. 320). Woolf represents their bitterness, anxieties and worries about the past and present, but suddenly 'things seemed to have lost their skins; to be freed from some surface hardness...radiat[ing] out some warmth, some glamour' (pp. 231-2). In this moment of pleasure and intimacy for the first time as a group, these characters drink 'to the New World' and want to celebrate it with a speech although this is constantly interrupted (p. 235). In particular, it is Eleanor who envisions 'another space of time' in which happiness predominates (p 236). Eleanor's optimism spills out to the younger generation like her niece Peggy: '[Eleanor's] laughter had had some strange effect on her. It has relaxed her, enlarged her. She felt, or rather she saw, not a place, but a state of being, in which there was real laughter, real happiness, and this fractured world was whole; whole, and free' (p. 313). Eventually, the hopes and visions of Eleanor and Peggy also make the young North understand what they mean by a different and new world and life.

North, just back from Africa, feels himself 'an outsider' in the metropolis as everyone is talking about 'politics and money' (p. 324). Woolf represents him differently from older male Pargiter characters, like Morris and Edward, in that North rejects the masculine ideal of the past symbolized by Edward. Like Katharine

and Orlando, he finds the masculine way of life limited, 'all locked up, refrigerated...[in] beautiful words' (p. 328). North, like Orlando, is free from male sex-consciousness. As an outsider, he rejects the rigidity of patriarchal thought which Woolf represents as a barrier to 'new combinations'. Above all, North rejects fascism: 'Not black shirts, green shirts, red shirts - always posing in the public eye; that's all poppycock' (p. 329). Having been liberated from all these authoritarian forms of self, Woolf endows him with ability to 'make a new ripple in human consciousness, be the bubble and the stream, the stream and the bubble - myself and the world together - he raised his glass. Anonymously, he said, looking at the clear yellow liquid' (pp. 329-30). As Woolf suggests in *Orlando* (1928), the 'anonymous' self, lost and found within city crowds, offers a solution to contradictions not only within the individual consciousness but also between the individual and the society in which he/she lives. Anonymity, as the previous chapter examines in detail, also involves Woolf's view of the poetic quality which enables the artist to go beyond any limiting sense of self for aesthetic creation. In his aesthetic understanding, therefore, North perceives the hidden fountain of life: 'For him a life modelled on the jet (he was watching the bubbles rise), on the spring, [on] the hard leaping fountain; another life; a different life. Not halls and reverberating megaphones; not marching in step after leaders, in herds, groups, societies, caparisoned' (p. 329).

In the communal perception of her outsiders, Woolf evades gender and sexual difference and unites her characters in romantic yearning for 'a new world' or 'another kind of civilisation' as opposed to the one represented in the early part of the novel by the pillar-box (p. 296). *The Years* announces the approach of such 'a new world' or 'another civilisation'. Nicholas, a foreign and homosexual character in the novel, describes to Kitty privately what he would have said in his speech if he had not been constantly interrupted: 'And finally...I was going to drink to the

human race. The human race...which is now in its infancy, may it grow to maturity' (p. 342). At the end of the novel, Eleanor also invokes the beginning of this 'new world'. At the end of the party, as she looks out of a window, she sees a young man and a girl who get out of a taxi, and the sight has an 'extraordinary' effect on her imagination: '"There," Eleanor murmured, as he opened the door and they stood for a moment on the threshold. "There!" she repeated, as the door shut with a little thud behind them..."And now!?" she said, looking at Morris..."And now?" she asked, holding out her hands to him' (p. 349). The implication of Eleanor's sudden remark 'There' suggests that she has just realized what Woolf's characters have been seeking throughout *The Years* 'another and different life', and then Eleanor stretches her hands out to Morris. This new relationship between brother and sister, Morris and Eleanor, is of importance for two reasons. First, it has political and cultural consequences in that Woolf, reconciling the relationship between Eleanor and Morris, suggests a reconciling of older gender conflict in a new postpatriarchal society. Secondly, it has a romantic implication in the sense that Woolf endows her characters with an imaginary space available and accessible for both men and women equally and collectively in future society. Like Wordsworth in his poem, 'Composed Upon Westminster Bridge' (1807)[18], therefore, Woolf ends *The Years* with an optimistic view for the future society in Eleanor's moment of vision: 'The sun had risen, and the sky above the houses wore an air of extraordinary beauty, simplicity and peace (p. 349). As in her previous novels, Woolf's artistic vision overcomes and transforms all the contradictions, discords and separations into at least a temporary harmony and unity.

Notes

1. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, ed. by David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 6. For an exploration of the relationship between modernism and modernity, see the following critics: Susan M. Squier, *Virginia Woolf and London: The Sexual Politics of the City* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Rachel Bowlby, *Virginia Woolf: Feminist Destinations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988); Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990); *Mapping The Subject: Geographies of Cultural Transformation*, ed. by Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift (London: Routledge, 1995); Laura Marcus, *Virginia Woolf* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1997).

2. Virginia Woolf, *The Years* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), pp. 6, 91, 182. Further references to this edition will appear in the text.

3. See, for example, Malcolm Bradbury, 'The Cities of Modernism', in *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930*, ed. by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), pp. 96-104; Raymond Williams, 'The Metropolis and the Emergence of Modernism', in *Modernism/Postmodernism*, ed. by Peter Brooker (London: Longman, 1992), pp. 82-94.

4. Georg Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', in *Classic Essays on the Culture of Cities*, ed. by Richard Sennett (Englewood Cliffts, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1969), pp. 47-60; Malcolm Bradbury, *The Social Context of the Modern English Novel*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1972), p. 49; Laura Marcus, *Virginia Woolf* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1997), p. 69.

5. James Donald, 'THIS, HERE, NOW: Imagining the Modern City', in *Imagining Cities: Scripts, Signs, Memory*, ed. by Sallie Westwood and John Williams (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 182.

6. Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), p. 186.

7. Massey, p. 177.

8. See Louise A. DeSalvo, '1897: Virginia Woolf at Fifteen', in *Virginia Woolf: A Feminist Slant*, ed. by Jane Marcus (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981), pp. 78-108.

9. While writing *Night and Day*, Woolf describes London in her diary: 'Here I was interrupted on the verge of a description of London at the meeting of sunset & moon rise. I drove on top a Bus from Oxford St. to Victoria Station, & observed how the passengers were watching the spectacle: the same sense of interest & mute attention shown as in the dress circle before some pageant. A Spring

night; blue sky with a smoke mist over the houses. The shops were still lit; but not the lamps, so that there were bars of light all down the streets; & in Bond Street I was at a loss to account for a great chandelier of light at the end of the street; but it proved to be several shop windows jutting out into the road, with lights on different tiers. Then at Hyde Park Corner the search light rays out, across the blue; part of a pageant on a stage where all has been wonderfully muted down. The gentleness of the scene was what impressed me; a twilight view of London. Houses very large & looking stately. Now & then someone, as the moon came into view, remarked upon the chance for an air raid. We escaped though, a cloud rising towards night' (D, I, p. 111, 21 January 1918).

10. E. M. Forster, 'Virginia Woolf', in *Virginia Woolf: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Claire Sprague (Englewood Clifts, N. J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1971), p. 18.

11. Josephine O'Brien Schaefer, 'The Vision Falters: *The Years*, 1937', in *Virginia Woolf: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by Claire Sprague (Englewood Clifts, N. J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1971), pp. 130-144. Similarly, Edwin Muir and Scott James view *The Years* as 'dead and disappointing', AWD, p. 280, 2 April 1937. As recently as 1977, Victoria Middleton also considers it as 'an ugly and poorly written novel, at best a misfire', Victoria S. Middleton, '*The Years*: A Deliberate Failure', *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, 80 (1977), p. 160.

12. Susan Dick, *Virginia Woolf* (London: Edward Arnold, 1989), p. 71. See also Bernard Blackstone, *Virginia Woolf* (London: F. Mildner & Sons, 1969), p. 13.

13. James Hafley, *The Glass Roof: Virginia Woolf as Novelist* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963), pp. 132, 136.

14. See also another diary entry on 11 January 1935 for the similar view, AWD, , p. 237.

15. For a detailed discussion of memory in Wordsworth's poetry, see Christopher Salvesen, *The Landscape of Memory: A Study of Wordsworth's Poetry* (London: Edward Arnold, 1965).

16. *Wordsworth: Poetical Works*, ed. by Thomas Hutchinson and Ernest De Selincourt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 740.

17. M. H. Abrams, 'Structure and Style', in *The Correspondent Breeze: Essays on English Romanticism*, ed. by M. H. Abrams (New York: Norton, 1984), 76-108 (p. 83).

18. This city now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air (*Composed*

Upon Westminster Bridge, 4-8).

CHAPTER VI

Between the Acts (1941): "I" Rejected: "We" Substituted Against the Fall of Civilization Under the Threat of War

'Jane Austen never heard the canon roar at Waterloo', writes Virginia Woolf, suggesting the absence of war in nineteenth-century fiction ('The Leaning Tower' (1940), CE, II, p. 164). The decade of 1930 underwent dramatic changes politically and culturally: Hitler comes to power; the Spanish civil war starts, and premonitions of the horror of World War II encompasses daily activities of life and enters the private home through the mass media of radio and newspapers. Unlike nineteenth-century writers, therefore, Woolf is not far away from these events as she writes continuously in her diary and letters, collects materials and photographs of death and ruined houses, reads and keeps notebooks of newspaper cuttings throughout the 1930s. The death of her nephew Julian Bell in the Spanish civil war as an ambulance driver, her deep concern with the Madrid massacres reported daily in the London newspapers and her own experience of World War I immerse Woolf intensely and sensitively in war. Hence war increasingly dominates her thoughts and writing in the 1930s. While writing *The Years* (1937), Woolf describes, in her diary, the way war invades her everyday life: 'But its odd, how near the guns have got to our private life again. I can quite distinctly see them & hear a roar, even though I go on, like a doomed mouse, nibbling at my daily page. What else is there to do' (D, V, p. 17, 13 March 1936). Woolf listens to the radio and writes:

> To-day we hear the gunfire in the Channel. We turn on the wireless; we hear an airman telling us how this very afternoon he shot down a raider; his machine caught fire; he plunged into the sea; the light turned green and then black; he rose to the top and was rescued by a trawler...we hear Hitler's voice as we sit at home of an evening ('The Leaning Tower', CE, II, p. 164).

Woolf's frequent comments in her diary throughout the 1930s show how she is deeply entrapped by her concern with the imminence of war. On 1 September 1939, she writes gloomily, 'Now at 1 I go in to listen I suppose to the declaration of war' (D, V, p. 232). 'This war has begun in cold blood. One merely feels that the killing machine has to be set in action' (D, V, p. 235, 6 Sept. 1939).

As well as fearing that war threatens the very survival of civilization and of art, Woolf also worries that it will cripple her creative power as a writer: 'But as the whole of Europe may be in flames - it's on the cards...But the whole thing trembles: & my book may be like a moth dancing over a bonfire - consumed in less than one second' (D, V, p. 142, 17 May 1938).[1] In another entry, she writes:

> It seems entirely meaningless - a perfunctory slaughter, like taking a jar in one hand, a hammer in the other. Why must this be smashed? Nobody knows. This feeling is different from any before. And all the blood has been let out of common life...Of course all creative power is cut off (D, V, p. 235, 6 Sept. 1939).

In her essay 'The Artist and Politics' (1936), Woolf also accounts for some of the ways in which war and the authoritarian system threaten artistic freedom and creativity:

> It is clear that the artist is affected as powerfully as other citizens when society is in chaos, although the disturbance affects him in different ways. His studio now is far from being a cloistered spot where he can contemplate his model or his apple in peace. It is besieged by voices, all disturbing...First there is the voice which cries: 'I cannot protect you; I cannot pay you. I am so tortured and distracted that I can no longer enjoy your works of art.' Then there is the voice which asks for help. 'Come down from your ivory tower, leave your studio,' it cries, 'and use your gifts as doctor, as teacher, not as artist.' Again there is the voice which warns the artist that unless he can show good cause why art benefits the state he will be made to help it actively - by making aeroplanes, by firing guns. And finally there is the voice which many artists in other countries have already heard and had to obey - the voice which proclaims that the artist is the servant of the politician. 'You shall only practise your art,' it says, 'at our bidding. Paint us pictures, carve us statues that glorify our gospels. Celebrate fascism; celebrate communism. Preach what we bid you preach. On no other terms shall you exist' (CE, II, p. 232).

Between the Acts, as this chapter explores, reveals Woolf's acute sensitivity

and response to authority and war, which she felt threatened the continuity of civilization and of art in the 1930s. She fights and writes against the tyranny, war and egotism of masculinity. Her fight is not propaganda or preaching but is intellectual and aesthetic. In her fight, Woolf as a woman writer remains outside patriarchal political norms and distances herself from any desire to 'impose "our" civilization or "our" dominion upon other people' (TG, p. 314). War and patriarchal politics, as she represents them, are means by which men try to satisfy their own sex instinct by killing and dominating the others. In 'Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid' (1940), Woolf asks us to feel, see and think about the root of war, authority and male aggression as well as of women's oppression in ways that help us to understand and redefine the nature of war. From her first novel to the last, in fact, she seeks to explore and clarify the connection between private and public violence, between the domestic and public effect of the patriarchal society, between male supremacy and female subordination and between conventions and the aesthetic. Hence Joan Bennett writes that war is a form of human agony that often haunts Woolf's novels.[2]

In 'Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid' (1940), Woolf terms the root of authority and aggression 'subconscious Hitlerism':

> The subconscious Hitlerism...is the desire for aggression; the desire to dominate and enslave. Even in the darkness we can see that made visible. We can see shop windows blazing; and women gazing; painted women; dressed-up women; women with crimson lips and crimson fingernails. They are slaves who are trying to enslave. If we could free ourselves from slavery we should free men from tyranny. Hitlers are bred by slaves' (CE, IV, p. 174).

For Woolf, it is this 'subconscious Hitlerism' that causes violence and threatens peace and liberty, yet her position in the fight against 'subconscious Hitlerism' is complex. She associates 'subconscious Hitlerism' with historical and cultural processes, because it has been 'fostered and cherished by education and tradition'

for centuries (CE, IV, p. 175). In Woolf's view, our upbringing and education breeds militarism and makes violence inevitable. Hence she argues that men and women must help each other to 'switch off' man's 'fighting instinct' for 'subconscious Hitlerism'; women must 'compensate the man for the loss of his gun' by creating 'more honourable activities for those who try to conquer in themselves their fighting instinct' (CE, IV, p. 175). For Woolf, one way this can be achieved is that women must leave their exclusive right of 'childbearing' and mothering and 'give [men] access to creative feelings. We must make them happy...We must bring [them] out of prison into the open air' (CE, IV, pp. 175-6). By this perception, she redefines the meaning of gender and turns upside down existing social and cultural values, which encourage aggression and militancy.

In 'Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid', Woolf also thinks of the 'fight' against 'subconscious Hitlerism' more broadly in a way that is linked to her feminism, pacifism and artistic view of writing:

> There is another way of fighting for freedom without arms; we can fight with the mind. We can make ideas that will help the young Englishman who is fighting up in the sky to defeat the enemy...'*I will not cease from mental fight*,' Blake wrote. Mental fight means 'thinking against the current, not with it' (CE, IV, pp. 173-4, emphasis added).[3]

This quotation is of importance in two ways. First, Woolf's 'mental fight' against a male fighting instinct encourages a communal impulse and awareness in which both men and women unite for the battle to make men see another social order. Woolf emphasizes the need for the communal feeling against the horror of a war of destructive capacity unprecedented in history. Her attempt to prompt a common thinking derives from the view that both men fighting abroad and women at home are suppressed under the tyranny of fascism and patriarchy. Although the current thought 'flows fast and furious...from the loudspeakers and politicians', telling us 'that we are a free people, fighting to defend freedom', Woolf, having consulted her

own experience, finds that 'it is not true that we are free. We are both prisoners tonight - he boxed up in his machine with a gun handy; we lying in the dark with a gas-mask handy' (CE, IV, p. 174). For both men and women, the enemy is the same: '"Hitler!" the loudspeakers cry with one voice. Who is Hitler? What is he? Aggressiveness, tyranny, the insane love of power made manifest...Destroy that, and you will be free' (CE, IV, p. 174). In *Between the Acts*, Woolf thus strives to transcend this aggression and tyranny by inventing an alternative female expansive process as communal vision: '"I" rejected: "We" substituted: to whom at the end there shall be an invocation? "We"...composed of many different things...we all life, all art, all waifs and strays - a rambling capricious but somehow unified whole - the present state of my mind' (D, V, p. 135, 26 April 1938). Woolf's communal thinking of 'we' and 'mental fight', as she writes 'Thoughts on Peace in an Air Raid' and diary, suggest a kind of continuity of literary tradition, linking her to Romantics such as Coleridge, Shelley and Blake. This view of continuity enables her not only to invent 'a new critical method' for each of her novels without limiting herself to any convention of writing, but also to project 'the flight of the mind' into the future (D, V, p. 298, 22 June 1940).

Woolf's turning back to Coleridge, Shelley and Blake suggests an expansive process in her practice of writing. As she writes in *A Room of One's Own* (1929), 'masterpieces are not single and solitary births; they are the outcome of many years of thinking in common, of thinking by the body of the people, so that the experience of the mass is behind the single voice' (ROO, p. 85). In this 'thinking in common', art expresses the individual identity and that of civilization and culture and gives them a sense of continuity even though they are threatened by violence and war. These 'masterpieces', produced by the common thinking, are kept in libraries; they, as old Bartholomew says in *Between the Acts*, become 'the treasured life-blood of

immortal spirit. Poets; the legislators of mankind. Doubtless, it was so'.[4] Woolf's view of poets as the 'legislators of mankind', recalls Shelley's statement in *A Defence of Poetry* (1840) that 'poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world'.[5] Through these books, therefore, writers gain a kind of timelessness as 'continuing presences' (ROO, p. 148). In 'A Letter to a Young Poet' (1932), Woolf writes: 'I do not believe in poets dying; Keats, Shelley, Byron are alive here in this room in you and you and you' (CE, II, p. 190). For Woolf, these 'continuing presences' represent a pattern or a communal vision beneath the flux of life. In 'A Sketch of the Past', she accounts for her view:

> Behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern; that we - I mean all human beings - are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work of art. Hamlet or a Beethoven quartet is the truth about this vast mass that we call the world. But there is no Shakespeare, there is no Beethoven; certainly and emphatically there is no God; we are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself (MB, p. 72)

From Woolf's perception, there is no God; there is only the 'thing itself' which may be kept continuous and permanent through art. Although war threatens to destroy peace and civilization, art and artistic vision can unite the artist to the continuity of human creativity throughout history.

In her essays written in the 1930s, therefore, Woolf explores the failures and successes of various artistic attempts to accomplish this ideal vision of continuity. In 'The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia' (1932), for example, she writes:

> If it is true that there are books written to escape from the present moment, and its meanness and its sordidity, it is certainly true that readers are familiar with a corresponding mood. To draw the blinds and shut the door, to muffle the noises of the street and shade the glare and flicker of its lights - that is our desire (CR, II, p. 40).

Sidney's writing seems inspiring, but Woolf soon finds him failing to achieve the ultimate vision she seeks: 'what, then, has become of that first intoxicating sense of freedom? We who wished to escape have been caught and enmeshed', because

'telling stories, he thought, was enough - one could follow another interminably. But where there is no end in view there is no sense of direction to draw us on' (CR, II, p. 48). While writing *Between the Acts* in the September of 1940, Woolf writes an essay on Coleridge, in which she talks again about the earthly entanglements as well as about the freedom an artist can accomplish through the creative vision. Although Coleridge is mentally and bodily sick, he is able to look upon a 'far-away vision that filled a very few pages with poems in which every word is exact and every image as clear as crystal' ('The Man at the Gate' (1940), CE, III, p. 221). Here what is important is not the personal failure or success of Coleridge, but the structure of the world that he creates out of words through his 'far-away vision'.

For the writers of the 1930s, creating a sense of a shared world offers a public duty which will transcend their isolated personal relations. In 'The Leaning Tower', Woolf wants them to have:

> the desire to be whole; to be human...the longing to be closer to their kind, to write the common speech of their kind, to share the emotions of their kind, no longer to be isolated and exalted in solitary upon their tower, but to be down on the ground with the mass of human kind (CE, II, p. 176).

As she points out in *Three Guineas* (1938), war breaks the distinction between public and private life; it is 'the bridge which connects the private house with the world of public life' (TG, p. 176). It is a bridge that 'suggests that the public and private worlds are inseparably connected; the tyrannies and servilities of the one are the tyrannies and servilities of the other' (TG, p. 364). Woolf thus encourages a common stance against tyranny and dictatorship by mixing her political voice with her feminist argument:

> We aren't passive spectators doomed to unresisting obedience but by our thoughts and actions can ourselves change that figure. A common interest unites us; it is one world, one life. How essential it is that we should realize that unity the dead bodies, the ruined houses prove. For such will be our ruin if you in the immensity of your public abstractions forget the private figure, or if we in the immensity of our emotion forget the public world. Both

> houses will be ruined, the public and the private, the material and spiritual, for they are inseparably connected (TG, pp. 364-5).

Woolf desires the unity of public and private lives in the face of tyranny. If men remain tyrants against women in the private house and keep them subordinate in the public life, they will continue to wage violence against each other. For Woolf, women should refigure their own roles in history, because the public world and the private home have been divided throughout history. By viewing them as united, she re-imagines and redefines that history. Woolf suggests that it is only art that reminds us of this 'capacity of the human spirit to overflow boundaries and make unity out of multiplicity', so that the role of the artist, she stresses, is to keep alive 'the recurring dream that has haunted the human mind since the beginning of time; the dream of peace; the dream of freedom' (TG, p. 365). It is such a communal vision and struggle for peace and freedom that Woolf offers the 'next generation' the hope that 'English literature will survive this war and cross the gulf...if we teach ourselves how to read and to write, how to preserve, and how to create' ('The Leaning Tower', CE, II, pp. 178-181).

In order to create such a communal vision against the spectre of war, Woolf introduces a new form of writing in *Between the Acts* just as she speculates about the future form of the novel in 'The Narrow Bridge of Art' (1927), which could appear 'in ten or fifteen years' time' (CE, II, p. 224). For her, the future novel will be in prose, but she prophesies that it will have 'many of the characteristics of poetry...It will be dramatic, and yet not a play. It will be read, not acted' (CE, II, p. 224).

Woolf's introduction of new forms in each novel represents different facets of social reality and of individual life as well as representing the continuous energy of her artistic creativity. She argues in 'Notes on an Elizabethan Play' (1925) that 'the great artist is the man who knows where to place himself above the shifting

scenery' (CR, I, p. 74). This continuous artistic experimentation and renewal of 'the shifting scenery' in her writing is linked to Shelley's sense of mutability, in which the author continually expands and escapes from the limitation of self: 'Man's yesterday may ne'er be like his morrow; / Nought may endure but Mutability' writes Shelley (*Mutability* (1816), 15-6). The introduction of 'dramatic' form into a novel is not simply an intensified use of dialogue and conflict but a theatrical event with the artistic emphasis on gestures, movements and costume as well as on the action and character resemblance to certain types of individual. The theatrical form is part of Woolf's constantly expansive imaginative process, in which she moves from the self that is empirical and fixed to another view of self which is sensuous, intuitive and universal. In this flexibility of play form, she writes, a future novelist will extend:

> the scope of his interest so as to dramatize some of those influences which play so large a part in life, yet have so far escaped the novelist - the power of music, the stimulus of sight, the effect on us of the shape of trees or the play of colour, the emotions bred in us by crowds, the obscure terrors and hatreds which come so irrationally in certain places or from certain places or from certain people, the delight of movement, the intoxication of wine ('The Narrow Bridge of Art', CE, II, pp. 228-9).

Woolf's play-form of writing also suggests a poetic quality. As in her previous experimental novels, she seeks to remove realist details, so that the play-form of novel emerges as different from the novel of a realist writer. Robert Kiely describes the movement from fictional narrative to the 'dramatic' or theatrical form as 'a movement from analysis to contemplation, from description to reflection. A play within a novel, like a play within a play, is a new layer of artifice that gives perspectives and credibility to the created environment from which it draws the materials it transforms'.[6] By keeping the structure of the novel or a prose narrative while inserting a dramatic form composed of the same characters and situation, Woolf makes the audience not only see themselves in a new way, but she also

engages them in a continual modification of perspective. In this constantly changing form of writing, therefore, Woolf challenges the assumption 'that "the novel" has a certain character which is now fixed and cannot be altered, that "life" has a certain limit which can be defined' ('Phases of Fiction' (1929), CE, II, p. 101). Woolf's subversion of the narrative order is an act of aesthetic and political revolt against authoritarian politics and control as defined and practised in both life and art.

Woolf employs her view of 'a new kind of play' in poetic prose form which is yet a theatrical event to achieve her communal vision in a continual shift of perspective, which she had imagined and planned fifteen years earlier (D, III, p. 128, 21 Feb. 1927).[7] Finding both the lyric poet and the 'psychological novelist' too limited and self-conscious ('The Narrow Bridge of Art', CE, II, pp. 219, 225), she looks back to the poetic drama and attitude towards life of the Elizabethans. Her turning back is significant for a number of reasons. Woolf seeks the continuity and communal experience beneath the 'long avenue' of literary tradition from the *Elizabethan age to the present* (CE, II, pp. 222). She praises and finds the 'poetic drama of the Elizabethan age' elastic as opposed to the *limitation of modernist* poetry, because the Elizabethans expressed themselves freely and fully, never making us 'feel that they are afraid or self-conscious, or that there is any thing hindering, hampering, inhibiting the full current of their minds' (CE, II, pp. 219, 221). By returning to this dramatic form of art, modernist artists, Woolf believes, would be able to convey not only the 'atmosphere of doubt and conflict that writers have now to create', but also the inconclusiveness of life without submitting their work to the ideological closure of nineteenth-century realism (CE, II, p. 219). Finally, as Brenda R. Silver argues, 'Virginia Woolf's recurring evocation of the Elizabethan Playhouse becomes a metaphor for a community where the artist not only shared a communal experience with his audience, but where he played an

integral role in the society at large', so that the communal experience between the audience and artist 'is on the level of consciousness - a community of minds established through art, and not a social community'.[8] In 'Notes on an Elizabethan play', Woolf describes the audience in their communal participation not as passive, isolated and separate, but rather as active participants in the act of creation, stamping and applauding. 'Indeed', she writes, 'half the work of the dramatists, one feels, was done in the Elizabethan age by the public' (CR, I, p. 75). In *Between the Acts*, Miss La Trobe's pageant, attended by the audience as a theatrical event, becomes a means for Woolf to imagine such a communal participation and perception when the author and audience, nobles and ordinary people unite.

Woolf explores her communal perception of identity in the dramatic form of *Between the Acts* as a further stage in the development of her writing practice about human life. She imagines 'a far richer grouping and proportion' by uniting 'the outer and inner' as in her earlier novels (AWD, p. 259, 18 Nov. 1935). As her diary suggests, she starts writing her last novel at 'intervals when the pressure was at its highest' during the difficult labour of her biography of *Roger Fry* (1940) (D, V, p. 340, 23 Nov. 1940). It is 'simply seized, one day, about April [1938], as a dangling thread: no notion what page came next. And then they came. To be written for pleasure' (D, V, p. 193, 19 Dec. 1938). But the 'pleasure' of the novel casts Woolf into doubt at once, and she describes herself 'in a dazed state, hovering between 2 worlds like a spider's web with nothing to attach the string to' (D, V, p. 138, 19 April 1938).

When at work on *Between the Acts*, Woolf says, 'I think I see a whole somewhere', yet she does not see wholeness when she finishes it; eventually she describes it as a 'medley' or 'a new combination of raw and lyrical' (D, V, p. 193, 19 Dec. 1938, p. 259, 19 Jan. 1940). This lyrical style links *Between the Acts* to

Woolf's earlier experimental novels. As she writes in her diary, 'scraps, orts & fragments' are a useful style for *Between the Acts*, considering 'scraps' as a description of fighting near Boulogne, and these 'scraps' become 'finger exercises' for the novel (D, V, p. 290, 31 May 1940). Woolf suggests writing and collecting 'lots of little poems [which] go into P[ointz] H[all]', her first title for the novel, and she intends to use them for her future criticism of English literature (D, V, p. 180, 14 Oct. 1938). In another entry, 'PH poetry', though 'not very good', is the product of a free and happy feeling when a solitary morning at Monk's House follows a London air raid (D, V, p. 313, 28 Aug. 1940). These entries suggest that the poetic experimental style is at the centre of *Between the Acts* as in Woolf's earlier novels, and PH poetry gives her pleasure, peace of mind and imaginative escape from the oppression of war in 1940.

In the poetic drama form of *Between the Acts*, Woolf not only seeks wholeness beneath fragments in the Romantic sense, she also desires to represent a common perception of identity as individual life becomes less important under the menace of war. Near the end of the novel, the audience are waiting anxiously for the last act of Miss La Trobe's pageant, but they are also worried about how she could represent 'ourselves', which they perceive as divided (p. 173). But Rev. Streatfield tries to make the audience see what her pageant means to show them: 'we are members one of another. Each is part of the whole...We act different parts; but are the same..."Scraps, orts and fragments! Surely we should unite?"' (pp. 172-3). Lucy Swithin would recall his 'we act different parts; but are the same' as particularly fitting to her unifying perception (pp. 173, 193). Hence it is the pageant which makes the audience realize the need of wholeness: 'What we need is a centre. Something to bring us all together' (p. 178). These quotations locate Woolf within a Romantic context, in which there appears desire for an essential unity beneath

fragments, an unchanging reality behind appearances. From the first novel to the last, Woolf's lyric intensity in her writing is clearly linked to her dissatisfaction with the realist representation as in the Edwardian novels. She further poetizes human identity in *Between the Acts* by dissolving the notion of the individual traits peculiar to novelistic characterization - the solid and sociological details of the external appearance as well as the coherent subjectivity of the individual self.

In *Between the Acts*, it is thus the artist and work of art that are shown to play an important role in time of war and violence by representing a communal perception of identity. The pageant in the novel, as a work of art written and directed by Miss La Trobe, unites not only known and unknown diverse people as a community, but it also makes them see the possibility of liberation from a 'vision of Europe, bristling with guns, poised with planes' and a sense of 'the doom of sudden death hanging over us...no retreating or advancing' (pp. 49, 103). The communal space of the pageant on the lawn of Pointz Hall, where all kinds of people, ranging from cowman, shepherds, ploughman, farmers, shopkeepers, cooks to kings and queens come together for a communal purpose, becomes a centre of community and Miss La Trobe's pageant the creator of it. Unlike Lily Briscoe of *To the Lighthouse* (1927), who achieves her vision through the self-possessed concrete canvass when she finishes her painting, 'Yes, she thought...I have had my vision' (FGN, p. 415) and Orlando with his/her poem, *The Oak Tree*, which receives public celebration and wins a prize, Miss La Trobe's task is more difficult. She deals in her pageant with the diverse community of people, exploring emotions deeply rooted in the human psyche as well as shared experience. Moreover, unlike Lily Briscoe's painting and Orlando's poem, Miss La Trobe is sure that her pageant has no physical permanence at all outside the moment of its representation; it passes and vanishes, and thus there is no chance of deciding its success in terms of personal

fame for the individual author. For example, the first interval of the pageant frustrates the audience; they leave the first act humming '*Dispersed are we*' (p. 86). When the audience come back to the play, Miss La Trobe hears scraps of their conversation and gnashes her teeth with shock: 'Here was her downfall; here was the Interval. Writing this skimble-skamble stuff in her cottage, she had agreed to cut the play here; a slave to her audience, - to Mrs Sand's grumble - about tea; about dinner - she had gashed the scene here' (p. 85).

Despite the sense of inadequacy and vulnerability in her pageant, however, what matters is a single moment of permanence and wholeness in the flux of the discontinuous and fragmented experience of life. With a sudden illumination, therefore, Miss La Trobe, as an artist, overcomes the feeling of inadequacy and failure and sees 'wandering bodies and floating voices in a cauldron, and makes rise up from its amorphous mass a recreated world. Her moment was on her - her glory' (p. 137). This creative process is never easy; she suffers a sense of agony and confusion each time due to the fact that her meaning is constantly threatened by interruption and dispersion. However, Miss La Trobe's real triumph is not to deliver a fully understandable meaning in the linear plot structure of the pageant, but rather the validation of her artistic vision and creativity of the mind, which endows her with the ability to have 'a passion for getting things up', a passion for making her audience see their 'unacted part[s]' (pp. 53, 137). Through Miss La Trobe's pageant, Woolf deals specifically with the artistic vision, uncovering the hidden affinities between art and life, the affinity in which the audience, though they feel themselves fragmented, see equally in themselves a potential for a form of unity and community that would survive the coming war. Woolf represents Miss La Trobe as artistically fulfilled, not by a successfully performed play but by the imaginative projection of vision, in which she creates in the audience a sense of a new order.

As the first interval starts, therefore, Miss La Trobe becomes delighted: 'Hadn't she, for twenty-five minutes, made them see? A vision imparted was a relief from agony...for one moment...one moment' (p. 88). This suggests that in Woolf's aesthetic theory of art, as in that of the Romantics, visionary glimpses of the unchanging reality behind appearances, are of greater importance than the finished work of art itself that records it. But this creative perception is an endless process to uncover the unchanging reality beneath appearances and diversity. Hence it cannot stop when Miss La Trobe's pageant is over. 'For another play always lay behind the play she had just written' (p. 58). This constant pursuit of vision in Woolf's poetic style suggests an affinity with the aesthetic view of Shelley in *A Defence of Poetry* (1840) as 'eternal' and 'infinite'.[9] Moreover, Miss La Trobe's poetic view of 'another play' that 'always lay behind the play' suggests a Shelleyan sense of continuous renewal in the imaginative creativity. In the Preface to *Alastor*, or, *The Spirit of Solitude* (1816), Shelley writes that a youth of genius, with 'uncorrupted feelings' and a passionate 'imagination...drinks deep of the fountains of knowledge, and is still insatiable'.[10]

Between the Acts with its pageant explores the whole of English literature, rejecting the performances of conventional patriotism and imperial history, having no 'Grand Ensemble. Army; Navy; Union Jack' (p. 141). It is acted in the ground of Pointz Hall, 'the very place for a play' as Miss La Trobe exclaims when she first sees it: 'There the stage; here the audience; and down there among the bushes a perfect dressing-room for the actors' (pp. 52-3). The quotation recalls Woolf's last essay 'Anon', in which Woolf writes of the 'common life' of medieval theatre staged in an 'uncovered theatre where the sun beats and the rains pour'.[11] The absence of walls is of importance to the staging of Miss La Trobe's pageant in the sense that Woolf breaks down the boundary not only between the author and the audience or

reader, but also between theatrical event and external physical world. Hence natural elements such as cows, swallows and rain have access to the action in the open performance place. Miss La Trobe attempts to break down the boundary between herself and her audience, yet Woolf suggests that she, like Rachel Vinrace in *The Voyage Out* (1915) and Mrs. Hilbery and Katharine in *Night and Day* (1919), is trapped by the old language, rigid and limited. It hinders Miss La Trobe from conveying her full sense of the diversity of common life. For Woolf, language is always a male convention; it serves men to represent a world in their own image, especially in the insistent 'I' of male writers.[12] Conventional public forms of language always limit and encourage division. So the words, used by Phyllis Jones in the first act of the pageant, 'peppered the audience as with a shower of hard little stones', creating 'a vast vacancy' between her and the audience (p. 71). Miss La Trobe seeks a language which will represent the continuity of history, culture and literary tradition, linking together the common life from 'prehistoric' time to the present (pp. 27, 197). In the age of 'Anon', Woolf writes, there was no separation between writer and reader, between artist and audience, so that there was no hierarchal relationship between men and women, no country gentleman's library in every house which Woolf satirizes in *Between the Acts*, there was only 'the common voice singing out of doors'.[13] In Woolf's view, it is this 'common voice' that may overcome divisions of gender and sexual difference as well as the disillusion and nothingness of war.

Although Miss La Trobe strives to perform the common history and literature of Britain in scene after scene from her pageant by fusing various recognizable Elizabethan, Restoration and Victorian archetypes, failures of language constantly menace her effort to communicate her vision. Hence the hope for the common view fades away as the audience gradually disperse and 'split up into scraps and

fragments' without meaning (p. 110). Miss La Trobe as a woman artist sees her failure as 'death': 'the stage was empty. Miss La Trobe leant against the tree, paralysed. Her power had left her. Beads of perspiration broke on her forehead. Illusion had failed. "This is death," she murmured, "death"' (pp. 125-6). The artist fails, but life itself comes to the rescue. Nature offers its illusion of sympathy when it is most needed. As Miss La Trobe agonizes over her failure, rain appeases the pain of the people of the world by 'weeping' for them. From this weeping, there appears a 'fresh' hope, and then Miss La Trobe exclaims vigorously, 'That's done it' (p. 162). Similarly:

> From cow after cow came the same yearning bellow. The whole world was filled with dumb yearning. It was the primeval voice sounding loud in the ear of the present moment...The cows annihilated the gap; bridged the distance; filled the emptiness and continued the emotion.
> Miss La Trobe waved her hand ecstatically at the cows.
> 'Thank Heaven!' she exclaimed (p. 126).

When the wind, rain and cows join the performance of the pageant, Miss La Trobe treats meaning as shared, as mutually generated by the author, players, audience and natural elements. Then meaning is free and fragile, able to bridge back to the time of 'Anon' and communicate it. As Gillian Beer points out, therefore, 'the prehistoric is seen not simply as part of a remote past, but as contiguous, a part of ordinary present-day life'.[14]

Throughout the play, Miss La Trobe prefers the position of 'Anon' and takes up Anon's anonymous words and voice, the voice that is 'no one's voice' (p. 162). In anonymous words and voice, Miss La Trobe suggests that the different names and costumes, which are demonstrated by the actors of her pageant, are only performative and strategic. While acting the historical time of Early Britain, Elizabethan, Restoration and Victorian, for example, the players are disguised in costumes, and their names are changed - the villagers as the Canterbury pilgrims,

Eliza Clark as Queen Elizabeth; the same woman, as Mr Streatfield says, plays both a Canterbury pilgrim and Lady Harridon. What Miss La Trobe tries to show her audience is that these variations in names and costumes do not matter, because 'we are all one' beneath these names and costumes (p. 157). Hence the pageant urges the audience to see that there never 'were such people' as the 'Victorians', 'only you and me and William dressed differently' as Lucy puts it (p. 156).

The pageant encourages the audience to recognize a common life by means of the choral singing of the 'digging and delving' villagers. The villagers wander among trees singing after one of the acts, and the wind blows their words; what they sing and what words they use are not important; what remains is the common life which music implies beneath different names, costumes and words:

> *Digging and delving*, the villagers sang passing in single file in and out between the trees, *for the earth is always the same, summer and winter and spring; and spring and winter again; ploughing and sowing, eating and growing; time passes*...The wind blew the words away (p. 112).

The villagers' singing suggests the continuity of existence even though time passes.

This continuing existence will survive the present moment of crisis and confusion.

Hence it embodies the hope of a future world. The diggers and delvers sing for a world that 'is always the same', a world that is timeless in its common values. In this world, costumes and names all change, but 'we remain forever the same' (p. 125). There is no need for the words that limit and separate us, so that their words 'didn't matter' (p. 85). At the end of the pageant, they feel more united than before, being afraid of using words as labels which may divide them. 'Must I be Thomas, you Jane?' They seek words which would not only 'protect and preserve us' from division, but also remind them of the common view of life (p. 171). Like Miss La Trobe as artist, therefore, the audience also experience anonymity feeling themselves not 'here or there...as if what I call myself was still floating unattached,

and didn't settle. Not quite themselves, they felt' (p. 134).

Thus, it is not words that unite the audience round a common life, but music used by Miss La Trobe in the pageant. Indeed, the pageant is about acting, dancing, singing, 'a little bit of everything' (p. 54). The sound of music has a more harmonizing and unifying effect on the audience than words. After each interval, it is music which not only keeps together the dispersing audience, but it also makes them aware of the hidden pattern beneath scraps, fragments and diversity. As Mrs Manresa and the others walk across the lawn to the strains of the gramophone, they intuitively recognize this unity:

> For I hear music, they were saying. Music wakes us. Music makes us see the hidden, join the broken. Look and listen. See the flowers, how they ray their redness, whiteness, silverness and blue. And the trees with their many-tongued much syllabling, their green and yellow leaves hustle us and shuffle us, and bid us, like the starlings, and the rooks, come together, crowd together, to chatter and make merry while the red cow moves forward and the black cow stands still (p. 108).

Music defies the repeated refrain of 'dispersed are we'. Under the effect of music, the audience feel closer not only to each other, but also to flowers, trees, birds and cows. Even the trees and birds are 'called out of their private lives' by music, called 'out of their separate avocations, and made to take part' (p. 105).

The gramophone music is not the only means used in *Between the Acts* to encourage unity; there are other non-verbal forms by which Woolf attempts to replace the old language. While waiting for another act, the audience see the 'view' as a 'melody', which holds them together:

> The view repeated in its own way what the tune was saying. The sun was sinking; the colours were merging; and the view was saying how after toil men rest from their labours; how coolness comes; reason prevails; and having unharnessed the team from the plough, neighbours dig in cottage gardens and lean over cottage gates. The cows, making a step forward, then standing still, were saying the same thing to perfection. Folded in this triple melody, the audience sat gazing; beheld gently and approvingly without interrogation (pp. 120-1).

As the words of the pageant fail to represent Miss La Trobe's illusion successfully, the cows undertake the responsibility for filling the 'emptiness' created by the failing language. Their yearning not only eradicates the 'gap', but they also carry on the 'emotion' interrupted by words (p. 126). Here Woolf fuses art and nature, human sensibility and objective materiality. In the act of the 'Present Time. Ourselves', therefore, 'nature once more had taken her part' with its unifying music and sound when Miss La Trobe fails: 'And Lord! the jangle and the din! The very cows joined in. Walloping, tail lashing, the reticence of nature was undone, and the barriers which should divide Man the Master from the Brute were dissolved. Then the dog joined in' (pp. 162, 165).

Woolf tries to show us an age, in which neither man nor his masculine language is master. If we remove humanity from the protective mediation of language, we will find an identity, which has connection with 'the Brute' - the cow, the bird and the dog. Hence Woolf's fictional artist Miss La Trobe digs and delves in her work of art to find this anonymous level of existence in common life which was more apparent in the age of Anon. Her pageant includes a 'primeval voice sounding loud in the ear of the present moment' (p. 126). In the final act, Miss La Trobe fuses together all these voices, and no one is sure who is speaking: 'Whose voice it was no one knew. It came from the bushes - a megaphonic, anonymous, loudspeaking affirmation', stressing that '*O we're all the same*' (pp. 167-68). Hence Miss La Trobe tries to be a semi-anonymous playwright, nameless in *Between the Acts* without any privilege over the players or the audience. She sometimes walks among her audience, arranges the stage, guides the actors and directs the play, yet 'very little was actually known about her' (p. 53); she is invisible most of the time, free to be someone beyond the definition of fixed identity, and thus the audience wonders about her name. She is simply 'whatshername' (p. 166). At the end, when

Mr. Streatfield wants to thank her, there is no one visible.

For Miss La Trobe, as for Anon, music, song and the 'voice', that is 'no one's voice', link us to a civilization where there used to be no division between the author and the audience. In *Between the Acts*, 'the chorus' of villagers, the actors, the audience and the author on the lawn at Pointz Hall help each other to achieve imaginative unity; the audience sing, murmur together, share the emotion, respond to the rhythm of music at the same time. Woolf suggests that we may be 'scraps, orts and fragments', yet the perception of common life unites us.

Yet although the pageant brings out *the capacity to envision a common life, Between the Acts* represents the main protagonist as trapped in isolation, unhappiness and conflict:

> He [Giles] said (without words), "I'm damnably unhappy."
> "So am I," Dodge echoed.
> "And I too," Isa thought.
> They were all caught and caged; prisoners; watching a spectacle. Nothing happened. The tick of the machine was maddening (p. 158).

The sense of 'caught and caged' dominates the fictional world of *Between the Acts*. Having been 'pegged down...like a captive balloon' by her domestic relations, or anxious about the future limited by 'what [she] must remember; what [she] would forget' (pp. 17, 139), Isa represents a sense of failure, incompletion and regret. If 'abortive' is, as she thinks, 'the word that expresse[s] her' (p. 14), it also describes virtually every character in the novel as disrupted and suspended. Giles, Isa's husband, for example, is 'manacled to a rock' and hopelessly filled with 'rage' by his vision of Europe under the threat of guns and warplanes (pp. 55, 49). The view of the outrageous war presses him 'flat', holds him 'fast, like a fish in water' (p. 43).[15] Hence Giles tries to get rid of his sense of outrage and impotency by flirting with Mrs Manresa as well as by feeling himself superior to the homosexual William

Dodge: 'It was a bit of luck - that he could despise him, not himself' (p. 100). In *Between the Acts*, Woolf represents her characters in a crisis of emotion, feeling and experience, which affects their relationships not only with one another but with society as well.

Woolf suggests that it is not just personal failing which produces individuals, who are 'abortive' and pressed flat in the fallen world of civilization. The doom of war hangs over them; it annoys, separates and fragments them. As the pageant moves on, negative feelings spread through our reading into the sense of whole community Woolf describes in the novel. Personal relations become increasingly full of hatred, destruction and conspiracy, because '*the gun slayers, bomb droppers* [are] *here or there. They do openly what we do slyly'* (p. 168).

Yet Woolf endows her characters with various creative impulses to escape from this bleak vision of the present moment caused by war. This creative impulse can be linked to the Romantic imaginary vision, in which Woolf's characters, when impatient with the meanness and sordidity of life, yearn for a world of unity and harmony. Like Miss La Trobe as the fictional artist of *Between the Acts*, for example, Isa Oliver is also full of such a romantic creative impulse. The poetic vision permeates Isa's thoughts throughout *Between the Acts*, yet her first expressive efforts for poetry are 'abortive', because the fear of her husband cripples her creativity and free expression; she hides her verses in an account book, so that he will not discover them (pp. 14, 46). Isa is distressed repeatedly by the masculine boots of her husband. The blood on his boots symbolizes his power and authority, yet she loathes masculine action and tries to escape the world of masculinity through her imaginary vision. But unlike Miss La Trobe, who tries to represent in her work of art what communal life requires, Isa is very much an individual creator of her own world. Isa uses poetic imagination largely as a means of escape from the

restriction of her domestic performance of the role 'wife' and 'mother'. She cannot envision these identities as part of a common life; as Miss La Trobe shows social roles to be only performances of parts in the pageant.

Isa's poetic quality starts very early in life. As a child, she watches her clergyman uncle, who 'made up poems, walking in his garden, saying them aloud' (p. 46); she, unlike other people, liked his poetry. When she reaches her adult identity, the poetic vision becomes very important, providing her with the capacity to escape both her agony at a world in which soldiers rape young girls (p. 19) and the limitation of her domestic life at home (17). She goes beyond the boundary of self into the dark shadow of her identity even though 'where we know not, where we go not, neither know nor care', 'flying, rushing through the ambient, incandescent, summer silent'; her rhyme becomes 'air' with 'a feather, a blue feather...flying mounting through the air...there to lose what binds us here...' (p. 14). In her tendency to escapism, Isa tries to write verses on a future world beyond judgment 'somewhere': it is 'not here, not now' but 'somewhere, this cloud , this crust, this dust - she waited for a rhyme; but somewhere surely one sun would shine, and all, without a doubt, would be clear' (pp. 56-57). As the broken rhythm suggests, utopian yearning in *Between the Acts* is represented more negatively than in *The Years* (1937). The urgency and danger of the times require the artist to envision the common life in the present rather than in a utopian hoped-for future.

While writing *Between the Acts*, the Shelleyan 'spirit of delight' becomes a source of calmness for Woolf under the fear of German planes, which brings her almost to the verge of collapse and death: 'And I read my Shelley at night. How delicate & pure & musical & uncorrupt he & Coleridge read...How lightly & firmly they put down their feet, & how they sing; & how they compact; & fuse, & deepen'; she wishes to 'invent a new critical method' as 'swifter' and 'lighter' such

as that used by Shelley and Coleridge, that may transcend the destruction of war and 'keep [alight] the flight of the mind' (D, V, p. 298, 22 June 1940). In 'Not One of Us' (1927), Woolf praises Shelley's style and 'state of being' in his poems, which comes 'through skeins of clouds and gusts of whirlwind out into a space of pure calm, of intense and windless serenity' (CE, IV, p. 25). In her view, Shelley's lyric style makes relationships less painful by helping us 'to greater sincerity and happiness in our own conflicts' (CE, IV, p. 25). But how and where can one capture a space of calmness either in the world or in ourselves, or beyond both of them? These are the questions that always makes Shelley himself sceptical of his vision as he writes in *Adonais* (1821): 'Die, / If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek' (464-65). Such moments of 'pure calm' are very brief, because the 'light of sense / Goes out' as Wordsworth writes in *The Prelude* (1850), under the power of the imaginary vision, 'with a flash that has revealed / The invisible world' (VI, 600-02). Yet although this flash of moment is transitory, it confirms that 'our being's heart and home / Is with infinitude.../ With hope it is, hope that can never die...'(VI, 604-606).

All of the characters in *Between the Acts* are represented as desiring 'infinitude' a space of calm, as a release from the pain and inadequacy of their present existence. Lucy Swithin turns to religious mysticism; William Dodge wants 'beauty' (p. 75), but beauty is not enough for Isa's agonizing experience, because the uncertain future disturbs her present under the threat of war. She wants to fly away from the shadow of the present to a world, 'where - no partings are - but eye meets eye' (p. 76), a life without separation, but collaboration between men and women, where 'hand seeks hand' (p. 139). In seeking such a calm space, Woolf locates Shelley into a central position in her aesthetic views for two reasons. First, Shelley's poetic vision delights her spirit when she is psychologically frustrated by

her experience of war. Secondly, both Woolf and Shelley imagine a future society based on freedom and equality, so that this view keeps our failing hope alive. In *Queen Mab* (1813), for example, Shelley writes:

> Futurity
> Exposes now its treasure; let the sight
> Renew and strengthen all thy failing hope.
> O human spirit! spur thee to the goal
> Where virtue fixes universal peace,
> And midst the ebb and flow of human things,
> Show somewhat stable, somewhat certain still,
> A lighthouse o'er the wild of dreary waves (VIII, 50-57).

What is stressed in the poem is that the present time is overshadowed by the uncertain future, yet the desire and vision for the future expose their 'treasures' that 'renew and strengthen all thy failing hope'. Similarly, through Miss La Trobe's work of art and Isa's romantic vision, Woolf, like Shelley, tries to find a present solution for endangered peace and civilization under the threat of war, but she also desires a future world, where there are 'no partings', and where 'hand seeks hand' in unity (pp. 76, 139).

In Miss La Trobe's eyes, the pageant is not a clear success, because she fails to make 'eye meets eye' in the present time of the play. Having failed in her pageant to represent the 'flattering tribute to ourselves' (p. 163), she uses mirrors in which the audience should recognize themselves. The narrator exclaims 'ourselves! ourselves!', yet the communal perception of identity does not come. The selves reflected suggest the modernist perception of the fragmented identity; unity is merely fantasy. The narrator continues: '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' (p. 165, Woolf's ellipses). The audience lose their belief of seeing themselves as whole; they are 'suspended, without being, in limbo' (p. 159), so that the search for unity, like the wild goose

chase after meaning in *Orlando* (1928), will continue for ever.

The breaks and interruptions in Miss La Trobe's pageant express both Woolf's modernist experimentation and her thematic concerns in *Between the Acts*. In these disjointed scenes, she subverts the rules of mimesis of the realist art. Nothing in the pageant imitates life. Nor does it seem to follow the rules of history, leaving out rulers except Queen Elizabeth and never referring to war. One spectator, Colonel Mayhew, asks his wife, 'why leave out the British army? What's history without the Army, eh?' (p. 141). The purpose behind Woolf's representing history without the army is to challenge patriarchal history and make us imagine the possibility of how we can stop history from repeating itself as war. If the audience see history and culture as a powerful narrative over which they have no control, authority and fascism will continue to suppress and dominate. In the pageant's inconclusiveness, Woolf rejects closure for art and history in order to construct and create new meaning. Miss La Trobe as an artist has been continuously interrupted and lost her control over her creation throughout *Between the Acts*, yet these interruptions have been followed by other successful moments of creation, like the unexpected participation of the digging and delving villagers, the sudden rainfall and the bellowing cows.

The pageant fails to represent achieved unity, but Woolf emphasizes that the pageant as a work of art shows something larger and more difficult to describe. This something is linked to a collective understanding that men and women do not need to imagine themselves as whole, but the pageant makes them at least see in their performance of parts, the possibility of creating a community and a communal perspective, 'a common effort' which will 'bring a common meaning to birth' (p. 137). This understanding is effected on both personal and communal levels in *Between the Acts*. On the personal level, there is a mutual interaction between the

artist's creativity and the individual understanding. After one of the interruptions in the pageant's performance, for example, the eyes of Miss La Trobe and Lucy Swithin meet in a common perception. Mrs Swithin feels that Miss La Trobe has given her an enabling self-image - an empowering belief that she could play many social roles: 'what a small part I've had to play! But you have made me feel I could have played...Cleopatra!' (p. 137). Miss La Trobe has 'stirred in me my unacted part' (p. 137).

Woolf uses the image of the 'wall', which is built by collective effort, to suggest this common effort of creating community in which everyone can play their role. Miss La Trobe, with the limited means at her disposal, has tried to convey to the audience that the falling 'civilization (the wall) [is] in ruins', but it can be 'rebuilt (witness man with hod) by human efforts; witness also woman handing bricks' (p. 163). For the construction of this lost common civilization, men and women must work together. Throughout *Between the Acts*, every act and effort, either by the pageant or the audience, renews this perception. Thus the Rev. Streatfield's message of unity remains in the ears of the dispersing audience (pp. 172-73). They appear to have understood the meaning and known their parts: 'he [Mr. Sreatfield] said she [Miss La Trobe] meant we all act' (p. 179). This common understanding is what Woolf desires to achieve in *Between the Acts* through a work of art, because each person takes away a different insight into herself/himself, yet they may compose something common and unified out of these insights - the Romantic theme that there is a fundamental unity beneath all these differences and scattered bits.

The idea of this inconclusiveness, yet the constant desire to create something new underlines Woolf's Romantic idea of creation in her practice of writing. In this respect, Miss La Trobe in *Between the Acts* appears explicitly as Woolf's creative

Romantic artist. Miss La Trobe has a Shelleyan sense of the constant mutability of creative energy. Despite her sense of failure, as she goes to the village pub, Miss La Trobe begins to envision next year's performance. Even before the pageant starts, she examines the scene and murmurs, 'it has the makings...' and we are told that 'another play always lay behind the play she had just written' (p. 58). This vision of 'another play' always prepares her for the next play after her perpetual failures. The view of another play suggests that the meaning of what resides behind the artistic effort, whether it has the essence of reality, or not, remains complex and mysterious as in Shelley as he concludes his contemplation in *Mont Blanc* (1816):

> What were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,
> If to the human mind's imaginings
> Silence and solitude were vacancy? (V, 142-44)

Bart Oliver guesses that what the artist seeks is not a religious sense of mystery but a conscious, fertile 'darkness in the mud; a whisky and soda at the pub; and coarse words descending like maggots through the waters' (p. 183). In a letter to G. L. Dickinson on 27 October 1931, Woolf writes: 'I feel things matter quite immensely. What the significance is, heaven knows I can't guess; but there is significance - that I feel overwhelmingly' (L, IV, p. 397). As Miss La Trobe leaves the grounds of the house, she undergoes a kind of 'death', in which the landscape is perceived as stripped of life and social meaning: 'It was growing dark. Since there were no clouds to trouble the sky, the blue was bluer, the green was greener. There was no longer a view - no Folly, no spire of Bolney Minster. It was land merely, no land in particular' (p. 189). Miss La Trobe pauses and puts down her suitcase, and suddenly the barren landscape engenders a stage. '"I should group them", she murmured, "here." It would be midnight; there would be two figures, half concealed by a rock. The curtain would rise. What would the first words be? The words escaped her' (p. 189). The 'two figures' imply a new creation, a new world, yet

the generating word is at stake, because the 'figure' may be figures of something that cannot be described in words. Woolf's view suggests an affinity with what Shelley writes in *On Life*: 'How vain is it to think that words penetrate the mystery of our being'.[16] But the first words of a new play come when her 'undermind works at top speed while the upper-mind drowses' ('The Leaning Tower', p. 166). The artist's vision and language suggest the dawn of a new world:

> She raised her glass to her lips. And drank. And listened. Words of one syllable sank down into mud. She drowsed; she nodded. The mud became fertile. Words rose above the intolerably laden dumb oxen plodding through the mud. Words without meaning - wonderful words (p. 191)

Miss La Trobe's final fertilizing moment of vision comes from nature. The tree outside is suddenly 'pelted' with 'the starlings'. The birds then 'pelted' the tree 'like so many winged stones', a description that suggests not only the scattered seed metaphor and growing of a new life, but also makes the tree '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!' (pp. 188-9). The birds appear again in the final scene, setting off Miss La Trobe's final vision in words: 'She set down her glass. She heard the first words' (p. 191).

Miss La Trobe's hearing of 'the first words' becomes a prefiguration of the last scene of *Between the Acts*, in which Giles and Isa sit alone after everyone has gone to bed. For the first time in the long day, they are actually about to speak to one another, and in doing so, they are about to create a new life for themselves and from themselves. 'Then the curtain rose. They spoke' (p. 197). Thus, Woolf links the engendering of artistic form and vision with the biological impulse which produces all life; the desire for sexual union is understood as part of the energy propelling the common life of collective endeavour. Mutability, change, failure, as

Shelley understood, are the fragments from which the creative imagination renews its vision of wholeness. Without collapse and disintegration, there could not be the moment of pattern and unity. As Shelley writes, the creative power of the mind compels 'all new successions to the forms they wear; / Torturing th'unwilling dross that checks its light / To its own likeness' (*Adonais*, 381-5). Woolf's modernist experience of fragmentation and collapse is the impulse behind her aesthetic pursuit of unity from the individual desire for transcendence expressed in her early fiction to her final affirmation of a common shared life.

Notes

1. For a similar view, see also D, V, pp. 161-2, 17 August 1938, p. 301, 28 August 1938, p. 189, 24 and 25 November 1938, p. 299, 27 June 1940, pp. 313-4, 31 August 1940.

2. Joan Bennett, *Virginia Woolf: Her Art as a Novelist*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), p. 70. For a full discussion of war in Woolf's work, see also Alex Zwerdling, *Virginia Woolf and the Real World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 302-23.

3. Woolf borrows 'I will not cease from mental fight' from William Blake's poem 'Milton', in *The Poems of William Blake*, ed. by W. H. Stevenson (London: Longman, 1971), p. 489:

   I will not cease from mental fight,
   Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand
   Till we have built Jerusalem
   In England's green & pleasant Land (33-6).

4. Woolf, *Between the Acts*, ed. by Frank Kermode (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 104. Further references to this edition will appear in the text.

5. *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. by Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977), p. 508.

6. Robert Kiely, *Beyond Egotism: The Fiction of James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and D. H. Lawrence* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 190.

7. For a similar view, see also, D, III, p. 139, 18 June 1927 and 9 May 1938; D, V, p. 336, 5 November 1940.

8. Brenda R. Silver, 'Virginia Woolf and the Concept of Community: The Elizabethan Playhouse', *Women's Studies*, 4 (1977), pp. 291-2.

9. *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, p. 483.

10. *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, p. 69.

11. '"Anon" and "Reader": Virginia Woolf's Last Essays', ed. by Brenda R. Silver, *Twentieth Century Literature*, 25 (1979), p. 398.

12. See, for example, ROO, pp. 98-149; 'Women and Fiction', CE, II, pp. 141-8.

13. "Anon" and "Reader": Virginia Woolf's Last Essays, ed. by Brenda R. Silver, *Twentieth Century Literature*, 25 (1979), p. 382.

14. Gillian Beer, 'Virginia Woolf and Prehistory', in *Arguing with the Past: Essays in Narrative From Woolf to Sidney* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 162.

15. Woolf uses the same image in 'A Sketch of the Past' when she argued her own sense of 'the invisible presences': 'The consciousness of other groups impinging upon ourselves; public opinion; what other people say and think; all those magnets which attract us this way to be like that, to repel us the other and make us different from that...Consider what immense force society brings to play upon each of us, how that society changes from decade to decade; and also from class to class;...I see myself as a fish in a stream; deflected; held in place; but cannot describe the stream' (MB, p. 80).

16. *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, p. 475.

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