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**THE DEATH OF RACHEL VINRACE:
A PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF
VIRGINIA WOOLF'S THE VOYAGE OUT**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with Virginia Woolf's first novel, The Voyage Out, and is a feminist, psychobiographical and sociological reading of this text. Louise DeSalvo (Virginia Woolf's First Voyage: A Novel in the Making (London: Macmillan, 1980)) and other critics have laid down much of the groundwork for my thesis by establishing many strong biographical links between the text and Woolf's life, therefore it is not primarily my intention to continue this approach, but to extend it by presenting an analysis of the particular patriarchal structure under which the heroine of the novel is oppressed, and seeking to relate this to the patriarchal late Victorian and Edwardian society in which Woolf herself grew up. Whereas the thesis incorporates elements of traditional literary criticism such as analyses of character and interrelations between different characters, nevertheless I couch these in an historical and political framework, seeking associations between the text and its wider historical setting (against which it is partly in reaction), and also explore the sociological and political debates and biases which were of particular concern in the historical period in which the novel was written. Also, my first chapter seeks to contextualize my discourse by analysing the major trends and warring factions in Woolf, and particularly Voyage Out, criticism over the past decade.

My conclusion (and the strength of the argument in the thesis) is that the causes of the death of Rachel, the heroine of the novel, are a complex mixture of the seemingly personal and the covertly political; her death is a product of her own unique personality, of the action of certain close

relationships upon her, and of the historical and political determinants which shape her fate. Another discourse runs through the thesis as it does sub-textually in the novel, that is, Woolf's identification with her central character, and I employ much material from Woolf's autobiographical writings to flesh out this additional dimension to the reading of the text, thereby encouraging the multiplicity of convergent readings to which it opens itself.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any University and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I consent to it being made available for photocopying and loan.

I give thanks to all who assisted me in the writing of this thesis, professionally my two supervisors Dr. Deirdre Coleman and Dr. Rosemary Moore, Miss Robin Eaden and Mr. Robert Harding who proofread my first chapter. Personally, I would like to acknowledge those friends and lovers who influenced both my life and work most deeply during the time of its writing: Mr. Chris Finch, Mr. John Hamburg, Miss Sharon Keay, Mr. Andrzej and Mrs. Christianne Markiewicz, Ms. Gabrielle Mortimer and Ms. Leonie Porter.

I wish also to thank my parents, Mr. Don and Mrs. Claire Murrie, for the emotional and financial support they offered me during the years of its composition, and the two typists involved in the preparation of part of the manuscript, Mrs. Elizabeth Wall and Miss Cecilia Wong.

I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my maternal grandmother, Doris Mary Hawke (1896-1972), a woman whose courage and endurance still stand as a shining example to all who knew her:

. . . the communication
Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the
language
of the living (Eliot).

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS IN TEXT

<u>AR000</u>	<u>A Room of One's Own</u>
<u>B</u>	Quentin Bell, <u>Virginia Woolf, A Biography</u>
<u>BP</u>	<u>Books and Portraits</u>
<u>BTA</u>	<u>Between the Acts</u>
<u>CR</u>	<u>The Common Reader</u>
<u>D</u>	<u>The Diary of Virginia Woolf</u>
<u>DOM</u>	<u>The Death of the Moth and Other Essays</u>
<u>G</u>	Lyndall Gordon, <u>Virginia Woolf: A Writer's Life</u>
<u>GR</u>	<u>Granite and Rainbow</u>
<u>L</u>	<u>The Letters of Virginia Woolf</u>
<u>MD</u>	<u>Mrs. Dalloway</u>
<u>S</u>	Jeanne Schulkind, <u>Moments of Being</u>
<u>TG</u>	<u>Three Guineas</u>
<u>TTL</u>	<u>To the Lighthouse</u>
<u>IVO</u>	<u>The Voyage Out</u>
<u>IY</u>	<u>The Years</u>

INTRODUCTION

Virginia Stephen began writing Melymbrosia, later to be renamed The Voyage Out¹, her first novel, probably late in 1907 on a trip by herself to Wells in Somerset and Manorbier in Wales. She writes in a letter to Violet Dickinson, her then friend and prime female model of five years' standing, "My writing makes me tremble, it seems so likely that it will be d-d bad - or only slight - after the manner of Vernon Lee," whom elsewhere in her letters she dismisses as turning "all good writing to vapour, w. her fluency and insipidity."² She accused herself of "grinding out the dullest stuff" which made her "blood run thick," and mentioned the four books of white paper awaiting her script (LI 316, 389). Almost five and a half years and many drafts later,³ Stephen, now Woolf, in February 1913 completed her novel.⁴ It was to be a further two years before it was actually published.

Louise DeSalvo in Virginia Woolf's First Voyage: A Novel in the Making (1980) has amply demonstrated the influence that events in Woolf's life during the period of her writing-process

1. Virginia Woolf, The Voyage Out (1915; rpt. London: Grafton, 1978). All references to page numbers are in the text.

2. The Letters of Virginia Woolf, ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann, 6 vols. (London: The Hogarth Press, 1975-1980), Vol. 1, 315, 320 (389, 397; [15?] Oct, Dec, 1907). My practice in citing from Woolf's letters is to include page number followed by letter number and date of letter. In reference to Woolf's letters and diaries and other similar material I retain abbreviations, thus "+" = and, "w." = with, etc..

3. Louise A. DeSalvo, Virginia Woolf's First Voyage: A Novel in the Making (London: Macmillan, 1980) 8-9 suggests that there were possibly seven drafts of the novel, and, if one takes into account the possibility of the existence of handwritten drafts which preceded the typescript drafts, the number could be as high as eleven or twelve. Parts of at least five drafts survive, with good evidence for the existence of a sixth.

4. DeSalvo 104.

had in altering and restructuring the course and content of her novel. Through her references to several drafts preceding the published version of the novel in 1915, and to letters and diaries and other evidence pertaining to the time of writing of the novel, DeSalvo makes out a strong case to the effect that The Voyage Out was not created in vacuo but was profoundly shaped by the circumstances of the life of its creator. A link had already been traced between the novel and Woolf's life by earlier critics; Floris Delattre in 1932 had noted the connection between the type of novel Woolf was trying to write and that of Terence Hewet, the major male character in the novel, on silence.⁵ Ten years later David Daiches, writing on Woolf's first two novels, divided the characters in each into three strata, defining the characterization in the first stratum as "subtle and searching, as though the author were exploring aspects of herself."⁶ In The Voyage Out this relates principally to Rachel's characterization, although Terence too assists in Rachel's process of self-discovery by acting as a foil and a catalyst to her self-realization. In Chapter 16 of the novel, as Rachel and Terence sit by the sea and talk, Terence is made to be the mouthpiece of the concerns of early twentieth-century English feminism, and causes Rachel to rethink values she has hitherto accepted unquestioningly. Deborah Newton noticed early in the history of Woolf criticism that "Rachel and Terence are inclined to be mouthpieces of

5. Floris Delattre, Le Roman Psychologique de Virginia Woolf (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1932) 89. Terence tells Rachel, the heroine of the novel, "I want to write a novel about Silence . . . the things people don't say" (Virginia Woolf, The Voyage Out (1915; rpt. Frogmore: Grafton, 1978) 220). In further references to The Voyage Out I supply only the relevant page number(s).

6. David Daiches, Virginia Woolf (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions, 1942) 22.

their creator's own views"⁷; and a more developed view of the subtle relationship between their characters as embodying varying aspects of Woolf's self, the "down-to-earth, positive, and willed side" and the "more dreamy, withdrawn, and vulnerable part of her nature," finds a place in criticism as recent as Phyllis Rose's Woman of Letters (1978).⁸

Since the publication of Quentin Bell's biography of Woolf in 1972, biographical approaches towards all of her novels, including The Voyage Out, have intensified. The revelation of the sexual abuse of Woolf by her half-brothers George and Gerald Duckworth, commencing when she was six in Gerald's case and continued by George after their mother's death in 1895 to 1903 or 1904 as her father lay dying, goes a long way towards explaining Rachel's sexual attitudes in the novel and their relation to her impending marriage with Terence.⁹ Rachel, when confronted in the novel with the fact that sexuality exists, chooses to deny the sexual part of her nature and to escape into a watery death.

Similarly, Woolf's complete letters which began to appear in 1975; the volume of previously unpublished autobiographical writings, Moments of Being, which appeared in 1976; and the increasing use of unpublished autobiographical or semi-autobiographical material from the Berg Collection in New York substantially filled out this early period of Woolf's life and supplied many telling parallels between it and the course taken by her first novel.

7. Deborah Newton, Virginia Woolf (Melbourne: U of Melbourne P, 1946) 24.

8. Phyllis Rose, Woman of Letters: A Life of Virginia Woolf (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978) 66.

9. Quentin Bell, Virginia Woolf: A Biography (London: The Hogarth Press, 1972), I, 42-4.

It is not primarily my intention in this thesis to try to forge a biographical connection between the materials at hand as this has already been done extensively by DeSalvo and by Roger Poole,¹⁰ Mark Spilka,¹¹ Stephen Trombley,¹² and Lyndall Gordon¹³ among others. One of the main theses of these critics is that Rachel's unexpected yet literarily convenient death in The Voyage Out, ostensibly from a "fever" (366) contracted either up the Orinoco on an expedition or due to poorly prepared food at the villa at Santa Marina is merely an elaborate excuse for Woolf to introduce hallucinatory scenes and other personal, first-hand experiences of insanity into her novel, and also an attempt to resolve her mixed and confused feelings during her courtship with Leonard Woolf which coincided with the latter stages of her writing of the novel. DeSalvo catalogues enough instances of breakdown and insanity at crucial stages in Woolf's writing-process to lend support to the conviction that the material with which she was working was highly personal indeed.¹⁴ Therefore, rather than approaching the event of Rachel's death as a purely physical phenomenon, this group of critics completely bypasses that surface view of the text and concentrates instead on the psychological and autobiographical sub-text which Woolf has couched in the figure of Rachel.

The object of this thesis is, by extending this approach

10. Roger Poole, The Unknown Virginia Woolf (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1978).

11. Mark Spilka, Virginia Woolf's Quarrel with Grieving (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1980).

12. Stephen Trombley, 'All that Summer She was Mad': Virginia Woolf and Her Doctors (London: Junction, 1981).

13. Lyndall Gordon, Virginia Woolf: A Writer's Life (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1984).

14. DeSalvo X, 5, 8, 11, 12, 63, 70, 74, 75, 104-5, 107, 108-9, 126, 134, 149, 154, 158-9.

to the novel, to see how far particular male and female characters, and indeed the concepts of "the masculine" and "the feminine" themselves, bear upon Rachel's death, and to examine the sociological foundations which underlie the production of the discourses of masculinity and femininity in the Victorian and Edwardian age. I will not be dealing with biographical information per se, but only as its use seems vital to illuminate certain aspects of the text which would otherwise go unnoticed or else lose their doubleheaded literary and personal /autobiographical function, which is a characteristic of the great majority of Woolf's fiction. I am arguing that Rachel's death is a fictional ruse symbolizing Woolf's death-wish in relation to her forthcoming marriage with Leonard, just as Rachel dies on the eve of marriage to Terence. In this I follow in the paths of previous critics. I wish to approach this event however from the perspectives of sexuality and gender relevant to the fate of Rachel as a woman born into one of the most rigidly patriarchal societies that has ever existed, that of Victorian England. In this society in which gender boundaries were well-defined and gender-roles relatively fixed, but which contained the elements in embryo of the disruptions of this order in later eras, Rachel considers the possibilities which life and love hold for her, and chooses death as an alternative. I trace the course of the novel which culminates in her acquiescence to this death, through her initial encounter with sexuality in the arms of Richard Dalloway, a Conservative politician; to her symbiotic relationship with her aunt Helen, a substitute for her dead mother; to her meetings with Hirst, a Cambridge student ignorant and contemptuous of women, her false love; and Hewet,

her true. As the date of her wedding to Hewet draws nearer, Rachel finds the pressures of love and sexuality in this society to be overwhelming, and takes refuge in delirium and death as means of escape from the fate she so earnestly wishes to avoid.

In this thesis I take for granted that gender categories are not innate but differ between societies in time and place, the qualities of "masculinity" and "femininity" being open to a variety of cultural constructions depending upon the particular needs of the society which they serve.¹⁵ In Rachel's case a conflict exists between her own notions of personal freedom and the forms of sexual and imaginative expression which her society holds as important and normative, thus in Kristevan terms she may be said to represent the feminine in the aspect of that which society represses or marginalizes, as against the masculine world of Ridley Ambrose, Pepper, Dalloway and Hirst who represent the great patriarchal institutions of England. Terence Hewet hovers uneasily between these two alternative relations to the embodiment of power in society.

Within Woolf's fictional study of the construction of gender in early twentieth-century England through the situation and fate of a single woman, a number of alternate and complementary binary oppositions suggest themselves in addition to the feminine/the masculine: the inner life/the outer life, impersonality/personality, the unconscious/the conscious.

These relate primarily to Rachel as she faces aspects of life

15. On this crucial point, among the great volume of relevant scholarship see particularly Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, trans. H.M. Parshley (London: Jonathan Cape, 1953) and, for a number of perspectives upon the way gender is constructed in society, Sherry B. Ortner and Harriet Whitehead, eds., Sexual Meanings: The Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981).

in the novel out of the range of her previous experience. The masculine in its purely sexual aspect is undoubtedly an unknown quantity in her experience; at the beginning of the novel, aged twenty-four, she is unaware that sexual passion exists and does not know how children are born (77, 94). The outer life is the province of men: the life of "guns . . . or . . . navies, or empires" (59) of Dalloway; or the outward life of the intellect or the Bar of Ridley Ambrose, Pepper and Hirst. This is the life in which Rachel fears she will be engulfed through marriage with Terence.

Rachel also represents the world of the impersonal and the unconscious, the intuitive and the mystical, whose dark side is insanity; as against the personal, conscious world of society which she finds both in Richmond with her aunts and at the hotel and villa at Santa Marina with her fellow English tourists. All of these oppositions contend within her, and her failure to find a synthesis allowing her to combine these varieties of experience is the true cause of her death. The discussion of all of these aspects seems essential within the general framework of the discussion of the masculine and the feminine in the novel.

In my first chapter I attempt a broad overview of Woolf criticism over the past decade in order more fully to situate my own discourse amidst the warring factions of traditional and radical critics who have marked out the battlefield during this period. In the second I discuss Rachel in terms of her relationships with the other characters in the novel and attempt to construct a broad sociological background to it in order to understand more fully who Rachel is as a social being peculiar to her time. In the third I discuss the relationships

she develops with her aunt Helen and lover Terence; Rachel's relationship with Helen is sharply undercut by the entrance of Terence into the novel, forcing her to reassess her gender loyalties radically. In the fourth chapter I discuss the love relationship which Rachel and Terence share together, and the resulting conflicts and tensions which this brings into Rachel's life as she more clearly senses her unique identity and sees the contradiction between it and the stereotypical pigeon-holing which her society wishes to impose upon her. These chapters search for the clue to Rachel's death as being primarily in her relationships, whereas the second seeks to find it within the broader canvas of the sexual politics of her time. The fifth chapter is a study of Rachel's personal psychology, and considers the possibility that the cause of her death is due to the quality of her psychological nature, a nature which becomes deeply disturbed when confronted with the fact of male desire. It is here that the novel most closely parallels Woolf's experience of incest, thus I draw on more autobiographical information in this chapter than in the whole of the rest of the thesis. Autobiography leads to an analysis of patriarchy, and the thesis comes full circle. In my concluding chapter I suggest some useful directions for critics of this novel and Woolf's work in general to proceed during the next decade. There is no doubt that the central figure in Woolf's novel, the death of Rachel, can be approached in a variety of ways, and constructing several discursive frameworks from which to view this event simultaneously gives access to the richness and complexity of Woolf's novel. As Sue Roe says in a discussion with Emma Tennant on Woolf: "There's always another story in Virginia Woolf. In any of the novels, there's another story fighting to

surface."¹⁶

From the evidence supplied by DeSalvo there is no doubt that for Woolf the writing of her first novel was a highly personal, cathartic process, one which, as DeSalvo confirms, almost cost Woolf her life.¹⁷ Rachel's death by fever in the text was duplicated by Woolf's suicide attempt and mental breakdowns during the writing of the novel in a series of causal connections hard to dispute. DeSalvo herself believes that the "most fascinating link" her research uncovered was that "each time Woolf wrote or revised the delirium and death scene of her central character . . . she herself went mad and once tried to commit suicide" [DeSalvo's emphasis].¹⁸ Many powerful emotions lay dormant below the comparatively smooth surface of the novel.

It seems that by inserting the existing ending to the novel Woolf was trying to channel the contents of her experiences of insanity into safer waters, delirium in the novel being the result of physical and not mental illness. This provided a wall between her fictional material and personal life. That this wall sometimes crumbled is well attested to by DeSalvo's research.¹⁹ By this ending she could also express the grief and guilt connected with the tragic

16. Sue Roe and Emma Tennant, "Women Talking About Writing," in Women's Writing: A Challenge to Theory, ed. Moira Monteith (Brighton: Harvester, 1986) 138.

17. DeSalvo 12.

18. DeSalvo X.

19. DeSalvo records Woolf's two mental breakdowns in 1910 and 1913 while finishing different versions of the novel, the second involving a suicide attempt; a rest cure in 1912; another breakdown in 1915 just before the publication of the novel; and sickness even in 1919 while revising the novel for the first American and second English edition. DeSalvo IX-X, 5, 8, 11-12, 63, 70, 74-5, 104-5, 107-9, 111, 149, 154.

early deaths of her half-sister Stella and brother Thoby, as well as that connected with the death of her mother,²⁰ thus emphasizing another side of her life-history and novelistic acumen, the awareness of the capriciousness of fate.

In the following chapter I wish to explore the transitions The Voyage Out has undergone in critical parlance over the last seventy-five years, but focussing particularly on the last decade when the recently established discourse of feminist criticism and the burgeoning discourses of semiotics and deconstruction challenged headlong the more established practices of liberal-humanist, biographical and psychoanalytic criticism, appropriating some elements of these older discourses at times to produce stunningly original readings, but generally shifting the whole field of critical endeavour from work to text, from author to reader and from signified to signifier. It is in the interstices between these rival discourses that my own text lies, a feminist discourse which benefits from some deconstructive insights, yet does not sacrifice history and biography when these discourses yield studied insights into Woolf's text. Perhaps the future of literary criticism lies in such positions taken between discourses or where their paths meet; whereas they give no more privileged access to a text than any other position, nevertheless a more generous and thoroughgoing view of the literary geography which surrounds a text is afforded.

20. Stephen Trombley has developed a highly complex psychobiographical theory involving the influence of Woolf's mother's death upon Rachel's death, in that whilst Rachel's two greatest needs in the novel are to find a mother-substitute and a successful romantic relationship, these two elements come together grotesquely in her dream of the tunnel leading to a vault, symbolic of a mother's womb, which in Woolf's case gives birth both to herself and to her incestuous half-brothers Gerald and George Duckworth (20). I discuss Trombley's work at greater length in Chapters 4 and 5.

CHAPTER 1

THE VOYAGE BEYOND: "D'YOU BELIEVE THAT THINGS GO ON, THAT SHE'S STILL SOMEWHERE - OR D'YOU THINK IT'S SIMPLY A GAME - WE CRUMBLE UP TO NOTHING WHEN WE DIE?"



Rachel, the heroine of Woolf's first novel, lives beyond it as a floating signifier open to the various constructions and biases of her creator's critics. Woolf herself is subject to this process of critical and biographical reconstruction; her life, especially because she was the victim of suicide, takes on mythical proportions and inspires devotion from the purveyors of a broad range of competing or complementary critical outlooks. Woolf's writing, in conjunction with these variant versions of her self, has been constructed in several easily discernible, predictable and contradictory configurations by critics over the last sixty years. She has been seen as primarily a modernist, ushering in the radical innovations of the stream-of-consciousness novel with her male and female contemporaries Joyce, Proust, Richardson and Sinclair; as primarily a feminist, a woman writer who wrote out of and concerning the condition of being an early twentieth-century female; or as a liberal, a woman who inherited many of her father's views on life and art and many of the assumptions of her class, although she rejected much. Some critics have ignored the axes of class and gender and see her, in liberal-humanist readings, as simply a "great writer," worthy of literary study. Any combination of these critical stances or a multiplicity of other alternatives cannot do justice to the richness of Woolf's texts; probably the most useful, all-embracing critical position is to regard Woolf, as Roe and Tennant quoted in my introduction do, as a writer who always

has "another story fighting to surface"¹ in her novels.

In this chapter I wish to survey some of the more recent critical positions towards Woolf and The Voyage Out which have appeared in books and articles published during the last decade (1979-90). This will provide the dual purpose of creating a background to my own work which commenced in 1985, as well as constructing a frame within which my own discourse may be placed as it opposes or embraces the various critical positions operating within the same discursive network. Critical writings with which I deal extensively in other chapters of my text such as DeSalvo's 1980 study are not discussed here in order to avoid reduplication of material.

In my summary of Voyage Out criticism during the past ten years, I divide critical approaches into the following categories, none of which are watertight, but which serve simply as convenient markers to chart the ever-broadening field of Woolf criticism. Firstly, I discuss what could be termed "traditional" criticism, including as one of its sub-branches the criticism Marxists term "liberal-humanist." This accounts for all criticism which does not explicitly represent itself as promoting a particular discursive strategy, as do for instance psychoanalysis or feminism. Secondly, falling within this first domain, but with a distinctive style and presuppositions of its own, is biographical criticism. Thirdly, I discuss critics who approach the text through a study of its narratology or linguistic status. Feminist readings of The Voyage Out proliferated particularly during the early 1980s, and a section is devoted particularly to them. Psychoanalytic readings of the text, often closely linked to biographical and

1. Monteith 138.

feminist discourses, continue to flourish; Rachel's illness is seen without exception it seems by all recent critics as psychosomatic in origin, even though a purely physical explanation is given in the text. Books as recent as Shirley Panken's 1987 Virginia Woolf and the 'Lust of Creation'² continue this tradition.

In my discussion of these various critical traditions, several other particularly important emphases in '80s' criticism of the novel will become apparent such as the concentration on Woolf's use of silence as a narrative strategy in the novel, or the continuing debates as to the status of Terence and Helen's characters in the novel and to their implication in Rachel's death. Critics are still divided concerning the question of whether Terence is a strong model of masculinity or weak and ineffective; and whether Helen is a liberating, positive force in Rachel's life or the "Great Mother," whose presence and archetype oppresses and drowns Rachel in her regressive desire to return to the safety of the amniotic fluid. Janis Paul participates in an interesting debate concerning Woolf's simultaneous dependence on Victorian and modernist styles and ideologies in the construction of her first fiction. Several Jungian readings of the novel are also canvassed in the sections on feminist and psychoanalytic criticism.

In T.E. Apter's 1979 study,³ she sees "the theme of physical aspects of human life as a negation of the spirit and a manifestation of society's limitations" as being a strong

2. Shirley Panken, Virginia Woolf and the 'Lust of Creation': A Psychoanalytic Exploration (Albany: State U of New York P, 1987).

3. T.E. Apter, Virginia Woolf: a Study of Her Novels (New York: New York UP, 1979) 14.

element in the novel. She refers not only to the negative animal imagery Woolf frequently employs to suggest the superficiality of the hotel guests at Santa Marina, but to the sexual imagery which so disturbs Rachel in her nightmare and delusions, and the general treatment of sexuality in the novel. It seems, though, that a deeper reading of the novel would take this approach one step further and see this treatment as indicative of Woolf's own fear of the body and of sexuality and physicality, or use her own explanation in "Professions for Women" of the difficulty of a woman writer in "telling the truth about my own experiences as a body."⁴ Woolf's difficulty in writing the body feminine in 1931, let alone 1907-13, meant that Rachel's death in The Voyage Out was assured, for if Woolf could not come to terms with the sexuality of an engaged woman, or her own as a married woman, there was only one narrative choice that could befall her heroine, particularly considering the incompleteness of Rachel's personality even in the latter stages of the novel and the societal pressures being brought to bear upon her there. The difficulties in life and art of theorizing a woman's sexuality could cause only severe distortions of it in terms of nightmare and delusion, and it becomes yet another subject, like the female equivalent of honour, which Rachel refuses to discuss in the novel, "for it is reserved for a later generation to discuss . . . philosophically" (299). Apter sees the novel as a whole presenting "a study of the impotence of individual vision, and of the self-destruction that emerges from that frustration."⁵ She goes on to say that in her later novels Woolf developed "a vision of [the] clash

4. "Professions for Women," in The Death of the Moth and Other Essays (London: The Hogarth Press, 1942) 153.

5. Apter 18.

[between individual and public mentality] as a creative challenge with the inevitable pitfalls as stimuli to self discovery,"⁶ suggesting that Woolf later in her career was able to develop more promising futures for her fictional heroines (a fact borne out by Katharine Hilbery, the heroine of her next novel Night and Day) as they became increasingly more mature and as Woolf herself matured as a woman and writer.

Quentin Bell, in his introduction to the collected edition of Leonard Woolf's autobiography published in 1980, defends him against charges by feminist and psychological critics of the late '70s such as Roger Poole, who criticized him as being a contributing factor to Virginia Woolf's "insanity" (the inverted commas are essential for Poole's argument). Poole also criticized Bell's free use of terms such as "insanity" and "madness" to describe Woolf's pathology in his biography of her, which is perhaps one of the reasons why Bell issued this spirited defence of his uncle:

In the very large volume of literature devoted to the study of Virginia Woolf there is a kind of lunatic fringe, and in this of late it has been possible to find authors who are ready to denounce Leonard, to find in his rationalism an unsympathetic and insensitive quality which, so the story goes, made him incapable of making his wife happy. There is a distinct air of quackery about such writers, a rejection of reason and indeed a sublime disregard of nearly all the available evidence. They too have their place in the records of intellectual dishonesty which Leonard so carefully examined.

Whereas I agree with Bell's rejection of the extreme conclusions that a critic like Poole draws, nevertheless it is easy to see in the otherwise smooth rhetoric of Bell ruptures in terms such as "lunatic fringe," "quackery" and "rejection of reason" which indicate anxiety about retaining the family honour and protecting a fundamentally liberal-humanist approach

6. Apter 18.

to biography from the purveyors of other methodological approaches; this also raises questions about the limitations involved when biography becomes a family concern, something protected from the gaze of outsiders whose views can easily be dismissed as "subversive," "radical" or "unauthorized." This is particularly relevant when considering feminist approaches to Woolf's life and art; Jane Marcus in her introduction to Virginia Woolf: A Feminist Slant⁷ compares the hostility that has greeted the "new readings of the novels, the essays, and the life" as analogous to the centuries of resistance which prevented the canonization of Joan of Arc. In the preface to her collection, Marcus also shows that the more personal aspects of Woolf's writing were often the more overtly political; she notes that it is "in the drafts of her novels, her notebooks, her diaries and letters, and the history of her family that we find an even more radical and feminist Woolf and can see her suppressing and repressing thoughts dangerous for publication."⁸ Thus feminist critics who are rewriting the history of Woolf's literary legacy are not on the whole reading the messages of contemporary feminism into Woolf's texts, but discovering an already existing, and sometimes submerged, discourse in her work.

Annis Pratt, in Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction (1981), to some extent continues the line of argument of

6. Leonard Woolf, An Autobiography. 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1980) I XII-XIII.

7. Jane Marcus, Virginia Woolf: A Feminist Slant (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1983) 1.

8. Marcus (1983) IX.

critics like Fleishman and Poresky,⁹ who employ Jungian or semi-Jungian readings to chart Rachel's development as a woman in the novel. She opens up a range of discourses in which the novel is seen as a reversal or debunking of the traditional Bildungsroman plot, historically primarily a male preserve. In a conception close to Poresky's view of the novel, and within a discussion of a tradition in women's fiction of the stunted growth of heroines, she writes:

moments of combined naturalistic and erotic epiphany between such characters as Rachel and Hewet . . . are only momentary, the price punishment or destruction by conventional society.¹⁰

Abel, Hirsch and Langland continue this tradition in their The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development (1983). They write:

for Rachel the hallucinatory descent into the suffocating water provides her only escape from a violent and confining social world and from the female body that frustrates her spiritual and artistic cravings.¹¹

Speaking generally of heroines in Rachel's predicament, they write:

Even if allowed spiritual growth, female protagonists who are barred from public experience must grapple with a pervasive threat of extinction¹²;

Lyndall Gordon sees this point from a different angle when she perceives Rachel's difficulties in adapting to a society which

9. Avrom Fleishman, Virginia Woolf: A Critical Reading (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1975); Louise A. Poresky, The Elusive Self: Psyche and Spirit in Virginia Woolf's Novels (Newark: U of Delaware P, 1981).

10. Annis Pratt with Barbara White, Andrea Loewenstein, Mary Wyer, Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction (1981; Brighton: Harvester, 1982) 24.

11. Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch, Elizabeth Langland, eds., The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development (Hanover: UP of New England, 1983) 4.

12. Abel, Hirsch, Langland 9.

she finds "unreal."¹³

Howard Harper's Between Language and Silence: The Novels of Virginia Woolf (1982) is a study devoted mainly to the first two categories in his title. Nevertheless, he also examines the sexual politics that operate on the level of narrative in The Voyage Out. He observes that "Not until the tenth chapter does the narrative enter fully and seriously into a male consciousness."¹⁴ He also observes the importance of death in the early lives of both Terence and Rachel - Terence's father died when he was aged ten and Rachel's mother when she was aged eleven - and suggests perhaps this is why they are attracted to each other in the first place.¹⁵ He sees Woolf's novels, including The Voyage Out, as arising from "the tensions between intellect and intuition, objectivity and subjectivity, fact and vision, masculine and feminine,"¹⁶ a formulation almost identical to Quentin Bell's summary of the dual inheritance which Woolf acquired from her parents (BI 20), and an illustration of William Blake's dictum, "Without Contraries is no progression."¹⁷

In Harper's reading these tensions are at the very level of text, the unconscious or the impersonal aspect of the writer squeezing through the fissures of language to appropriate language and conscious territory for itself, playing out unconscious conflicts on the level of text as various

13. Gordon 110.

14. Howard Harper, Between Language and Silence: The Novels of Virginia Woolf (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1982) 27.

15. Harper 29.

16. Harper 31.

17. William Blake, "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," Plate 3, in Geoffrey Keynes, ed., Blake: Complete writings with variant readings (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1966) 149.

components of the split subject vie for discursive space. Harper suggests that what Rachel struggles to remember in her delirium could be related to her and Terence's unexpected discovery of Susan and Arthur's lovemaking at the picnic.¹⁸ Whereas there is no justification for this view in the text, it is clearly a moment when Woolf's own attitudes toward sexuality come to the fore and override those of her characters; Terence says in response to Rachel's displeasure at the sight of lovemaking, "I can remember not liking it either" (139), an unlikely confession from a twenty-seven year old man reputed to have had considerable experience with the opposite sex. He claims "there's something horribly pathetic about [sexual love]" (140).

Harper supplies additional analogues between The Voyage Out and Heart of Darkness, a strong preoccupation of '80s' critics of the novel, in Mr. Flushing's narration of the tale of Mackenzie who (like Kurtz) penetrated "farther inland than any one's been yet."¹⁹

One of the problems in Harper's analysis of the novel (and readings like it) is that they interpret the signs of Rachel's love before her illness as prophetically tragic. In my reading of the novel the problems in Rachel and Terence's relationship begin to occur from the time of their engagement, when the realities of love as Rachel perceives them and the form that this love must take in its social construction by the wider community create a yawning gap which she cannot cross.

Harper criticizes Fleishman's view of Woolf as both

18. Harper 40.

19. Harper 44; IVO 284. The text Harper uses is slightly different from the Grafton edition at this point.

scorning and affirming the Liebestod motif in her work,²⁰ offering instead the suggestion that "The novel . . . explores the motif with enough complexity to make terms like scorn and affirm seem too simplistic."²¹ It seems though that Woolf gives more than casual commitment to the idea of death-in-love in her novel, and whereas she critiques conventional views of love in other sections of the text, Terence's passionate declaration of their love as Rachel dies, so close to Woolf's own wording in one of her suicide notes to her husband, is meant to be read "straight" and not with an ironic twist. The critical problem discussed above probably should be couched in terms of the contradictions, inconsistencies and particularly the unevenness of Woolf's text, rather than in an attempt at formulating any single stance towards the Liebestod motif which Woolf displays in her novel.

The collection of essays in Eric Warner's volume, Virginia Woolf: A Centenary Perspective (1984) (originally papers delivered at a conference at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge in 1982), are basically liberal-humanist in approach, whilst offering some interesting new readings of The Voyage Out. In Ian Gregor's essay, "Virginia Woolf and her Reader," he states what is by now one of the most common critical views taken towards the novel:

It is as if the author found herself trapped in the conventions of one novel, while seeking to write another; A Room with a View uneasily over-looking Heart of Darkness.²²

Most critics (including those as recent as Janis Paul (1987))

20. Fleishman 16, quoted in Harper 54n.

21. Harper 54n.

22. Ian Gregor, "Virginia Woolf and her Reader," in Eric Warner, ed., Virginia Woolf: A Centenary Perspective (New York: St. Martin's, 1984) 50.

disagree with Lytton Strachey's early view that the novel is "very, very unvictorian,"²³ and instead point to tensions between the Victorian and modernist elements within it. This critical view is a natural progression from the many critics throughout the novel's history who have insisted that the form of the novel belies its content, or that at least the sudden death of Rachel breaks any unity to which it may have aspired. This may have been what Strachey was suggesting in the letter to Woolf quoted above when he criticized the novel as lacking "the cohesion of a dominating idea . . . in the action."²⁴ Modern critics, particularly of feminist or biographical/psychoanalytic/phenomenological schools have adequately explained the sudden break or fissure in the novel at the onset of Rachel's fatal headache as being the result of Woolf's personal concerns overtaking any other future her heroine may have had, and this is also my reading of the novel, developed through an analysis of patriarchy and the competing and contradictory impact which the discourses of society and self exert upon Rachel.

John Bayley provides in Warner's volume without a doubt the most original reading of The Voyage Out this decade in his essay, "Diminishment of Consciousness: A Paradox in the Art of Virginia Woolf"; using a semi-feminist, quasi-deconstructive, metafictional critical methodology, he actually reverts to a highly traditional, pre-modernist reading of the novel. Bayley

23. Letter to Virginia Woolf, 25 Feb 1916, in Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey, Letters, ed. Leonard Woolf and James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press/Chatto and Windus, 1956) 56, quoted in Robin Majumdar and Allen M^CLaurin, eds., Virginia Woolf: The Critical Heritage (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975) 64.

24. Majumdar and M^CLaurin 65.

considers The Voyage Out to be Woolf's "masterpiece,"²⁵ completely reversing the traditional hierarchical canon of Woolf's first seven novels which advances roughly chronologically from The Voyage Out through to The Waves. He claims:

The Voyage Out is the most interesting of [Woolf's] novels because of the ways in which old-style fiction possesses or haunts her involuntarily at times in spite of her continual attacks on and feints away from it. The death of Rachel is profoundly moving . . . because it yields with such abandon to the novel's old power to move us. And yet it also renounces the novel.²⁶

Rachel dies, Bayley believes, "so as not to become a 'character'"; "[she] dies as a kind of feminine gesture, to avoid having to take part in an art form shaped and dominated by the masculine principle."²⁷ Thus Woolf in her narrative, in this reading of the novel, submerges her truly distinctive and revolutionary female novelistic innovations into the figure of the death of Rachel as, as yet, they cannot break through the traditional form of the novel dominated by masculine principles; they have not yet found a form which will welcome them as their own. Yet in Bayley's reading this is not wholly a negative process as:

Essentially [Woolf] is a combative writer, not a dreamy passive, poetic one; and in her later books it is possible to feel that she makes too conscious an effort to embody herself as feminine poetic; Shakespeare's mute sister who has found a voice . . . the masculine games of invention, the tough dualistic struggle between self and fiction, suit her better.²⁸

Is this a bold and almost certainly misguided attempt to reclaim Woolf for masculinist purposes?

25. Warner 82.

26. Warner 73.

27. Warner 73.

28. Warner 76.

In Bayley's linguistic, metafictional, conceptual play he pictures Rachel dying "in order that she should not take part in a novel."²⁹ Yet he contradicts himself later as he compares the characters in The Years which he says "are taken from life" with Rachel who "comes as much or more from literature, and the result is that Rachel is the more interesting character."³⁰ Is Rachel an interesting character in a novel or is she one desperately trying to avoid the label "character," and having to die to achieve this end? This question can alternatively phrase itself: is The Voyage Out wholly a Victorian novel or does this slippage, this desire to escape by the central character a few chapters before the close of the novel, indicate a whole range of gender/psychological/biographical issues that provide the main crux for the plot of the novel, itself only the thin layer covering the sub-text that contains immense social and unconscious determinants? In this latter reading Bayley's approach is seen to be highly reductive, and the novel very unvictorian precisely by its strong sub-textual resistance to the Victorian elements still within its structure.

In another collection of essays published in 1983, Virginia Woolf: New Critical Essays, Shirley Neuman, in yet another reading of the novel as being analogous to Heart of Darkness, makes a specific association between "Marlow's journey into the unknown"³¹ and Rachel's growth in sexual knowledge. Neuman considers the thematic links between the two

29. Warner 77.

30. Warner 81.

31. Shirley Neuman, "'Heart of Darkness', Virginia Woolf and the Spectre of Domination," in Monica Clements and Isobel Grundy, eds., Virginia Woolf: New Critical Essays (London: Vision, 1983) 62.

novels to be even more important than the structural ones, and quotes Rosemary Pitt to that effect:

Rachel, like Kurtz, is venturing too far into unknown areas of the self and experience and has to pay through extinction.³²

In Ginsberg and Gottlieb's Virginia Woolf: Centennial Essays (1983), Evelyn Haller and George Ella Lyon provide two more interpretations of Woolf's work. Haller, in "The Anti-Madonna in the Work and Thought of Virginia Woolf," claims that Woolf was influenced in her career by a system of thought derived from the worship of the ancient Egyptian goddess Isis. Whether or not this is true (personally I find it highly untenable), Haller's argument is that Woolf often used pagan symbolism to describe women in her fiction rather than the traditional Madonna images for wives or mothers which, being associated with Christianity, Woolf associated also with the oppressions of imperialism and patriarchy. Haller calls these figures in Woolf's fiction anti-Madonnas. She searches her novels for references to Egypt and finds in an early version of The Voyage Out Lucilla Ambrose (an early version of Helen) feeling "herself . . . as old as the Pyramids, which have looked down upon countless generations" and Helen Ambrose in the completed version of the novel juxtaposed in the opening pages with "the polished sphinx" on the Embankment, her "eyes fixed stonily straight in front of her at a level above the eyes of most."³³ She mentions Helen's husband's "supplicating" voice when addressing her in this section of the novel, and this, together with the trajectory of Helen's gaze, are

32. Clements and Grundy 62; Rosemary Pitt, "The Exploration of Self in Conrad's Heart of Darkness and Woolf's The Voyage Out," Conradiana, 10 (1978) 146.

33. Elaine K. Ginsberg and Laura Moss Gottlieb, Virginia Woolf: Centennial Essays (Troy: Whitston, 1983) 97.

instances in the novel provided by Haller which she claims support her thesis of Helen as a goddess somewhat set apart from the rest of humanity and an archetype to be feared; she claims however that Helen, unlike her prototype in Melymbrosia, no longer dreams of her "yellow Egyptian sand."³⁴ The political relevance for feminism of this sort of discourse seems to me strongly in doubt. Woolf once wrote (seemingly partially seriously) that "Our brilliant young men might do worse, when in search of a subject, than devote a year or two to cows in literature, snow in literature, the daisy in Chaucer and in Coventry Patmore,"³⁵ but in the context of a thoroughly politicized, revamped concept of the study of English literature in the modern academy, the marginalization of such a discourse in most circumstances would be the most politically honest course for a radical critic to take. Haller too risks the marginalization of her discourse by making it too obscurantist and by seeking to find Egyptian references in Woolf's fiction where none exist or where their appearance is relatively unrelated to Woolf's wider artistic and political concerns in the particular contexts. Jane Marcus' description of Haller as "an iconographer of Egyptian mythology"³⁶ adds to the air of mystification which Woolf herself, in her own critical practice, sought to dispel by seeking out aspects of a text often previously "Not known, because not looked for,"³⁷ but which made profound historical and sociological sense in

34. Ginsberg and Gottlieb 97.

35. "Outlines: I: Miss Mitford," in Virginia Woolf, The Common Reader: First Series, ed. Andrew McNeillie (1925; rpt. London: The Hogarth Press, 1984) 184-5.

36. Marcus (1983) IX.

37. T.S. Eliot, "Little Gidding," in Collected Poems: 1909-1962 (rev. ed.; London: Faber, 1974) 222.

terms of the text's determinants within the society in which it was originally written.

Lyon's essay, "Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Body," relates, as does much Woolf research this decade, one of the most prominent contemporary feminist discourses, the discourse of the body, to her work. Lyon believes that "motherlessness permeates [Woolf's] characters,"³⁸ including (mistakenly I believe) Clarissa Dalloway in her catalogue of the motherless, and characterizing Rachel as "a motherless girl suddenly taken from her amniotic world of music and sleep onto the harsh land of human relationships, sexual and imperfect."³⁹ Quite perceptively she analyses Rachel's major problem in the novel as the tension between having to be both subject and object in her world, object because this is the major way that women have been viewed sexually and otherwise in patriarchal societies. Lyon quite mercilessly exposes both Rachel and Terence's essential unwillingness to enter fully into a sexual relationship, stating that "To marry, they must get out of the audience and join the play; in a less positive image, they must stop staring into cages and admit that they are animal."⁴⁰ This has particular relevance to the scene in which they condemn Susan and Arthur's lovemaking as "pathetic" (140), yet fall themselves into a passionless union, a meeting of souls but with little physical contact. Lyon comments on the transformation from Rachel's dream to delirium of the deformed man to a deformed woman, "as if, during her engagement, Rachel

38. Ginsberg and Gottlieb 112.

39. Ginsberg and Gottlieb 113.

40. Ginsberg and Gottlieb 114.

has transferred her horror of male sexuality onto her own."⁴¹ She also notes Rachel's description of herself as a mermaid in the mock-fight she has with Terence after their engagement, and aptly comments that mermaids are impenetrable by nature; Rachel has chosen a metaphor for herself which permits no possibility of the feared violation.

In Jane Marcus' Virginia Woolf: A Feminist Slant (1983), Beverly Ann Schlack's essay, "Fathers in General: The Patriarchy in Virginia Woolf's Fiction," deals with several types of father-figure in Woolf's work. In particular relation to The Voyage Out, Willoughby Vinrace is seen as a natural father who oppresses, "the first in a long line of portraits of the father as oppressor,"⁴² a tradition which continues in Woolf's next novel with Katharine Hilbery's father, grandfather and uncle, Sir Francis, and extends to all men who abuse the power vested in them in a patriarchal society. This is in fact the greatest weakness in Schlack's argument; it becomes a catalogue of bad men in Woolf, a superficial approach as Woolf also posits women in her fiction who abuse power and misuse influence. Miss Kilman in Mrs. Dalloway is the most obvious example of this, but in subtle ways Helen Ambrose and Mrs. Flushing of A Voyage Out, and Mrs. Ramsay of To the Lighthouse, among others, fall into this category. Woolf's own view was that women participate in the reproduction of patriarchy almost to the same extent as men, and that patriarchy, like other impersonal constructs such as fascist ideologies, is a system of power relations which prevails so strongly because it discourages the analysis of its own first assumptions and is

41. Ginsberg and Gottlieb 115.

42. Marcus (1983) 53.

unaware of the subconscious factors which assists in its formation. In the case of Mary Beton in A Room of One's Own, her liberation from patriarchy comes through a private income which enables her to dissolve her anger towards individual men and to see them as a body driven by unconscious instincts for money and power. Yet her final liberation as a writer comes with her vision of a man and a woman entering a taxi together, symbolizing the union of male and female within the individual mind. As Woolf goes on to explain, this state is more an unconsciousness of one's own sex by a writer than the specific consciousness of one's masculine and feminine components. As in Derrida's later vision⁴³ of a sexuality distinguished by the lack of sexual marks and a breakdown of the binary opposition masculinity/femininity, so it seems a truly feminist reading of Woolf's novels will attempt to recover the harmony between the conveniently termed "masculine" and "feminine" which are a feature of Woolf's fiction, but which have given way in recent critical discourse to a splitting of the sexes, rather than to an analysis of the deeper unity which exists as a product of Woolf's own search for psychic wholeness, embodied in her writing, as a woman writer in a patriarchal society.

Louise DeSalvo's contribution to the collection Between Women: Biographers, Novelists, Critics, Teachers and Artists Write about their Work on Women represents the extremity of feminist criticism closest to liberal humanism. The collection as a whole, relying on critics' "meetings" with the great women of art, relies heavily on personal experience as an indication of the subsequent relationship between the critic and her text.

43. Jacques Derrida, "Choreographies." Interview with Christie V. McDonald, Diacritics 12.2 (1982) 76, cited in Toril Moi, Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory (London: Methuen, 1985) 172-3.

DeSalvo is no exception to this. She describes herself as a thirty-two year-old mother of two on her way to the University of Sussex to do research on Woolf, "gloriously drunk on [her] third sherry."⁴⁴ Whether this type of discourse is at all helpful to a feminist cause is extremely doubtful; rather, it depoliticizes DeSalvo's work on Woolf and unconsciously betrays it as a means of entry into the acceptance of a bourgeois-dominated academy. The puttana of DeSalvo's title has paid her dues and been accepted both by predominantly white, male, Anglo-Saxon, North American academia, as well as by her family who now cook her breakfast. She has discovered that the creative act "is nurtured by loving friendships" and is not just a "solitary, solipsistic act."⁴⁵ Yet in her final statement that the fact that she and Woolf are both women is "quite enough" despite racial and class differences (she depicts herself as "more Italian than American . . . a street kid, out of the slums of Hoboken, New Jersey"⁴⁶), she betrays her racial and class background at the expense of affirming an unproblematic unity of womanhood. By this statement she also deconstructs the solidarity she has claimed between herself and her sons who are elsewhere described as being "made out of the same stuff that I was" and "A chip off the old block"⁴⁷ respectively. DeSalvo has fallen simultaneously into the liberal-humanist bind of stressing universality over

44. Louise DeSalvo, "A Portrait of the Puttana as a Middle-Aged Woolf Scholar," in Carol Ascher, Louise DeSalvo, Sara Ruddick, eds., Between Women: Biographers, Novelists, Critics, Teachers and Artists Write about their Work on Women ((Boston: Beacon, 1984) 35.

45. DeSalvo (1984) 42.

46. DeSalvo (1984) 53.

47. DeSalvo (1984) 44, 45.

difference, and the radical bind of stressing the needs of one oppressed group over another. What radical critics of Woolf desperately need to find is a discursive space which can celebrate her achievements as a female human being, neither of these two terms outweighing each other in stress, as well as expose the privileged position from which she wrote as an upper middle-class Anglo Saxon. Only then can feminists and Marxists come together in a joint appropriation of the truly radical nature of her work, and a post-colonial Britain need not burn her image as is its fate in the Hanif Kureishi-scripted 1987 film "Sammy and Rosie Get Laid."

An interesting sidelight in DeSalvo's essay is her response to an article by Quentin Bell, "Proposed Policy on Virginia Woolf's Unpublished Material," which appeared in a 1978 edition of Virginia Woolf Miscellany. This article particularly troubled her as she assumed it referred to her proposed edition of Melymbrosia, one of the early drafts of The Voyage Out. I quote from Bell:

A short time ago a reputable scholar suggested the publication of an earlier version of one of the novels, not only because it would be of interest to other Woolf scholars but because it could be offered as - in effect - a new novel to the 'generalist Woolf reader.' This, I must say, arouses acute misgivings - suppose that the reader agrees with Virginia in condemning the earlier version, suppose that it is below her usual standard? Then, surely it is unfair to give it currency. Some such deflation of values follows any inflation of published matter [and] must surely be apprehended. Scratch the bottom of the barrel and you will come up with impurities.⁴⁸

Although I concur with Bell's point that an edition of an earlier version of one of Woolf's novels marketed as a "new novel" is a problematic conception, the completely spurious

48. Quentin Bell, "Proposed Policy on Virginia Woolf's Unpublished Material," Virginia Woolf Miscellany 10 (1978): 3, quoted in DeSalvo (1984) 46.

arguments he uses to back up this position betray once again his anxiety to protect the family honour. His near-hysterical questioning: "suppose that the reader agrees with Virginia in condemning the earlier version, suppose that it is below her usual standard?" assumes that Woolf and Johnson's "common reader" is unable to contextualize a work of fiction, and the question of the novel's literary merit must surely take second place to the insights it affords of a work in progress, many of them relating to material suppressed in subsequent versions and in danger of being lost to history. Woolf's reputation as a novelist is sufficiently established for any "impurities" in early drafts to prove negligible; such "impurities" are likely to be the crude formulations of aesthetic and political ideas and forms which in their later and more polished appearance could just as easily have lost rather than gained their originally desired effect.

Another interesting feature of Bell's comments is his insistence on using Woolf's Christian name rather than the more customary and more critically neutral "Woolf." Whereas this is understandable to some extent as Bell is Woolf's nephew, nevertheless it is part of a much wider phenomenon which I label "Virginia criticism." The device has certain rhetorical advantages: as well as being a further example of the way that family biography or criticism can narrow intellectual horizons by assuming a familiarity with the authorial subject inaccessible to others, it can also be employed by male paternalist critics to "contain" Woolf as the bright young daughter of a liberal upbringing, or be used by feminist critics of a non-theoretical persuasion to hail Woolf in spurious sisterhood as an absent or distant yet sympathetic

onlooker to their critical projects. All of these critical approaches have as their chief aim the desire to fix Woolf, to provide a consistent and understandable version of a woman whose difference from herself not only expresses itself in works widely disparate in time and purpose, but within the very same texts. This inability to allow the tensions and contradictions of Woolf's texts to remain just that severely limits an understanding of the complexity of her work as being largely a collection of oppositional discourses which are nevertheless to some extent obsequious to the liberal tradition from which they emerge, the tradition which gives them at least part of their context. The danger of a personalist approach to Woolf is seen quite clearly in DeSalvo's response to Bell's article; she, fearing that her edition of Melymbrosia will be blocked by Bell as literary executor of Woolf's estate, falls into reminiscence of how much of her time and person she has invested in this work, instead of analysing the political and ideological basis of this projected action. Even from the safe distance of this essay which has its vantage point two years after her edition was published, DeSalvo still resists an analysis of the politics of copyright. By this omission and the tone and content of her essay in general, she completely depoliticizes her own work on Woolf and runs the risk of resurrecting her in the tired old formula of a woman unconcerned with the politics of the world surrounding her, a woman exclusively concerned with personal relationships and the happenings of her inner life.

David Dowling's Bloomsbury Aesthetics and the Novels of Forster and Woolf (1985), along with many older studies of Woolf, makes the mistake of exaggerating the strength of the

Bloomsbury Group upon her. Critics like Frank W. Bradbrook in his essay on Woolf in The Pelican Guide to English Literature have tried to make her a suppliant at the temple of any male artist from Roger Fry to Tolstoy and Chekhov and even Shakespeare. Yet Bradbrook says it is the "less massive genius of Chekhov," rather than Tolstoy, with whom she identified as she "Modestly realiz[ed] her limitations." He places her in the context of a female tradition only to denigrate her work as "curiously fragmentary and inconclusive" beside Austen and Eliot's.⁴⁹ Compared with the male tradition which she feeds on, she has a "too passive conception of perception," an "essential naivety" (this comment is based on a misreading of a passage of Woolfian irony), and would benefit if she was "more capable of describing the subtleties and complications of normal, mature living."⁵⁰ Her "essential strength" is due to the influence of her father, whereas she is berated for the intense individuality of her writing which does not lend itself to the "establishment of a tradition"; in the final and most subtle insult she becomes the Angel in the House as, even though not among "the very greatest of English novelists," she is still "a delicate and subtle artist in words, who upheld aesthetic and spiritual values in a brutal, materialistic age."⁵¹

Dowling falls nowhere near this extremity of criticism, yet ventures too far as he seeks to present Woolf struggling with the tenets of modernism, as quite legitimately she can be

49. Frank W. Bradbrook, "Virginia Woolf: The Theory and Practice of Fiction," in Boris Ford, ed., From James to Eliot: Volume 7 of the New Pelican Guide to English Literature (1961; rev. ed. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983) 344, 342.

50. Ford 343, 347, 350.

51. Ford 347, 354, 353.

seen as striking out her own individual modernist path. Dowling thinks "it is interesting to see how a mind reared on nineteenth-century notions of form struggled to adapt itself to the Bloomsbury world of Post-Impressionist exhibitions and quite a new conception of form in art."⁵² Yet as early as 1908, two years before the first Post-Impressionist exhibition in London, Woolf was experimenting by herself with fiction, writing to Clive Bell telling of her plans to "re-form the novel and capture multitudes of things at present fugitive, enclose the whole and shape infinite strange shapes."⁵³

Dowling's masculinist emphasis asserts itself also in the language he uses to describe Rachel's encounter with Dalloway; he says that "in [their] relationship . . . Woolf played out her . . . rebellion against her father."⁵⁴ If this is so it is not a very spirited rebellion as it leaves Rachel locked in her room concocting terrifying fantasies of voices moaning, eyes desiring and barbarian men snuffling at her door. The Rachel/Dalloway encounter for Woolf rather serves to express her confusion at her own experience of incest, and the subsequent distrust of a relationship with any man. Dowling's greatest fault is his attempt to force all of the content of Woolf's novel into a pattern reflecting Bloomsbury aestheticism; he falsely reads the novel as being determined to a large degree by the motifs and thematic structuring devices of music and painting, not all of which are actually evident in the novel. Operating from Bloomsbury presuppositions, he claims that the "extended climax of Rachel's fever and death" in the novel

52. David Dowling, Bloomsbury Aesthetics and the Novels of Forster and Woolf (London: Macmillan, 1985) 108.

53. LI 356, 438 (19 Aug., 1908).

54. Dowling 109.

"destroys any aesthetic significance"⁵⁵ in it, yet in no way was Woolf committed to following Roger Fry's views on aesthetics as outlined in later published works such as Vision and Design (1920). Dowling's tendency to see Woolf as a female E.M. Forster is another disturbing element in his discourse which in many ways fails to take into account the full consequences of Woolf's own vision and voice.

Pamela J. Transue's Virginia Woolf and the Politics of Style (1986) presents a discourse rather like Bayley's in Warner's volume in that it also theorizes the difficulty of a fiction which partakes of both Victorian and modernist elements. Transue writes:

In this first novel, Virginia Woolf is hindered by her attempt to work within traditional novelistic conventions. One senses a disjunction between what she wants to do in the novel and the tools she has for doing it.⁵⁶

This is similar, though with different emphasis, to Bayley's statement that "old-style fiction possesses or haunts [Woolf] involuntarily at times in spite of her continual attacks on and feints away from it."⁵⁷ Both statements point to the discrepancy between Woolf's stated experimental intentions with her novel and the form of Victorian fiction which held such strong sway over her that she did not fully escape its influence until 1920 and the commencement of writing on Jacob's Room.

Transue has some other interesting observations to make about the novel. She describes Dalloway kissing Rachel as "the first genuine, unprogrammatically human interaction that Rachel has -----
55. Dowling 116.

56. Pamela J. Transue, Virginia Woolf and the Politics of Style (Albany: State U of New York P, 1986) 17.

57. Warner 73.

ever experienced."⁵⁸ This runs against the grain of most critics of the past decade who tend to see Dalloway's kiss in wholly negative terms because of its ultimate effect upon Rachel. In the text it is considered ambivalently by Rachel, but Transue does much to rectify the former critical imbalance by showing that the very shock of an action not to be predicted by Rachel's dull routine, one which springs from impulse and not order, is enough to throw her off-balance, and that although this has the potential to be a positive experience for her, due to her background it leads to delirium and death.

Transue also views the novel as being primarily about marriage. This is at first difficult to accept as Rachel's unusually solipsistic individuality seems to preclude any identification with nineteenth-century heroines headed for that state; Rachel has none of the passionate ardour needing to be tamed of an Austen heroine or the essential unwillingness to adapt to society of a Jane Eyre. Rather, Rachel approximates most closely the restless intransigence of a Catherine Earnshaw who, if she is truly to consummate her love, must do so beyond death. Marriage exists as a strong theme in The Voyage Out through its absence; its absence confirms what the reader has known all along: that Rachel is of too intractable a spirit to succumb to this stock narrative conclusion. Transue records Elizabeth Heine's observations of the changes which Woolf made to her text after her marriage, by which Rachel was transformed from an "intelligent, outspoken, critical young feminist" to "the vague and innocently naive dreamer of the published

58. Transue 18.

text."⁵⁹ It is interesting to try to ascertain the reasons for such drastic changes. Whether the loss of confidence which Woolf experienced as a woman after her marriage (noted earlier) was responsible, or whether her habitual fear of criticism compounded this loss of confidence, the 1915 version of The Voyage Out is a far less political work than its predecessors, and the lack of outline given Rachel as a character seems to reflect Woolf's questioning of the forms available for the expression of young female attributes and aspirations in the early twentieth-century novel. Neither of the two other young women in the novel, Susan Warrington and Evelyn Murgatroyd, are seen by the narrator as being in any way fit role-models to follow, and Rachel, who at least has creative and imaginative insight which seems to suggest other latent powers, dies before these can be realized to any extent. Despite all of this, Transue believes that "in no other novel does [Woolf] come nearer to preaching than she does here"⁶⁰; if Woolf changed her text to omit further perceived unliterary interruptions, this goes a long way to explain why in later years Woolf kept the literary and political/polemical aspects of her writing apart to a far greater degree.

Janis M. Paul's 1987 study of Woolf, The Victorian Heritage of Virginia Woolf: The External World in Her Novels, concentrates, as do many recent studies of Woolf, on the Victorian influence and external reality in her novels, which due to biases in early Woolf criticism have received little attention for most of this century, an imbalance which is only

59. Elizabeth A. Heine, "The Earlier Voyage Out: Virginia Woolf's First Novel," Bulletin of Research in the Humanities 82 (1979) 294.

60. Transue 33.

now beginning to be redressed. In the heady days of modernism in which Woolf wrote, naturally little attention was given to the literary epoch which was passing, except, as in an essay like Woolf's own "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," to condemn it as being an ineffective tool for capturing contemporary reality. Woolf's objects of attack in this essay were the Edwardian writers Wells, Bennett and Galsworthy, but, even though Woolf condemned many aspects of Victorian life and culture, critics have paid too little attention to the devotion she held for many writers from this earlier period, most of whom had helped shape her literary sensibility from early youth.⁶¹ Similarly, two powerfully influential critical discourses of the 1930s dissuaded future critics from discussing political or moral issues in Woolf. Marxist attacks on Woolf's novels during the 1930s claimed that as a writer she was unconcerned with the "real world" of political and economic materiality, and excessively concerned with the "spiritual," inner dimension of life. The parallel attack by the Leavises and others associated with the journal Scrutiny claimed that Woolf provided no moral universe in her fiction as a structuring device for her characters' thoughts and feelings. Thus most critics neglected this dimension of Woolf's work unless it was treated through the aesthetic sieve of the inner life/outer life dichotomy.

Paul's argument begins with a summary of T.S. Eliot's position in "Tradition and the Individual Talent": "no writer's greatness is predicated entirely on a break with the past; every

61. In the first half of 1897 alone Woolf records in her diary the reading of eleven novels, ten works of biography or memoirs, and at least seven volumes of history, all by Victorian writers. See BI 50-51.

artist walks a tightrope between tradition and rebellion."⁶²

Paul's purpose is to restore to Woolf criticism the element of tradition which has always been largely absent from the discussion of her novels, but in seeking to make all of her material support her central thesis, she sometimes overcompensates as in the following example:

all [Woolf's] novels have summary endings - marriages, deaths, finished works of art, concluding statements - that enclose, circumscribe, and order even the most open-ended experience. Such endings, in consonance with her characteristic verbal style, demonstrate Woolf's desire to communicate the closed, coherent, and unified vision that characterizes nineteenth-century fiction.⁶³

It is difficult to associate the endings of Woolf's fictions with those of the nineteenth century, principally because the entire design of most of her novels militates against such an identification. Woolf's desire in her fiction to "achieve a symmetry by means of infinite discords, showing all the traces of the mind's passage through the world; achieve in the end some kind of whole made of shivering fragments"⁶⁴ is an entirely different conception from that of the typical nineteenth-century novel whose standard structuring devices are a much more rigid conception of plot, character and narrative dénouement. Woolf's endings themselves can be described as "shivering fragments" which, whilst providing formal narrative closure, nevertheless open themselves to a multiplicity of meanings which must be supplied by the reader. Ten years after the publication of The Voyage Out, Woolf in her essay "The Russian Point of View" wrote of the conclusions to Chekhov's

62. Janis M. Paul, The Victorian Heritage of Virginia Woolf: The External World in Her Novels (Norman, Oklahoma: Pilgrim Books, 1987) 5.

63. Paul 6.

64. Notebook. Italian holiday, 1908. See BI 138.

short stories in a formulation which seems to describe her own narrative closures far better than Paul's statement does:

These stories are inconclusive, we say, and proceed to frame a criticism based upon the assumption that stories ought to conclude in a way that we recognise. In so doing, we raise the question of our own fitness as readers. Where the tune is familiar and the end emphatic - lovers united, villains discomfited, intrigues exposed - as it is in most Victorian fiction, we can scarcely go wrong, but where the tune is unfamiliar and the end a note of interrogation or merely the information that they went on talking, as it is in Chekhov, we need a very daring and alert sense of literature to make us hear the tune, and in particular those last notes which complete the harmony.⁶⁵

The "information that they went on talking" reminds one immediately of the conclusion to The Voyage Out: "voices sounded gratefully in St. John's ears" (382) as the hotel guests make their way to bed. Woolf, whilst still compelled to provide some form of narrative closure, nevertheless makes this as open-ended as possible such that it asks more questions than it answers, the complete reverse of standard Victorian practice.

Paul's critical task of reclaiming the lost Victorian tradition in Woolf's fiction usually yields more balanced statements:

the controlling emotion in Virginia Woolf's fictional vision is ambivalence - between society and individuality, between language and silence, between past and present, between traditionalism and experimentation, between externality and internality, in summary, between Victorianism and Modernism.⁶⁶

Paul, like many other modern critics, picks up on the device of the subversion of the Bildungsroman genre in The Voyage Out. Ruotolo, also partaking of this critical tradition, puts forward the view that the major lesson that

65. "The Russian Point of View," in CRI 176.

66. Paul 7.

Rachel learns in her lifetime is the "art of disengagement."⁶⁷ Certainly Rachel's embodiment, or rather lack of it, in the novel, runs totally alien to the basic principles of the Bildungsroman genre, which ultimately requires the subject's successful integration into his or her society.

Paul's appreciation of The Voyage Out as a subverted Bildungsroman is coupled with her recognition that in many ways it also fulfils the conditions of the late-Victorian tropical adventure narrative. Like Conrad's Heart of Darkness, however, Woolf's story also undermines the fundamental intentions and ideology behind these sorts of narratives, which tended to be imperialist in nature. Rachel's death, by its very individuality, is a statement against imperialism as it is a statement against all forms of patriarchy.

Paul is at her critical best when illustrating, as in the above quotation, the tension in Woolf's narrative between her progressive thematic intent and the weight of tradition and creative inertia which causes her to seek older forms. She expresses this well in the following statement:

even though Woolf's early heroines wish to abandon their traditional social roles, they express uncertainty about their own self-discoveries and attempt to integrate their freedom with the external world . . . Woolf tries to fit her theme of feminine self-actualization into a traditional novel structure which demands the closure of marriage or death. Thus in Woolf's early novels her theme seems to conflict with her chosen form, objectifying her own conflicts about the structures of the past.⁶⁸

Latent in what Paul writes, but nevertheless clearly observable, is the parallelism she sets up between the tentativeness of Woolf's early heroines and Woolf's own tentativeness as author. On the one hand Rachel's self-

67. Lucio P. Ruotolo, The Interrupted Moment: A View of Virginia Woolf's Novels (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1986) 21.

68. Paul 51.

discoveries lead effortlessly but problematically into the social sphere of marriage; on the other Woolf as author also slides effortlessly towards the conventional Victorian narrative closure of marriage: even though there are elements in the text which militate against this and eventually force a different ending, one gains the dominant impression that the truly radical elements of Woolf's text have been sacrificed, death just as effectively as marriage providing no channel for the expression of alternative female life-options. Woolf's sacrifice to Victorian form and her sacrifice of Rachel's potential thus become identical issues, identical also with Woolf's failure at this stage of her career to forge a truly unique narrative path for her characters. Paul mentions the general ambivalence of Woolf throughout her career to English social and literary conventions; this can also be constructed in feminist terms as an internal fight between the literary legacy left Woolf by her father and other men of his and preceding generations, and the new feminist consciousness of herself as a woman with the power and ability to create new forms more relevant to the generation in which she lived.

Paul is interested also in Woolf's theme of gender-stereotyping in the novel. She depicts Woolf as growing up in a society where "Newbolt Men" and the "Angel in the House" were the acceptable respective models for men and women to emulate, and interprets Rachel's nightmare as a fear of social stereotyping by men as an object of "beauty, sexuality and social surface."⁶⁹ She notes that Rachel sees her past life in terms of the same image which appears in this nightmare, a "creeping, hedged-in thing, driven cautiously between high

69. Paul 62.

walls,"⁷⁰ and concludes that

For Rachel to marry Terence and return to England would be to return to everything she has escaped. Only by some sort of separation from society can Rachel maintain her freedom.⁷¹

Rachel's separation is, of course, through death.

Paul believes that Rachel's death is a pessimistic statement in Victorian terms but an ironic statement in modernist terms: "only through a 'senseless' Victorian death can Rachel escape a 'senseless' Victorian life."⁷² Thus in Paul's critical schema Rachel's death fits the criteria to belong to both a Victorian and a modernist novel, and in fact, as Paul and others have demonstrated, in many ways the novel as a whole hangs awkwardly between these two very divergent traditions. Paul uses the examples of the two novels which Terence wishes to write in The Voyage Out, one on "Silence . . . the things people don't say" (220) (internal reality) and one on "society and clothes"⁷³ (external reality), as parallels to the two kinds of novel that Woolf's novel itself is. Yet in the context of the discussion of Terence's literary aspirations in The Voyage Out, his novel about silence is seen to be of far superior subject-matter than his other, whose plot could quite comfortably fit into a Victorian mould. This seems to highlight even more poignantly the modernist novel that Woolf's first is trying to be, amidst the Victorian trappings which threaten to misshape it and put a stranglehold upon its radical intentions.

Paul deviates slightly from her core argument that Woolf

70. IVO 79; Paul 62.

71. Paul 73.

72. Paul 74.

73. Paul 75.

walks the line between tradition and rebellion by stressing what she believes to be the traditional nature of the ending of The Voyage Out, as against its radical elements which she fails to mention. She claims that the ending affirms "the value of the physical and social world Rachel has left behind"⁷⁴, and that by not concluding the novel with Rachel's death, Woolf stresses the traditional at the expense of the modern. This of course undercuts her argument that Rachel's death is in part a Victorian literary device, and also more notably fails to take into account the revolution that has taken place between the formal Victorian narrative dénouement and Woolf's type of conclusion. Although the ending to The Voyage Out does affirm the physical and social world, whether it affirms their value is another question. The reader has been led through a process rather like Terence's in which he became aware of "what depths of pain lie beneath small happiness and feelings of content and safety" (352). The restoration of the social world at the end of the novel, the voices sounding "gratefully in St. John's ears as he lay half-asleep" (382), is the only conclusion possible if Woolf is going to avoid complete nihilism. Whereas this type of ending bears a superficial resemblance to the convention of the restoration of order in Shakespearian tragedy, there is no solid reality to which to return as in that dramatic mode, nor is the comparative security of the Victorian world picture a viable option any longer. Woolf's world in The Voyage Out thoroughly imbibes the notion, both modernist and accepted by Woolf herself, of a shifting and unstable universe, expressed in her diary when writing Mrs.

74. Paul 75.

Dalloway as a distrust of "reality - its cheapness."⁷⁵ Paul's construction of the novel as a "triumph of the external world"⁷⁶ due to its conclusion and the physical agent(s) which bring about Rachel's death totally ignores the psychological sub-text of the novel which gives this event any meaning, and fails to acknowledge the modernist currents clearly pervading Woolf's fiction even in this early phase of her career.

Louise DeSalvo's second book on Woolf, Virginia Woolf: The Impact of Childhood Sexual Abuse on Her Life and Work, appeared in 1989 and must be considered the definitive work on this important influence upon Woolf's fiction. Whereas the book cannot be faulted in its comprehensiveness, including readings of still unpublished writings from Woolf's early youth, some of these readings and DeSalvo's analysis of The Voyage Out can be rather naive at times. DeSalvo's potted reading of the novel takes the following form:

In the novel, Rachel dies inexplicably, after a delirium which suggests sexual abuse. Woolf is suggesting that sexual abuse and inexplicable death are connected.⁷⁷

In her argument DeSalvo jumps quite glibly from portions of the text which could suggest sexual abuse to the firm conviction that such an event occurred in Rachel's life:

Helen Ambrose suspects Rachel's father of 'nameless atrocities with regard to his daughter' . . . she also suspects that he bullied his wife, her sister. But she never asks Rachel directly if her father has abused her, she does not confront Vinrace about her suspicions, nor, apparently, did she ever ask her sister. If Rachel has suffered and Helen has suspected it, it seems clear that she would have been powerless to stop it, which is, perhaps, why she really doesn't want to know . . . The novel is extremely realistic in its portrait of the deadly effect of sexual abuse upon a young woman, who is not even fully aware of what has happened to her, who only becomes

75. QIII 248 (19 Jun., 1923).

76. Paul 77.

77. DeSalvo (1989) 168.

aware in the images which crowd her dreams.⁷⁸

DeSalvo here moves unproblematically from Helen's suspicion of "nameless atrocities" perpetrated by Rachel's father to imputedly hard evidence culled from Rachel's dreams proving a case of sexual abuse. The more obvious conclusion to be drawn, considering that the text presents no direct evidence of such an occurrence, is that the images in Rachel's dreams mirror a sub-text replete with generalized female fears of sexuality, or, as is more likely, reflect Woolf's own experience of sexual abuse. DeSalvo is departing from the parameters which the text itself sets up; she is indulging in the type of criticism which L.C. Knights denounced in relation to Shakespearian studies in his famous 1933 essay, "How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?," that is "pseudo-critical investigations"⁷⁹ which have little relation to the text in question and sometimes (as I believe in this case) actually work against the evidence presented in the text. Rachel's sexual ignorance early in the novel fairly convincingly invalidates any assertion that she was a victim of sexual abuse, and if, as DeSalvo would argue, this is because she was "not even fully aware of what . . . happened to her,"⁸⁰ the burden of proof lies with DeSalvo to substantiate this from the text. If DeSalvo is actually making an offhand reference to Woolf's own sexual abuse through the figure of Rachel, she should be much more explicit about where she is dealing with textual, and where with sub-textual material. DeSalvo views the "drowning images in delirium as

78. DeSalvo (1989) 168.

79. "How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?," in L.C. Knights, 'Hamlet' and other Shakespearian essays (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1979) 306.

80. DeSalvo (1989) 168.

symptomatic of sexual abuse."⁸¹ Again DeSalvo is clearly working with sub-textual material here which she presents as textual. This reference to drowning, combined with DeSalvo's earlier reference to the association between sexual abuse and inexplicable death, makes the parallels between DeSalvo's statements and Woolf's own experience too strong to escape serious attention, yet DeSalvo is also intent on proving a case of sexual abuse in regard to Rachel, a case which cannot be sustained by the text. DeSalvo is on safer critical ground when reclaiming some of Woolf's proto-feminist statements which throw into relief her successes in The Voyage Out and later writings, statements perhaps not unconnected with issues such as childhood and adolescent sexual abuse: "A painstaking woman who wishes to treat of life as she finds it, and to give voice to some of the perplexities of her sex, in plain English, has no chance at all."⁸²

Jane Wheare's 1989 Virginia Woolf: Dramatic Novelist employs a form of criticism combining a fairly traditional biographical approach on the one hand and elements of a socialist-feminist position on the other, encouraging dislocation in the style of her book, yet also providing rewarding insights from both of these very different discursive strategies. Wheare numbers among Woolf's "dramatic"⁸³ novels The Voyage Out, Night and Day and The Years. She concentrates in part on the relationship between these texts and Woolf's

81. DeSalvo (1989) 168.

82. Letter to Lytton Strachey. LI 381, 469 (28 Jan., 1909), quoted in DeSalvo (1989) 302. Virginia Blain earlier appropriated this quotation in her article "Narrative Voice and the Female Perspective in 'The Voyage Out'" in Clements and Grundy 121.

83. Jane Wheare, Virginia Woolf: Dramatic Novelist (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1989) 1.

didactic works, A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas. In relation to Woolf's novels Wheare writes, not as a reflection of the radical Derridean/Kristevan dismantling of the binary opposition masculine/feminine, but more likely as a liberal appropriation of some of the content of this position, "In all her novels . . . Woolf presents male and female characters who can be seen as the victims of traditional sexual stereotyping."⁸⁴ The reservation of the "some" seems justified, as all human beings are the victims of traditional sexual stereotyping to some extent whether they consciously resist it as Rachel and Terence do, or whether they accept its dictates as the majority of the characters in the novel seem to.

Wheare's conservatism emerges in the strong comparisons she makes between The Voyage Out and other texts written at the time, often quite alien in style and intent to Woolf, such as Arnold Bennett's Old Wives' Tale. She also believes Woolf and the narrator fundamentally follow Helen's point of view in the novel, whereas the reader's sympathies seem to be manipulated to be in line much more with the emerging consciousness of Rachel. This in itself points to the emphasis that Wheare gives to authority in the novel (Helen) as against uncharted experience and eccentric development (Rachel). She has a similar attitude towards Terence's significance in the novel, which again needs to be checked against Rachel's role. Wheare believes that Terence's world-view is seen as normative by the reader of The Voyage Out. She writes that "It is primarily through Terence . . . rather than a female character, that Woolf puts across and illustrates the 'feminine' point of

84. Wheare 99.

view in her novel."⁸⁵ Whereas it is true that Terence often verbalizes the feminine point of view to a far greater degree than Rachel in the novel, it is nevertheless Rachel who lives out the female experience and suffers the female death. Wheare places too much emphasis on Terence's ability to identify vicariously with Rachel and the social situation of women in general, and too little on the emergence of Rachel herself as an individual with her own views and perception of reality. Nevertheless, it is in Rachel's silences in the novel, both verbal and textual, that the position of the early twentieth-century female subject is best enunciated.

Wheare has strengths, however, in certain aspects of her critical methodology and practice. She draws, as do many modern critics, particularly feminists, very extensively from Woolf's letters and diaries, a healthy direction for Woolf criticism to continue to proceed in, particularly if this approach is employed with care and avoids earlier excesses of biographical criticism. She pays close attention to primary sources generally, a strategy which pays dividends, particularly with a writer who often pre-dates in all the modes of her writing literary-critical insights which have taken over half a century longer to find general scholarly acceptance. Wheare is critically insightful in her recognition of the fact that early in The Voyage Out "Rachel is as yet unable to make the connection between the worship of 'masculine' values and her own deprivation."⁸⁶ This connection is made through a slow, unfolding process as she realizes that the life she has lived up until the present has not been a series of random

85. Wheare 58.

86. Wheare 49.

accidents, but one carefully moulded by social and political forces over which she has had little control. Despite this, however, Woolf's novel is not an overtly feminist one as Wheare suggests, with Woolf modelling her characters in order to concur with this political motive. Although sections of the novel bear close resemblance to arguments employed in A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas, Woolf's feminism in this novel is nevertheless largely latent, emerging from the fate of her heroine and probably often barely perceived by the author herself.

The most unsatisfactory element in Wheare's thesis is the combination of conservative and radical discourses which are brought together in an apparently unproblematic fashion. Towards the end of her section on The Voyage Out, Wheare writes that in the novel Woolf dramatizes "the problem of evil"⁸⁷ through the life and death of Rachel Vinrace, and, in what almost amounts to a version of the theodical "greater good" doctrine in Christian theology, adds:

Through the novel's carefully worked out structure of echoes and repetitions [Woolf] is able to capture something of the significance and value which, for her, is present beneath what might appear to be the most arbitrary of experiences and obscure of lives.⁸⁸

Wheare also often creates no distinction in her writing between Woolf the author/person and the narrator of the novel. Apart from the insights of modern critical theory, Woolf herself stated in 1922, "when I write I'm merely a sensibility."⁸⁹

These elements in Wheare's discourse combine with her

87. Wheare 82.

88. Wheare 82-3.

89. DII 193 (22 Aug., 1922).

general treatment of feminist issues in the novel to create an uneasy marriage between two vastly different attitudes to literature and its theory.

Alice Fox's Virginia Woolf and the Literature of the English Renaissance (1990)⁹⁰ has parallels with Janis Paul's work in its concentration on the writers of the past to account for the weight of tradition which permeates Woolf's texts despite their fundamentally modernist progressiveness. Unlike Paul's thesis, however, Fox shows how Woolf used the material she garnered from past texts to illuminate more clearly the twentieth-century contexts with which she dealt in her novels.

Fox concentrates particularly on Woolf's use of Hakluyt's Voyages to embroider and, indeed, to a large extent shape, the account of Rachel's own voyages to and through South America. As soon as the Euphrosyne reaches South America, Woolf's narrator embarks on a long description of the five Elizabethan barques which had arrived at precisely the same spot three hundred years before, using details culled directly from Hakluyt. In an earlier draft of the novel, the country is described as "a virgin land behind a veil," a figure which extends the metaphorical associations still present in the published text which link Rachel with the Euphrosyne.

Fox believes that Woolf employs allusions to The Tempest to "body forth a world fraught with . . . barriers and restrictions"⁹¹; in particular she perceives thematic, yet ironic associations between Rachel and Shakespeare's Miranda:

Although Prospero's tuition has prepared Miranda for life

90. Alice Fox, Virginia Woolf and the Literature of the English Renaissance (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990).

91. Fox 25.

as an Elizabethan queen, Willoughby Vinrace's benign neglect, based on a 'good-humoured . . . but contemptuous' attitude towards women, has prepared his daughter for nothing at all, not for a career, not for marriage. Death, rather than a new life, ends her voyage.⁹²

Fox sees Woolf as engaged in a process of "de-Elizabethanizing the women of the novel"⁹³ through its successive drafts, believing Elizabethan literature to be a male preserve and consequently increasing through subsequent drafts the number of references in which male characters are associated with Elizabethan texts and are seen to be at ease with them. In contrast to this ease, and in light of the early reference in the novel to Rachel's mind being "in the state of an intelligent man's in the beginning of the reign of Queen Elizabeth" (30), Fox notes that Rachel, unlike the male characters in the novel

is trapped by an antiquated social structure she can neither understand nor transcend. She might as well be an Elizabethan woman, uneducated, without a profession, without a sense of her own importance, without the rights whose continued withholding Woolf was to decry even thirty years after writing her first novel.⁹⁴

Fox advances the original thesis that Rachel dies because she dares to voyage into her father's world of independence and adventure, an act which constitutes a transgression of the social demarcations set out for women of her period. Fox places this insight in the context of the Elizabethan allusions and settings which permeate the novel, and of Rachel as a woman caught between two worlds:

The allusions to Miranda from The Tempest, along with the milieu of Elizabethan voyages in The Voyage Out in its finished state, create a world that Rachel both is and is not a part of. When Woolf added, at a stage later than

92. Fox 26.

93. Fox 27.

94. Fox 29.

those of the extant drafts, that 'the time of Elizabeth was only distant from the present time by a moment of space' . . . she sharpened the point that the entire narrative made in its liberal use of Elizabethan elements: little progress in the condition of women had been made in the three hundred years which separated the early twentieth century from the Elizabethan age.⁹⁵

Fox believes that Woolf uses Elizabethan elements, the "promise [of foreign lands incredibly rich in beauty and wealth]," in the novel to "delineate the masculine world from which Rachel was barred."⁹⁶ This is the greatest strength in Fox's discourse; she, like Woolf, creatively uses Elizabethan sources to highlight twentieth-century oppression. In this process neither the sixteenth- nor the twentieth-century contexts are violated. Both Fox and Woolf rewrite sixteenth-century history through its intertextual associations with The Voyage Out, but manage not to unwrite it completely through this process.

Of biographical discourses on The Voyage Out during the past decade, I discuss three here, two as representatives of the type of short-sighted criticism which often still prevails in discussions of Woolf's work, as well as an example of a slightly more sophisticated approach to biographical criticism. Biographical discourses in general have still not taken into account the new critical spaces opened up by various contemporary retheorizations of the individual, or the deconstruction of the subject of the older type of literary biography, an approach which can easily be applied to the claim that traces of an author's personality remain or can be reconstructed in his or her work, usually on a sub-textual level. Woolf's own statement on the human personality, "we're

95. Fox 31.

96. Fox 34.

splinters and mosaics; not, as they used to hold, immaculate, monolithic, consistent wholes,"⁹⁷ as well as her acceptance in her fiction of "the old post-Dostoevsky argument," "that character is dissipated into shreds now,"⁹⁸ should guide discussions of how a character or characters in her fiction may or may not relate to the author herself.

Leon Edel's 1979 study of the Bloomsbury Group, Bloomsbury: A House of Lions, once again promulgates the sexist view popular until the late 1960s which saw Woolf as largely the product of Bloomsbury or her father's influence, and gave little attention to the fact that she, along with other contemporary modernist writers, was fundamentally following her own individual path towards revolutions in style and portrayal of character, albeit being influenced by the general artistic ambience which surrounded her.

Edel sees The Voyage Out as partly an attempt by Woolf to "discover and understand the men around her."⁹⁹ It seems that by the time of the writing of this novel Woolf had already in large measure come to terms with "the men around her," as the novel presents a highly developed view of sexual politics and of relationships between men and women, only occasionally seeking specifically to understand the nature of individual male characters, which seems to me a peripheral task to this larger undertaking. Edel has too simple a view of the novel's structure as it relates to Woolf's biography:

Bloomsbury is floated to a South American shore, where it is divided between a hotel and a villa - Gordon Square and

97. DII 314 (15 Sept., 1924).

98. DII 248 (19 Jun., 1923).

99. Leon Edel, Bloomsbury: A House of Lions (1979; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981) 154.

Whether this to any extent reflects Woolf's unconscious purpose in the novel (I think even Edel would not impute such a one-dimensional allegory to the conscious mind of Woolf), nevertheless its reductiveness completely ignores the critique which Woolf is able to direct at Victorian and Edwardian society from the safe distance of neutral South America. Edel includes in his book useful biographical information on various emotional states through which Woolf passed while writing her novel, but fails to see the political significance of these. For instance, Edel recounts Woolf's reaction after a dream she had in the early stages of the novel's composition in which her (dead) father disapproved of her writing: "I was very melancholy, and read it this morning and thought it very bad."¹⁰¹ Yet Edel does not go on therefore to say how much, by actually completing her novel, Woolf was operating against the perceived reaction of her father, and therefore by implication the patriarchal society within which she lived and the male establishment within, and tradition of, literature.

Edel's claim that "Virginia's decision to kill Rachel Vinrace . . . was in a deeper sense a killing of herself"¹⁰² has much circumstantial evidence to support it considering the record of breakdown and attempted suicide which DeSalvo has catalogued¹⁰³ during Woolf's writing of the novel. Yet once again Edel fails to place this in a political context, a context which is actually inherent in the novel itself.

100. Edel 155.

101. Edel 155; LI 325, 406 (15 Apr., 1908).

102. Edel 199.

103. See the introduction to this thesis (pp. 4 and 9).

Rachel's death can be seen as the result of an education saturated with ignorance, sexual and otherwise. Woolf's breakdowns and suicide attempt, apart from their origin in Woolf's genetic predisposition towards manic-depressive psychosis, were brought on by the stress of environmental factors such as adolescent sexual abuse, the tensions bearing upon her marriage, and the decision, taken largely out of her hands, that it was too dangerous for her to have children. In all of these cases the common factor is the patriarchal construction of woman, a being given unequal access to education, abused, encouraged to conform to certain stereotypical patterns of behaviour in regard to the rituals of engagement and marriage ("the machinery of mating" as Gordon terms it¹⁰⁴), and "persuaded . . . to agree"¹⁰⁵ by her husband to vital decisions concerning her body and well-being. Edel's use of the familiar "Virginia," a device employed particularly by biographers and literary biographers and already commented on earlier in this chapter, also contains the danger of depoliticizing Woolf and her work.

A more satisfying approach to literary biography is found in Lyndall Gordon's essay, "A Writer's Life," in Warner's volume. Gordon writes:

The death of Rachel in The Voyage Out [is] Virginia Woolf's backward, transforming [look] at her own muted side, potentially creative, potentially distorted and always threatened with extinction. To follow the history of Virginia Woolf's muted self is to follow the more muted characters in her novels.¹⁰⁶

Although Gordon presents too easy a correlation between text and life, particularly in the greater vagueness of the latter

104. Gordon 107.

105. BII 8, quoted in Trombley 110.

106. Warner 66.

sentence which moves unproblematically from life to an unspecified number of fictional characters, nevertheless the theme of the historical mutedness of women, identical to Woolf's own feminist polemic, begins to transform biographical criticism into serving a larger political purpose.

More obvious examples of abuses in the use of a biographical approach to literature occur in Shirley Panken's 1987 Virginia Woolf and the 'Lust of Creation'. Some of Panken's critical surmises are based upon no evidence whatsoever and rely upon an unquestioned one-to-one association between Woolf and seemingly any of her fictional characters. A case in point is Panken's comments on "some of St. John's vicious language and vituperations":

What St. John or Virginia Woolf appear to be inveighing against are the oral frustrations and deprivations connected with the mother of the nursing period.¹⁰⁷

Setting aside for the moment the question of what standing this statement has on psychoanalytic grounds, on the level of the text where these "vituperations" occur, St. John is merely playing out his characteristic Stracheyesque role, denouncing female sexuality and shocking his audience with jokes about masturbation. This albeit ambivalent portrait of her friend Lytton Strachey is nevertheless as far as possible removed from either Woolf the author or the authorial persona. To conflate the identities of St. John and Virginia Woolf is not only to ignore the problematic of the transforming nature of literary process, but to identify Woolf with many of the values in the novel which her narrative persona trenchantly rejects or at the very least looks askance upon.

In the same section of her argument, Panken utilizes a -----
107. Panken 83.

reference by Helen to her brother from an entirely different portion of the novel to illustrate Woolf's hypothesized sibling oral rivalry. The language Panken uses reveals her recognition of the weakness of her argument:

In this context [the aggressive imagery of the Psalm Mr. Bax reads at the hotel church service], Helen's seemingly casual allusion to her younger brother may further clarify St. John's exaggerated oral imagery since it is linked to another younger brother, Adrian Stephen, invoking oral envy and rage in his sister, Virginia Woolf.¹⁰⁸

The age-old rhetorical device of suggesting the weakest point in one's argument is actually the strongest (the "seemingly casual allusion"), the hesitant "may" followed by the bold "further clarify," and the completely unproblematic "since" all serve to conceal the conceptual misconnections which Panken is making.

Panken makes similar conceptual leaps in other sections of her text. She notes the inverse connection between the movement of the blind in Rachel's room during her illness which seems terrifying to her and the analogue from which this moment presumably arises, Woolf's description of a blind drawing its acorn across the floor to the accompaniment of the sound of the sea in "A Sketch of the Past," which is "the purest ecstasy [she could] conceive."¹⁰⁹ The comparison of the movement of the blind in The Voyage Out to the "movement of an animal in the room" (335) is associated by Panken with Rachel's fear of sexuality, which is a more than adequate explanation of the simile considering the abundance of animal imagery in the novel in other contexts concerned with this fear. Yet Panken's further suggestion that Rachel's perception of the movement of

108. Panken 83.

109. In Virginia Woolf, Moments of Being. 2nd ed. Ed. Jeanne Schulkind (London: The Hogarth Press, 1985) 75.

the blind as if it were an animal relates to "Virginia's fear and confusion regarding her parents' sexuality as she lay next to their bedroom in Cornwall"¹¹⁰ has absolutely no biographical evidence to support it, nor do we know whether Woolf ever consciously considered the subject of her parents' sexuality, let alone with fear and confusion.

The most ludicrous example of Panken's biographical method, however, is her comments on the image in Rachel's delirium formed by her mental transformation of a wave into the side of a mountain, in which she perceives her knees as "huge peaked mountains of bare bone" (353). According to Panken, this "projects Virginia's desire to resurrect her father who was a passionate mountain climber."¹¹¹ Panken also asks equally irrelevant questions arising from Rachel's conflict before her marriage:

Did Woolf feel she killed off her mother because of her sexual burgeoning and closeness to father during her childhood and early adolescence? Or in turning to men, did she feel that she threatened Violet [Dickinson] and therefore had to punish herself?¹¹²

It is unlikely that either of these alternatives explains the conflict Rachel experiences in the novel in her divided loyalty between Helen and Terence. If a biographical explanation needs to be sought after, it is more plausible to see in Rachel's conflict the triangular situation which existed between Woolf, her sister and her brother-in-law Clive Bell in the years 1908 and 1909, the years in which Woolf was writing the first drafts of her novel. Certainly the letters from Woolf to Violet Dickinson in the months immediately preceding

110. Panken 84.

111. Panken 84.

112. Panken 87.

her marriage in 1912 bear no trace of conflict; Leonard Woolf met Dickinson in June of that year and pronounced that "he never met anyone he liked so much."¹¹³

Panken, like most liberal-humanist and biographical critics, is on safest ground when dealing directly with the primary autobiographical sources available to students of Woolf. Panken's appropriation of Woolf's remarks in a 1906 letter that "my present feeling is that this [fictional and experienced] dream like world without love, or heart, or passion, or sex, is the world I really care about, and find interesting"¹¹⁴ serves to explain the peculiar effect of bloodlessness that both Woolf's first novel and first major fictional character inspire. Panken's explanation of Woolf's many revisions of the river scene¹¹⁵ in terms of "her marked conflict concerning marital versus homoerotic issues"¹¹⁶ is also a highly plausible association to make considering both DeSalvo's evidence of the number of revisions this scene underwent, and the gradual desexing and de-empowering of Rachel through the various drafts of the novel.

Studies of the use Woolf makes of language and of the narratological status of her texts have increased during the last decade as the impact of structuralist theory, deconstruction and other linguistic-based theories of literature have increasingly turned the attention of critics away from issues of the signified to issues of the signifier.

113. LI 505, 631 (24 Jun., 1912).

114. LI 227, 272 (June? 1906).

115. The semi-hallucinatory scene in the novel in which Rachel and Helen roll in the grass and Helen and Terence kiss above Rachel.

116. Panken 75.

Woolf as a modernist herself was often concerned with problems of language and its relation to "reality," both in connection with her own writing and the writing of others. Late twentieth-century literary theory often strikingly reflects concerns over which she was already pondering fifty to eighty years before.

E.L. Bishop in his 1981 article "Toward the Far Side of Language: Virginia Woolf's The Voyage Out"¹¹⁷ addresses many of the concerns involved in Woolf's understanding of language and its relationship to reality. Bishop is particularly interested in Woolf's ambivalent attitude towards language and the projection of this concern onto the heroine of her first novel:

One notices throughout Woolf's writings a constantly fluctuating regard for language: it strikes her by turns as an almost magical force, as a mere necessary evil, and as a betrayer of life . . . [The Voyage Out] is both a groping exploration on Woolf's part of the connection between reality and language, and a dramatic portrayal of a corresponding exploration in the growth of the central character.¹¹⁸

For Bishop, Rachel's sense of her own reality is largely constructed through language. When she demands, "What is it to be in love? . . . each word as it came into being [seeming] to shove itself out into an unknown sea" (176), she "is discovering that articulation may be heuristic as well as declarative."¹¹⁹ The process of Rachel and Terence falling in love in the novel is itself seen to be heavily mediated by the type of language they use.

Bishop also concentrates on the constricting and distorting powers of language. He focuses on the section in

117. E.L. Bishop, "Toward the Far Side of Language: Virginia Woolf's The Voyage Out," Twentieth Century Literature 27 (1981): 343-61.

118. Bishop 344.

119. Bishop 351.

the novel in which Rachel is writing replies to the letters of congratulation she has received from some of the hotel guests on the occasion of her engagement. She is suddenly struck by the likeness between the phrases she is using and those she has condemned in the congratulatory letters as having been false and conventional. Realizing the gap between the reality which surrounds her as she writes and the paltry words she is using to express her thanks, she asks herself: "Would there ever be a time when the world was one and indivisible?" (303)¹²⁰. Bishop compares this experience of writing and language with Rachel's kinaesthetic experience whilst reading Gibbon. According to Bishop, "when reading Gibbon [Rachel] had transcended the gulf between words and external reality; for a moment the world had seemed to be one and indivisible."¹²¹ In the context of these two varying experiences Bishop concentrates on the power of language to "[capture] experience"¹²² as well as its tendency to fix and define, thus limit the range of meaning. Bishop outlines the process of a word's transformation into a "cipher,"¹²³ a process which he views in terms of lapsarian-like decline, as indicated by the language he uses to describe it. In his words, expression "[loses] the original sensory imprint as it becomes a vehicle for abstract thought. Language begins to constrict and distort that same experience which it brought to light."¹²⁴ The injection of the world of the senses into language constitutes a fall, but one which is essential if

120. The Grafton text is corrupt at this point, reading "invisible" instead of "indivisible."

121. Bishop 351.

122. Bishop 351.

123. Bishop 351.

124. Bishop 351.

any mode of abstract or theoretical thought is to take place.

Bishop, however, still seeks for a moment in the reading and language process pure in terms of sensory experience and undefiled by the contamination of abstract thought. He posits this moment either in time at the stage before the word on the page is processed by the brain, or in space as an "elusive reality that lies just on the far side of language"¹²⁵ and is unable ever to be captured by it. This, in Bishop's terms, is "the struggle" of all of Woolf's fiction: "to restore language to its metaphorical intensity - to transform words from pellets of information into channels of perception - and thereby to net that elusive reality."¹²⁶ That this was Woolf's aim in her fiction is not in doubt; sufficient witness of the "struggle" is given in her diaries, which parallel the process of the writing of her novels. That it was a doomed quest is also certain. Bishop's terms such as the "captur[ing]" of experience and the presentation of "immediate"¹²⁷ sensory experience share this doom; belonging to an older aesthetic and conceptual linguistic framework, they too fail to net the reality ever elusive in this space-time continuum.

Nora Eisenberg's essay, "Virginia Woolf's Last Words on Words: Between the Acts and 'Anon'," in Jane Marcus' New Feminist Essays on Virginia Woolf, adds further dimensions to our understanding of Woolf's relationship with language. Eisenberg discusses the "little language" in Woolf, "small or broken words, brief or unfinished sentences, cries, calls,

125. Bishop 359.

126. Bishop 359.

127. Bishop 351.

songs, silences, and even sights [sic] and gestures."¹²⁸ In contrast to this is the language against which Woolf rebelled, patriarchal language which in Woolf's view was rigid and divided the world conceptually instead of unifying it. Woolf's definition of the "little language" in The Waves is of a language "such as lovers use."¹²⁹ This relates particularly clearly to The Voyage Out through the hesitations and pauses which characterize Rachel and Terence's speech during their walk in the jungle. Eisenberg claims that Woolf identified the "little language" as being the peculiar province of women who "traditionally worked [via language] to smooth over the divisions and rifts caused by men."¹³⁰ This is an overstatement of her case, as Woolf recognized within her writerly self the same insistent egocentricity which she so thoroughly castigated in male authors such as Joyce. Woolf's concept of the "little language" has significant parallels in some aspects of the literary theory of Kristeva, Helene Cixous and Luce Irigaray, particularly Cixous in her search for a female language to subvert dominant male logocentrism. Cixous, unlike Eisenberg, de-essentializes this language, which she associates with her theory connecting writing and the "other bisexuality." Whereas this writing is more likely to be employed by women in a patriarchal society undergoing change, Cixous opens the possibility for its use by men such as the French homosexual writer Jean Genet who are prepared to lay aside for a time their "glorious monosexuality."¹³¹ Eisenberg

128. Marcus (1981) 254.

129. Virginia Woolf, The Waves (1931; rpt. Frogmore: Granada, 1977) 96.

130. Marcus (1981) 254.

131. Moi 110 and see 109-10 in general.

sees in the music in which Rachel is deeply involved in The Voyage Out a prototype of the "little language" which features more clearly in Woolf's later novels; it stands "as an alternative to the words of the manly Hirsts and Hewets."¹³²

Poresky too takes note of the language which Rachel and Terence use in the jungle scene; in this section of the novel "their voices . . . joined in tones of strange unfamiliar sound which formed no words."¹³³ It is easy to apply Kristeva's theory of the semiotic to these utterances which escape the patriarchal net's language of the Symbolic; neither Woolf nor Poresky theorize the language of the novel so explicitly, but as in the work of many earlier critics of the novel, linguistic discourses were enunciated yet not theorized, awaiting new insights through the work of various Continental philosophers.

Harper employs the phenomenological theories of Merleau-Ponty to his narratological analysis of The Voyage Out. He uses Merleau-Ponty's concept of perception as "more than a secret technique for imitating a reality given as such to all men [but] the very realization and invention of a world"¹³⁴ to foreground the experiences of readers of the novel rather than the imputed viewpoint of the author as traditional criticism does. Harper distinguishes between the plots of conventional novels and the "plot of intentionality":

The conflicts in the plot of intentionality are always on the frontier of awareness, language, and style, where the creative imagination struggles with the ineffable. Meaning is not something inherent, or at least self-evident, in the given world; rather, it is something to be discovered, achieved, wrested from the struggle with the

132. Marcus 254.

133. Poresky 39; TVO 278.

134. Quoted in Harper 3.

protean, phenomenal world.¹³⁵

By this definition Harper's concept of the "plot of intentionality" has much in common with Bishop's understanding of Rachel's experience of articulation in the novel as being heuristic. Also in keeping with this definition is Harper's later description of The Voyage Out as being Woolf's "'first articulation' of a mythic language."¹³⁶

Harper concentrates on the "narrative" of a text on its own terms without the appeal to an external author - the creator of the art-object - as in traditional criticism, the approach popularized in such essays as Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author."¹³⁷ This view of literary process causes Harper to construct sentences such as the following in order to try to grasp the nature of the textual process with which he is working, and the reader's role in constructing meaning:

[the suffering and paranoia of Mrs. Ambrose in the opening scene of The Voyage Out] is really experienced in the larger field of intentionality where the constituting consciousness struggles to find objective correlatives for its own feelings.¹³⁸

Harper believes that the novel is concerned with

the nature of the process of perception itself . . . In the first five paragraphs of the book there are more than twenty references to the psychodynamics of perception - either to the act of seeing or - what is even more significant, perhaps - the refusal to see or be seen.¹³⁹

In an extension of Mitchell Leaska's old argument concerning To the Lighthouse, he claims that one of the "plots" of The Voyage

135. Harper 3.

136. Harper 7.

137. Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in Image Music Text, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977) 142-8.

138. Harper 13.

139. Harper 13-14.

Out is the "very complex flow of perspectives."¹⁴⁰ In moving the concept of multiplicity of perspective from a structural device which helps to illuminate theme to the status of one of the "plots" of the novel (even to talk of plot in the plural except in terms of the traditionally accepted hierarchical conception of plot undergirded by sub-plots is a radical innovation) is to make a marked shift in one's own perception of a literary work, particularly by raising issues about the multiplicity of ways that such a work can be constructed and studied. Some elements of Harper's phenomenological approach make great strides towards a self-reflexivity so common to postmodernist literature and criticism. Whilst not concentrating exclusively on the signifier as much postmodernist writing does, his work nevertheless opens up a field of meaning which is potential and not fixed, awaiting each individual reader's heuristic voyage to reveal itself as never-ending process.

Harper's basic critical approach is to trace the changing perspective of the narrative voice in Woolf's text. The only problem with this methodology is that he sees writing as largely an impersonal process either originating from the unconscious, or, as is more likely given the terms he uses, having a self-generating power which propels the narrative forward by its own strength. Whereas both of these models may contain some truth, Harper ignores the conscious process of selection and rejection which an author undergoes when writing; however strongly this process itself may be dictated by extra-conscious factors, nevertheless it can never be completely depersonalized. Although he wishes to employ the term

140. Harper 14.

"narrative consciousness" to describe an impersonal creative function working through the novel, in practice Harper often attributes personal characteristics to it. Evolutionary theory, from which the whole concept of literary process derives, struggles with the same problem of trying to convert a teleological language into a language suggesting process. The failure to do this in both cases suggests either a return to older models of thought is warranted to some extent; or alternatively, that an entirely new language which breaks down the traditional subject-object division must be created.¹⁴¹

Mark Hussey in The Singing of the Real World: The Philosophy of Virginia Woolf's Fiction (1986) adds further insights to an understanding of Woolf's relationship with language. He claims that in her novels

The nonverbal imagination must be felt in the reader's mind; the books must be read actively to half-create from intimations their non-verbal origins . . . An art that expresses meaning and feeling without using referential signs would obviously appeal to a writer wishing to convey her sense of the numinous.¹⁴²

Whereas Hussey's concept is well expressed, there is no possible way that any reader but Woolf (and even then I would have grave hesitations) would be able to get in touch with her "nonverbal imagination," the "non-verbal origins" of her novels, or "her sense of the numinous." These are all uniquely Woolf's, and any attempt to tap the original source of her inspiration purely via her novels has less chance of success than a séance has of summoning her spirit. This, in fact, is what Hussey is attempting to do. The alluring signs on the

141. See Derrida's comments on the ancient use of the middle voice in Greek and other Indo-European languages in relation to this in Jacques Derrida, "Différance," in Margins of Philosophy, trans. Alan Bass (Brighton: Harvester, 1982) 9.

142. Mark Hussey, The Singing of the Real World: The Philosophy of Virginia Woolf's Fiction (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1986) 66.

pages of Woolf's novels hold out the promise of presence (she does use referential signs even if one of their major functions is to direct the reader to some conception of the numinous), but what the reader is more likely to be experiencing while he or she reads is his or her own non-verbal imagination and sense of the numinous. Whether imagination itself can ever be truly non-verbal is a highly debatable point; on the other hand one of the conditions of the existence of the numinous is the very impossibility of adequately defining it in words. The numinous equates with a reader's attempts at capturing the emotional and imaginative sub-text of Woolf as she wrote her novel; separated forever by a Derridean *différance* from the impulses of her creative act, one must be content with one's own finite construction of the text using whatever secondary information may be available, or give up the attempt completely and abolish the author from her text, allowing complete freedom of textual play.

Hussey is more credible in his second point which makes no grand claims like the first. He writes of "[Woolf's] search for a suitable form through which to communicate her perception of the world that . . . had at its heart an empty, silent center that eludes communication in language."¹⁴³ The empty, silent heart of Woolf's world is at the opposite end of the spectrum from the numinous toward which she reached, no doubt in large part to escape from the silence and fear of this centre. Characters in many of Woolf's novels face this centre, only to turn away again that their lives may be saved from dissolution. In The Voyage Out Rachel undergoes an experience of dissolution while reading in the villa around midday. As

143. Hussey 67.

she becomes keenly aware of the impersonality of the universe and the immensity and desolation of all that exists, the clock ticks "in the midst of the universal silence" (124). In this instance words save her in the form of Terence's invitation to the picnic. In The Waves Rhoda cannot cross a puddle that strikes her as "cadaverous, awful." Identity fails her as she realizes that "we are nothing." As she regains a sense of her body she notes that "This is life then to which I am committed" (TW 43). This latter incident is based on an actual experience in Woolf's childhood and is associated in her diary with her view of "reality."¹⁴⁴ In her 1928 diary she expands on this:

Often [at Rodmell] I have entered into a sanctuary; a nunnery; had a religious retreat; of great agony once; + always some terror; so afraid one is of loneliness; of seeing to the bottom of the vessel. That is one of the experiences I have had here in some Augusts; + got then to a consciousness of what I call 'reality': a thing I see before me; something abstract; but residing in the downs or sky; beside which nothing matters; in which I shall rest and continue to exist. Reality I call it. And I fancy sometimes this is the most necessary thing to me: that which I seek. But who knows - once one takes a pen + writes? How difficult not to go making 'reality' this + that, whereas it is one thing.¹⁴⁵

In this diary entry Woolf admits, as Hussey states, the extreme difficulty of defining this "reality of the centre." Woolf used to combat such depressive moods by "incessant brain activity,"¹⁴⁶ including reading and planning her work, but this move away from the centre was also perceived as a loss as it was a move away from "the assault of truth."¹⁴⁷ Terence finds this truth when he realizes during Rachel's illness that "underneath the life of every day, pain lies, quiescent, but

144. See DIII 113 (30 Sep., 1926).

145. DIII 196 (10 Sep., 1928).

146. DIII 112 (28 Sep., 1926).

147. DIII 112 (28 Sep., 1926).

ready to devour" (351-2). Bernard in The Waves provides the greatest challenge to it as he faces death "unvanquished and unyielding" (IW 200), uniting the fearful silent centre with the power of peripheral, numinous, and now externalized death. In such an event language rightly falters.

Makiko Minow-Pinkney in Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject (1987) continues this concern with Woolf's attitude towards "reality" and its relationship to language. She writes that

In The Voyage Out Terence's desire to 'write a novel about Silence' incarnates [the] contradiction [that literature in its quest for the 'real' produces only an endless chain of signs] . . . He seeks to write a novel because the desire for a final truth is not abandoned, but a novel about silence because language necessarily defers that truth indefinitely.¹⁴⁸

Minow-Pinkney takes Terence's comments in the novel rather out of context as it is not simply a novel about silence that he desires to write, but a novel about "Silence . . . the things people don't say" (220). This presumably limits the meaning of the statement to the hidden discourses which undergird all of our lives, with the meaning of those ineffable aspects of reality which escape neat conceptual or linguistic closure only occupying a secondary position in the order of signification. Therefore, if we accept the former as being the primary meaning of Terence's statement, in his novel he would be unearthing these hidden discourses and giving them form, thus bringing finite, once-buried truths to light. There is no suggestion in the novel that Terence is in search of a "final truth" through his writing of a novel, access to a grand or master narrative which will explain all. In fact, by writing of silence in Minow-Pinkney's understanding of Woolf's meaning, he would be

148. Makiko Minow-Pinkney, Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject (Brighton: Harvester, 1987) 25.

ironically coming closer to this conception precisely by affirming the inability of language ever adequately to capture reality.

The history of feminist criticism on Woolf is a chequered one. Although some early studies of her work in the 1930s were either overtly feminist, such as Gruber's Virginia Woolf: A Study and Lohmüller's Die Frau im Werk von Virginia Woolf¹⁴⁹; or contained strong feminist elements, such as Winifred Holtby's study (1932), this tradition was not revived again until the late 1960s when books and articles bearing titles such as Feminism and Art: A Study of Virginia Woolf and "Feminism in Virginia Woolf"¹⁵⁰ began appearing. It took a further decade for this tradition to become consolidated with explicitly feminist readings of Woolf's novels such as Gayatri Spivak's of To the Lighthouse in Women and Language in Literature and Society, which replaced cruder, early '70s' "images of women"-type criticism such as Judith Little's "Heroism in To the Lighthouse" in the Koppelman Cornillon edited Images of Women in Fiction: Feminist Perspectives.¹⁵¹ In the period between these extremities of feminist criticism, the major works of Moers, Showalter and Gilbert and Gubar had largely single-handedly legitimated feminist criticism as an

149. Gertrud Lohmüller, Die Frau im Werk von Virginia Woolf. Aus Schrifttum und Sprache der Angelsachsen. Bd. 8 (Leipzig: Universitätsverlag von Robert Noske, 1937).

150. J.B. Batchelor, "Feminism in Virginia Woolf," English 23 (1968): 1-7, reprinted in Claire Sprague, ed., Virginia Woolf: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1971) 169-79.

151. Gayatri C. Spivak, "Unmaking and Making in To the Lighthouse," in Sally M^CConnell-Ginet et. al., eds., Women and Language in Literature and Society (New York: Praeger, 1980) 310-27; Judith Little, "Heroism in To the Lighthouse" in Susan Koppelman Cornillon, ed., Images of Women in Fiction: Feminist Perspectives (Bowling Green: Bowling Green U Popular P, 1972) 237-42.

intellectually valid way of approaching a literary text.¹⁵²

The first feminist literary biography of Woolf was published in 1978 by Phyllis Rose, setting the scene for the explosion of feminist material on her which, more than any other critical method, defined the direction of Woolf studies throughout the 1980s.

I have already surveyed in the liberal humanism section of this chapter some feminist criticism of Woolf; more than in the case of most writers a wide spectrum of feminist discourses on Woolf can be legitimately employed, as many of her most radical insights were spawned in an environment which was still fundamentally liberal. Here I examine the more radical feminist criticism of The Voyage Out, and highlight some of the theoretical difficulties in conceiving Woolfian feminist criticism and critics as approaching anything like a consensus or unity in matters concerning the interface between her politics and art.

One of the best essays to be published on The Voyage Out in the last decade was Virginia Blain's "Narrative Voice and the Female Perspective in 'The Voyage Out'," which first appeared in the Clements and Grundy collection in 1983.¹⁵³ Blain's starting-point for her discussion is Woolf's comments in the essay "Professions for Women":

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 (DOM 151).

152. Ellen Moers, Literary Women: The Great Writers (Garden City: Doubleday, 1976); Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979).

153. Virginia Blain, "Narrative Voice and the Female Perspective in 'The Voyage Out'," in Clements and Grundy 115-36.

Whereas these comments open up Woolf to the charge of essentialism, to the belief that in some illusory future one will be able to "know" woman in an exact and finite sense, Blain misreads them as applying to women's "prime obligation in any [nature/nurture] debate . . . to resist all attempts to contract its terms of reference."¹⁵⁴ Blain then goes on to use Woolf's statement as supporting evidence for her view (shared by Simone de Beauvoir) that Woolf had considerable gender-consciousness as a writer. In many ways this line of thinking runs counter to other of Woolf's statements such as her insistence in A Room of One's Own on the androgynous nature of mind which writers should attempt to develop, as well as to other feminist critics such as Toril Moi who have a Derridean/Kristevan anti-essentialist understanding of gender. In other ways Blain seeks to escape from an essentialist view of reality, as for instance when she critiques Woolf's concept (developed in relation to Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage) of a "psychological sentence of the feminine gender"¹⁵⁵; she accepts that this may have relevance to the first-person female narrator of Richardson's novel, but does not accept its application to Woolf's concept of a female writer who (Blain quotes from A Room of One's Own) should be "merely giving things their natural order, as a woman would, if she wrote like a woman."¹⁵⁶ This is consistent with Blain's desire to stress that Woolf wrote as a woman, as against Woolf's statements of the androgynous writer being the ideal. Blain lauds Woolf's

154. Clements and Grundy 116.

155. Virginia Woolf, "Romance and the Heart," in Contemporary Writers (London: The Hogarth Press, 1965) 24; Clements and Grundy 117.

156. AROOO 87; Clements and Grundy 117.

politics of writing in other of her statements, which in her view have as their ultimate goal "the ability to take [their] own femaleness so much for granted that the issue of gender can be forgotten."¹⁵⁷ I would argue that this conception is in fact identical to Woolf's theory of the writer as androgyne. The woman who writes "as a woman, but as a woman who has forgotten that she is a woman, so that her pages were full of that curious sexual quality which comes only when sex is unconscious of itself"¹⁵⁸ is surely a statement which could be applied equally to men if the sexual signifiers were changed.

In Blain's understanding of Woolf's search throughout her career for a narrative voice which would fit her material, she manages both to escape the snares of essentialism as well as to become enmeshed in them again as she describes Woolf's resistance to the conventions of the Victorian novel:

In some senses all of Woolf's work can be read as a quest for an authorial self . . . The real bogey handed on to her from the nineteenth century, with which she engaged at this period in a life-or-death combat, was the masculine voice of the omniscient narrator.¹⁵⁹

Whereas Woolf successfully escaped the spectre of the "masculine" voice in the short stories she wrote between 1917 and 1920, and was progressively dispensing with the function of an omniscient narrator in the stream of consciousness novels she wrote during the 1920s until she abandoned it altogether in The Waves (1931), this very progression signifies that although Woolf constantly sought a voice and form which would enable her to "enclose everything,"¹⁶⁰ the various disparate voices and

157. Clements and Grundy 117.

158. AROOO 88; Clements and Grundy 117.

159. Clements and Grundy 119.

160. DII 13 (26 Jan., 1920).

forms she found in the meantime were sufficient to capture much of the reality she hoped to net. In contrast to Blain's thesis that Woolf was a writer acutely aware of her gender, her most successful experiment in the novel involved her adoption of three male and three female narrative voices in addition to a voice which was decentred from a self to such an extent that its ability to enunciate was its only recognizably human attribute. Both The Waves and the "Time Passes" section of To the Lighthouse justify Naremore's appropriation of one of Bernard's statements in the former to describe the universe depicted by these disembodied Woolfian sensibilities, "the world without a self."¹⁶¹

Blain reads The Voyage Out as an oppositional discourse, "an extended argument with those aspects of Bloomsbury most particularly represented by her earliest literary rival [Lytton Strachey]."¹⁶² This is in stark contrast to those critics who perceive the novel as having been born out of the positive and nurturing influence of Bloomsbury. The two views are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Blain, whilst claiming that "the double-edged characterization of the two Bloomsbury figures in The Voyage Out - St. John Hirst and Helen Ambrose - indicates the extent of their author's unease with some of the values they represent,"¹⁶³ is still acknowledging that the characterization is in fact double-edged.

Blain rightly criticizes DeSalvo for considering Melymbrosia a better novel than The Voyage Out because it is closer to Woolf's personal experience:

161. James Naremore, The World Without a Self: Virginia Woolf and the Novel (New Haven: Yale UP, 1973); TW 194.

162. Clements and Grundy 121.

163. Clements and Grundy 121.

it is not [Rachel's] consciousness which frames the novel but that of Woolf's narrator, whose gender-conscious ironies operate as a constant reminder to the reader of the existence of the sex-war as a kind of grim backcloth to the romantic love story.¹⁶⁴

In the same vein she criticizes James Naremore for not crediting Woolf with the ability to distance herself from her fictional creations:

Virginia Woolf herself may or may not have been sexually nervous: the point I would wish to make is that she is perfectly conscious, as author, of this quality in her heroine - it is not a case of an unconscious projection of her own secret fears.¹⁶⁵

Woolf was in fact inordinately conscious of the parallels which could be drawn between herself and her first major heroine, as she was conscious of the parallels between other characters in the novel and figures from her personal life. In a letter to her sister in 1908 she berated herself: "Never was there such an improvident author - Flaubert would turn in his grave,"¹⁶⁶ as she feared that Kitty Maxse, an acquaintance, would recognize herself as Mrs. Dalloway; the reference to Flaubert, despite his realist prescription of authorial distance from one's text, is nevertheless propitious in light of his complete identification with his fictional creation Madame Bovary, as the intensity of Woolf's identification with Rachel was at least of similar magnitude, provoking the breakdowns and suicide attempt which causal connections I trace elsewhere in this thesis.

In the most radical and original section of Blain's essay she adumbrates the theme of The Voyage Out as the "problem of a woman's disablement by fear of condemnation by the other

164. Clements and Grundy 122.

165. Clements and Grundy 123.

166. LI 349, 432 (10 Aug., 1908).

sex."¹⁶⁷ This view effectively negates all readings of the novel which consider Rachel's inherent timidity as the major cause of her death (the majority of traditional readings), and instead foregrounds the effect of the patriarchal order which confines Rachel and circumscribes her fate from birth as a potential speaking subject denied a voice. In this reading, the figure of Terence, who is treated sympathetically even by the majority of feminist critics, is seen to be also complicit in the patriarchal machine. Blain believes that Terence's "jealousy of Rachel's 'otherness' gives credence to her delirious fears of 'castrating,' in the sense of emasculating, him."¹⁶⁸ This view is diametrically opposed to that of a paternalistic critic like Leaska who berates Terence's "difficulty with authority" and points to his need to develop "strong . . . masculine assertion"¹⁶⁹ in order to be a better husband to Rachel. Both views are extreme, Blain's as Rachel too is jealous of Terence's otherness; when he talks of his writing in the novel and becomes more impersonal it seems to Rachel that "He might never care for anyone; all that desire to know her and get at her . . . had completely vanished" (221). In addition, Terence's later comments when he and Rachel are discussing marriage are almost worryingly free of any taint of possessiveness, and express his complete (stated at least) acceptance of her otherness: "you're free, Rachel. To you, time will make no difference, or marriage" (288). A more developed expression of Blain's position which avoids a simple

167. Clements and Grundy 125.

168. Clements and Grundy 125.

169. Mitchell A. Leaska, "Virginia Woolf's The Voyage Out: Character Deduction and the Function of Ambiguity," Virginia Woolf Quarterly 1.2 (1973): 25. See Chapter 3 for further discussion of Leaska's critical viewpoint.

separatism, whilst at the same time acknowledging the need for women to recognize their oppression and be liberated, is found in a later statement:

In this novel men and women are shown to share the fear that the other sex will use them, turn them into objects. But whereas men have an age-old common language in which to give voice to this fear, women have no such language. In Rachel, the fear becomes fatally internalized.¹⁷⁰

Lydia Blanchard's review-essay on the three collections of essays published on Woolf in 1983, all substantially feminist in nature, "Virginia Woolf and Her Critics: 'On the Discrimination of Feminisms'," provides a convenient starting-point for the discussion of the contestations between different types of feminist during the past decade. Blanchard believes that Woolf is a novelist we "are only beginning to learn to read,"¹⁷¹ and is particularly concerned in this essay to stress the variety of critical endeavour being expended upon her by Anglo-American feminists, rather than critically engaging in the debates which have divided them from French feminists or from feminists of a deconstructive persuasion. Both Jane Marcus and Martine Stemerick in essays in these collections argue the "weaknesses" of deconstruction as a critical tool for understanding Woolf, and Blanchard writes that "To read these collections, to consider Woolf's own criticism, is to be reminded of the sterility of much modern criticism, divorced from life and from the world in which the text exists."¹⁷² Whereas I agree that some deconstructive readings of Woolf violate the richness of her texts (Spivak's on To the

170. Clements and Grundy 125.

171. Lydia Blanchard, "Virginia Woolf and Her Critics: 'On the Discrimination of Feminisms'." Review-Essay. Studies in the Novel 17 (1985): 96.

172. Blanchard 96.

Lighthouse is a case in point), other theoretical readings, particularly those employing the work of Lacan, Barthes, Derrida, Cixous, Kristeva and Irigaray, have added to our understanding of the radical nature of much of Woolf's work. Moi was justified in her introduction to Sexual/Textual Politics in 1985 in citing Perry Meisel as "the only critic of my acquaintance to have grasped the radically deconstructed character of Woolf's texts" (she was either not acquainted with Spivak's essay or considered it a deconstructive reading of Woolf rather than an acknowledgement of Woolf's own deconstructive insights).¹⁷³ It has taken until the late 1980s for French theoretical thought to enter the arena of Woolf studies to any marked degree; Minow-Pinkney's book-length study Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject represents a watershed and holds out the hope of this type of study proliferating in the future.

Blanchard describes feminism as being "the political concern that subsumed, for [Woolf], all other concerns."¹⁷⁴ Yet, like Ken Ruthven in Feminist Literary Studies, she finds it a problematic term and prefers to use the designation "feminisms" to "help us accommodate to the many different uses of feminism, uses for which there is probably no common denominator and which can change radically and rapidly."¹⁷⁵ By this statement Blanchard is in fact deconstructing the concept of feminism and reinstating it, in its literary guise, as a phenomenon of widely divergent critical practices and

173. Moi 18; Perry Meisel, The Absent Father: Virginia Woolf and Walter Pater (New Haven: Yale UP, 1980).

174. Blanchard 97.

175. Blanchard 97; K.K. Ruthven, Feminist Literary Studies: An Introduction (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984) 4, 15-19.

strategies. Thus, while ostensibly denouncing deconstruction and much postmodern theory, Blanchard is in fact involved in a parallel process, employing "feminisms" as a critical tool to prevent closure and open up "feminism" as an everchanging, evolving concept able to adapt itself to the needs of the particular time or society to which it addresses itself, its difference from itself already inscribed in the very materiality of the signifier which seeks to define and fix its meaning.

Martine Stemerick, in an essay in the Ginsberg and Gottlieb collection which Blanchard reviews, writes that by the time Woolf came to write Three Guineas she realized that "the complex psychological patterns and tensions which existed within her family could not be separated and analysed apart from the society in which they occurred."¹⁷⁶ I would date this realization as having occurred much earlier, as Rachel, at least in part a Woolf-figure, is firmly placed in a familial context in The Voyage Out which clearly reflects a larger societal context through which both it and she are defined.

Blanchard concludes her essay by claiming that "Woolf's feminism was one that recognized the need to bring woman into the traditional male world and at the same time celebrate her special qualities, one that recognized the value of a woman's tradition but wanted access to the male tradition as well."¹⁷⁷ As it stands, this statement serves as a useful summation of some of Woolf's feminist ideology. Yet the natural progression from this in Blanchard's mind to the position Woolf held in

176. Martine Stemerick, "Virginia Woolf and Julia Stephen: The Distaff Side of History" in Ginsberg and Gottlieb 69; Blanchard 99.

177. Blanchard 103.

Three Guineas, that women will cooperate with men to achieve a common goal of peace in the world, "the rights of all - all men and women - to the respect in their persons of the great principles of Justice and Equality and Liberty,"¹⁷⁸ is more problematic. Whereas almost nobody would argue with the virtues of these three great principles, a closer interrogation of these originally radical doctrines seems necessary in the light of liberalism's general marginalization of women and other oppressed groups, often under the banner of these very same principles. A fourth principle needs to be added to the foregoing three - that of difference - a difference that exists without the need for capitalization as it resists reduction into a reified abstraction, yet subsumes all three previous principles into an acceptance of the right to justice, equality and liberty of the individual within its all-important context. This is the section of Woolf's text whose revolutionary power Blanchard resists. Woolf does write of the cooperation of men and women in the quest for peace, yet says this is best achieved by women remaining outside the masculinist society to which she addresses the fictional letter in Three Guineas. Blanchard subtly overwrites the movements of Woolf's text which oscillate between desires for separatism and for unity of purpose, and at her conclusion gathers Woolf's many feminisms together into an all-encompassing humanistic oneness, overriding the differences which are a crucial feature of both Three Guineas and Blanchard's article itself. The liberal-humanist temptation for unity at all costs has once again proved irresistible.

Of feminist writings on The Voyage Out in the latter part

178. Blanchard 103; TG 164.

of the decade, some attention has been paid to the comparatively strong criticism of patriarchy which Woolf inscribed in Melymbrosia. "It's the burden of lies," Rachel is made to say in the earlier version in relation to the obfuscations and half-truths upon sexual matters with which she has grown up (Hussey). "Music is a tiny tin sword which was clasped into their hands to fight the world with, if other weapons failed," Woolf writes, relating the powerlessness of Rachel to the powerlessness of women generally throughout history under patriarchy (Marcus).¹⁷⁹

Ruotolo follows the example of Woolf in A Room of One's Own by placing patriarchy in a context in which it is seen to be oppressive to both men and women. He writes that "In her first novel . . . as in her last, human sexuality intertwined with the politics of paternalism traps men and women alike."¹⁸⁰

Jane Marcus believes that, not the ignorance in which Rachel is brought up, but her sudden coming-to-terms with the facts of women's oppression, determines her death.¹⁸¹

Rachel Bowlby sees the presence of insanity in Woolf's novels (or delirium in the case of The Voyage Out) as a conscious political strategy designed to expose the arbitrariness of the divisions society constructs between the normal and abnormal:

In [Woolf's] novels, the 'fit' of madness . . . inverts and jeopardizes the security of the 'fit' of conformity, of fitting in. Off the rails, the sufferer's different place makes the line of normality and convention appear as

179. Hussey 173n23; Jane Marcus, "Liberty, Sorority, Misogyny" in Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987) 111.

180. Ruotolo 43.

181. "Rachel dies from such knowledge as she gains from books, of woman's plight" (Marcus (1987) 88).

such.¹⁸²

Handley provides a more thoroughgoing account of Woolf's feminist strategies in her first novel than any of the previously cited critics¹⁸³. Relating the mermaid scene in the latter part of the novel to Terence's aspirations as a novelist, he writes:

Terence tries to know people through his narratives, and yet Rachel, impenetrable like a mermaid, resists such knowledge and refuses to be simply part of the narrative of Terence's life.¹⁸⁴

Handley believes that

Rachel is both sexually and figuratively impenetrable. She does not bend under the novelist's [Terence's] will to know her, to be an object in his order. Instead, she resists being 'examined and probably crushed' . . . by Hewet's sympathy.¹⁸⁵

These statements enter into one of the most perennial debates associated with the novel: how the reader is to understand Woolf's characterization of Terence. Whereas most, including feminist, criticism has traditionally regarded him in a positive light, some feminist critics of the past decade have interpreted his desire in the novel to get to know Rachel and the circumstances of her life as another instance of a colonizing mentality. Whereas this can be partially explained by Woolf's desire in the novel to diffuse her feminist consciousness by transferring some of it to her major male character, this is nevertheless a critique which is likely to have a future in feminist discussions of the novel as it

182. Rachel Bowlby, Virginia Woolf: Feminist Destinations (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988) 164.

183. William R. Handley, Virginia Woolf: The Politics of Narration. Stanford Honors Essay in Humanities. No. XXI (Stanford: Humanities Honors Program, 1988).

184. Handley 1.

185. Handley 7.

imbibes deeply of both the Irigarayan concept of the specularization of women by men and the critical, imperialist metaphor of the colonization of women.

Handley states that "both Rachel and Jacob [of Woolf's Jacob's Room] are killed, it could be argued, by a male-defined and enforced tradition in literature and society."¹⁸⁶ In Rachel's case this assumes literal significance as, perturbed by the curbs, Locrines and Brutes of Milton's Comus, and having no language with which to understand her sensations, let alone deal with them, she falls into a delirium from which she never recovers. On a purely metaphorical level, though, Rachel and Jacob represent subjects so imbued by their society's twin ideologies of sexual repression and war that they are in fact killed by the patriarchal logic which fuels both of these enterprises. Woolf's critique of patriarchy in A Room of One's Own as a phenomenon which adversely affects both men and women is once again relevant in this context, but without the recognition of difference, of the acceptance of the fact that women generally bear the greater oppression by far in a patriarchal society, no feminist discourse can successfully dismount the powers that hold us all in thrall.

In the final section of this chapter I discuss psychoanalytic discourses on The Voyage Out of the past decade. Possibly more than any other discursive strategy, psychoanalytic or psychological readings of Woolf's text form hybrids in their conjunction with a large number of other discourses such as biographical criticism, feminism and various forms of liberal humanism. This seeming eclecticism on the part of psychoanalytic discourses can be more truly seen as a

186. Handley 10.

process of parasitism by other discourses upon them; psychoanalysis and the wider field of psychology of which it is a part boast names such as Freud, Jung, Laing and the like which not only provide validation for new and revivifying discourses, but also serve as convenient intellectual markers to oppose, particularly for feminists and deconstructionists, in the process of defining their own theoretical positions.

Louise Poresky in The Elusive Self puts forward a Jungian reading of the novel. Consistent with Jung's emphasis on the "self" being the prime arbiter and constructor of reality, she interprets much of the novel through Rachel's unconscious perspective, allowing little room for other characters, societal forces or even Rachel's conscious, willed self to exert any influence upon the action. For example, Poresky interprets Rachel's dream of the "little deformed man" (74) in Jungian terms as an expression of Rachel's animus. Nurse McGinnis in the images of Rachel's delirium becomes a projection of an aspect of her personality. The episode of the slaughter of the chicken outside the hotel kitchen symbolizes "Rachel's confused and tortured psychic life."¹⁸⁷ Thus the force of Richard Dalloway in a Freudian analysis as a "taboo libidinal object," the oppression by the figure of Nurse McGinnis which in Rachel's mind at least is real, and the concrete experience of ugliness and cruelty witnessed by Rachel all become subsumed in a theory of projection which conveniently ignores the actual physical agents of Rachel's oppression and psychic distress.

Betty Kushen's Virginia Woolf and the Nature of Communion (1983) is primarily a psychoanalytic study of Woolf's

187. Poresky 38.

relationships with other women during various periods of her life, most of which, in Kushen's view, partook of the symbiotic intensity which characterized her relationship with her dead mother well into her forties. Kushen (as other critics do) considers a letter written by Woolf to her sister in 1908 with references to bottle-feeding as analogous to Woolf's process of writing The Voyage Out. Woolf writes:

I'm so excited about my novel! . . . I dont [sic] rhapsodise anymore, but believe that the best novels are deposited carefully, bit by bit; and in the end, perhaps they live in all their parts . . . I write as Julian [Vanessa's son] sucks his bottle; a necessary occupation, but not of intense interest to you perhaps.¹⁸⁸

In response to this, Kushen comments:

Thus Virginia thought of the parts of her novel as organic, organs, the living elements of a living body. Then in rapid regression in identification with the feeding infant she herself became the baby, Julian, rather than the creator-mother, who sucks nourishment drop by drop, to grow bit by bit as the living infant grows. The living infant is at the same time her novel.¹⁸⁹

The conceptual association Kushen makes of Woolf's novel living "in all [its] parts" being a conscious metaphor for a living body is doubtful, as this metaphor through several centuries of constant use has lost the intensity it originally possessed; the phrase "I write" could just as easily apply to Woolf's letter as to her fiction; and the reference to writing or bottle-feeding is further blurred. Nevertheless the "not of intense interest to you perhaps" betrays a self-effacing anxiety by Woolf about the worth of her work, which establishes Kushen's comparison.

Ellen Bayuk Rosenman's The Invisible Presence: Virginia Woolf and the Mother-Daughter Relationship is probably the best

188. LI 350, 433 (11 Aug., 1908), quoted (in part) in Kushen 78-9.

189. Kushen 79.

book-length study published concerning the relationship between Woolf's fiction and psychoanalysis. Rosenman's focus is the relationship that Woolf's female protagonists have with their fictional mothers; in The Voyage Out she traces Rachel's course through identification with substitute mother-figures (Helen, Terence) to a final regressive desire to merge with the body of her mother through death. She claims that this novel and The Waves are

infused with the implicit memory of an earlier wholeness which makes all ensuing development 'a second severance from the body of our mother,' as Bernard says in The Waves.¹⁹⁰

Rosenman makes frequent comparisons between the two novels, particularly between the characters of Rachel and Rhoda; she writes that Rachel, like Rhoda, attempts a return to the mother,

first through heterosexual love and, when that alternative proves unsatisfactory, through a watery delirium which resembles Rhoda's death by drowning.¹⁹¹

She also establishes a link between The Voyage Out and what she terms the "uncharted genre of female regression"¹⁹² which includes titles such as Chopin's The Awakening and Plath's The Bell Jar, at the expense of making an identification with the Bildungsroman tradition.

Rosenman perceives Rachel's major existential problem in The Voyage Out as the death of her mother, which has provided her with no adequate model by which to form her own identity. She exists as a shadowy reflection of her dead mother,

a pathological variant of the mirroring relationship

190. Ellen Bayuk Rosenman, The Invisible Presence: Virginia Woolf and the Mother-Daughter Relationship (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1986) 20.

191. Rosenman 23.

192. Rosenman 30n10.

between mother and infant, in which the child verifies its existence by watching its mother's responses. By implication, it raises the question: what does a reflection do when its original dies? The possible answers - seek a new original or die - are provided by The Voyage Out.¹⁹³

Rosenman argues, as do Leaska, JoAnn S. Frye¹⁹⁴ and an increasing number of contemporary critics, that the nature of Rachel's relationship with Terence is more regressive than emancipatory. She believes that

Rachel and Terence share, not passion, but a drowsy, timid, childish sensuality which regularly devolves into still, silent trances . . .¹⁹⁵

She makes much of the fact that in the river-scene, as Rachel falls to the ground and enters a semi-hallucinatory state, it is "Helen's soft body" and "strong and hospitable arms" (291) which are her focus, not Terence. This reading suppresses the situation of conflict over love-object, however, which seems to be Rachel's greatest dilemma in this passage.

Rosenman continues her theory of Rachel's regression into a pre-Oedipal world by expanding upon Grundy's observation in Warner's volume of the similarity between Terence's name and that of Rachel's mother. She believes that this "reinforces the idea that Rachel turns to a romantic relationship as a substitute for mothering [being mothered]."¹⁹⁶ The association made by Rachel between the two types of love is clearly shown in Melymbrosia when, as Terence declares his love for her, she cries: "My mother is dead!"¹⁹⁷

193. Rosenman 24.

194. JoAnn S. Frye, "The Voyage Out: Thematic Tensions and Narrative Techniques," Twentieth Century Literature 26 (1980): 402-23.

195. Rosenman 24.

196. Rosenman 24-5.

197. Melymbrosia 197-8; Rosenman 25.

Rosenman critiques the position taken by previous critics of the novel who unproblematically accept Mrs. Dalloway's assertion that Dalloway is "man and woman as well" (57). Opposing this view, she considers he displays "an aggressive sexuality" that proves to be "no comforting maternal substitute for Rachel." Yet "Terence, with 'something of a woman in him' . . . offers Rachel a less dangerous way to realize Mrs. Dalloway's promise of a lover who is 'man and woman as well.'"¹⁹⁸

Neither of these options is satisfactory in Rosenman's view. The first leads to the tunnel and vault imagery of Rachel's nightmare which "suggests the female body and a return to the womb"¹⁹⁹; the second leads to a collapsing of gender-distinctions and "peace" (322). Yet whereas Rachel and Terence's relationship cannot be constructed as being a passionate expression of their difference from each other (it begins to totter when Terence articulates some of his observations of the differences between the sexes), it can nevertheless be seen as gelling when they attempt to efface the differences which lie between them. This subversion of gender-difference which Elaine Showalter attacked so viciously in relation to Woolf's later work is seen to be present in her very first novel, and whether it is evaluated positively or negatively by feminists, it cannot be denied that Woolf's aesthetic of androgyny was one of the major paradigmatic formations informing both her fictive and political writings.

Rosenman views two other crucial moments in the narrative as symptomatic of Rachel's tendency towards regression. She

198. Rosenman 25.

199. Rosenman 25.

interprets Rachel and Terence's "leaving a large space for the reflection of other things" (310) as they look into the mirror in regressive terms as "the inevitably imperfect reconstruction of pre-natal oneness."²⁰⁰ Also, the entry of Rachel and Terence into the jungle in their lovemaking scene is seen as regressive. The text states that the jungle seems to be "at the bottom of the sea" (277), and Rosenman interprets the scene as having "a submarine quality which suggests the amniotic fluid of the womb."²⁰¹ She perceives a current running through the novel leading simultaneously back to the mother and onward towards death. These two elements meet in the figure of Helen, who as the symbol of the Great Mother appears in two crucial episodes in the narrative: at the proposal scene and by Rachel's deathbed where she seems "of gigantic size" (354). "Taken together," Rosenman writes,

these moments suggest the enormous and dangerous power of the Great Mother: as the incarnation of nature and female immanence - the sexuality implied by the marriage proposal - she also contains the seed of death.²⁰²

In an explanation of the substantial changes Woolf makes between the incidence of male and female figures in the nightmare and delirium sequences in the novel, Rosenman posits a masking effect in the former, the woman in the tunnel of the latter being "the 'real' figure behind the deformed man in [Rachel's] original dream, who fits consistently with the surrounding female imagery."²⁰³ This view is in accordance with the importance of archetypal female figures for Rosenman's central thesis of the cruciality of the mother/daughter

200. Rosenman 29.

201. Rosenman 26.

202. Rosenman 28.

203. Rosenman 30.

relationship in Woolf's fiction, yet simply centralizes the swamping effect of the mother archetype at the expense of marginalizing Rachel's fear of male sexuality, which is at least as strong a factor in her delirium. A more balanced approach is possible which views Rachel as a victim squeezed between the strength of the mother-archetype on the one hand and patriarchal ideology and practice on the other, leaving her little space in which to develop her own subjectivity.

In contrast to Rosenman's intelligent and incisive study of psychoanalytical issues in The Voyage Out, Panken's "psychoanalytic exploration" is both less psychoanalytic and more cavalier in borrowing material from other discourses which does not fully mesh with Woolf's text. She raises issues dealt with previously by psychoanalytic critics; particularly interesting is her radical foregrounding of the relationship between Rachel and Helen as being the major contributing factor in the former's illness, at the expense of investigating Terence's role in the disease-process.

Panken takes as her basis for this critical position a quotation early in the novel in which Helen discovers Rachel asleep amidst a pile of books in her cabin. Rachel appears to Helen "lying unprotected [looking] like a victim dropped from the claws of a bird of prey" (33). For Panken this moment marks the beginning of Helen's specific attitude of patron towards Rachel:

Though the novel on a manifest level depicts the vicissitudes of the love relationship between Terence and Rachel, two tenuously committed individuals, the 'bird of prey' image reminds us that the subplot concerning the ambivalent relationship between Helen and Rachel, surrogate-mother and niece, is the more pivotal.²⁰⁴

Panken views the river-scene with its triangular

204. Panken 78.

configuration of Rachel, Helen and Terence as being definitely sexual, suggesting "Rachel's profound conflict and indecision concerning homosexual versus heterosexual orientations."²⁰⁵ Panken, however, takes this observation one step further than most critics by suggesting that this erotic conflict is not just confined to Rachel's consciousness, but that Helen too has a vested interest in Rachel not marrying. This reading makes sense of portions of the novel which would otherwise remain elusive, for instance Helen's extreme pessimism about Rachel's marriage being a success and her general lack of enthusiasm and matter-of-fact attitude towards her and Terence's engagement. Woolf's exploration of Rachel's ambivalence towards marriage and the concomitant factors associated with it in the chapters immediately preceding her delirium precisely requires this delirium as a means of exploring more indirectly through symbol and image the underlying anxieties which result in Rachel's death. The major weakness in Panken's argument is her need to isolate Rachel's illness in an empirical fashion; she posits for Rachel an affective disorder such as acute melancholia, and quotes Sylvano Arieti from the American Handbook of Psychiatry to support her position. Apart from the obvious blurring between life and art which this type of critical position tends to generate, it fails to take into account the extremely subjective nature of Rachel's illness as Woolf has chosen to depict it. The very reluctance of the text to enter into a debate as to whether the illness is primarily physical or psychological, and the open-ended and multi-layered nature of the plot at this point in the novel open up a space in the text which is both silent and mysterious. The reason for Rachel's

205. Panken 82.

death, whether due to sociological and patriarchal pressures, the effect of her most significant relationships upon her, or to some inherent weakness which remains largely unspecified, is an issue about which Woolf is unwilling to theorize in any ultimate fashion, though she provides many tantalizing clues which provide the readers of her text with a major mode of engagement with it. Ultimately, Woolf is searching for no final truth regarding her fictional character Rachel; as in Terence's desire that Rachel should always remain "free" (288), so Woolf knows that in writing the self it dies. Thus through the narrative strategy of silence, through the indecisions and contradictions of Rachel in the text, her character is made to live by its very elusiveness. The elusiveness which kills Rachel is the same quality which brings her alive to every new generation of readers in an endless process of appropriation.

In the following chapter I wish to explore how Woolf treats the theme of the relationship between the sexes in The Voyage Out as it appears in the relationships between different characters and, by bringing Woolf's feminist theory to bear on the issue, to illuminate the sociological background which throws the novel into relief.

CHAPTER 2

"WE SHOULD LIVE SEPARATE . . . WE ONLY BRING OUT WHAT'S WORST": "THE MASCULINE" AND "THE FEMININE" IN THE VOYAGE OUT

One of Woolf's concerns in all of her fiction is to delineate relationships between men and women and to attempt to describe the effect that their maleness or femaleness has on their relationships with each other or with members of the same sex. Quentin Bell in his biography of Woolf states that from an early age she believed herself to be the inheritor of two varying and opposed traditions passed down through her parents: that of the intellectual Stephens, to whom her father Leslie belonged, who wrote and dealt in facts; and that of the physically beautiful Pattles of which her mother Julia was an example (BI 18-20). Bell dichotomizes these traditions as "sense and sensibility, prose and poetry, literature and art, or, more simply, masculine and feminine" (BI 20).

There is no doubt that the conflict between these two competing tendencies within Woolf occurs often in her fiction, not only in major characters such as Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay in To the Lighthouse who are based directly upon Woolf's parents, but throughout the whole range of her characters. Clive Bell, upon reading an early draft of The Voyage Out, criticized Woolf's sharp distinctions between male and female characters:

to draw such sharp and marked contrasts between the subtle, sensitive, tactful, gracious, delicately perceptive, + perspicacious women, + the obtuse, vulgar, blind, florid, rude, tactless, emphatic, indelicate, vain, tyrannical, stupid men, is not only rather absurd, but rather bad art, I think.¹

He accused her also of being "too didactic" (BI 209), charges to which Woolf replied: "Possibly, for psychological reasons which seem to me very interesting, a man, in the present state

1. BI, Appendix D, 209 (Letter to Virginia Stephen, [?] 5 Feb, 1909).

of the world, is not a very good judge of his sex; and a 'creation' may seem to him 'didactic'."2

The draft which Bell and Woolf were discussing is lost to us now, but I would argue that the final version of The Voyage Out represents a more balanced view of the sexes. Many critics however, coming to the novel from To the Lighthouse with inflated views of the Mrs. Ramsay/Julia Stephen character and devaluing Mr. Ramsay/Leslie Stephen proportionally, project these views onto the Ramsays' prototypes Helen and Ridley Ambrose, thus, I believe, distorting the text. Also, the character of St. John Hirst in the earlier novel is portrayed by Woolf, I would argue, in a much more sympathetic light than that of Charles Tansley in To the Lighthouse - more than many critics would care to recognize.

A single example of the type of criticism which tends to disparage Woolf's male characters and elevate the female is found in Roger Poole's work. In a passage in which he discusses Julia Stephen figures in Night and Day, The Voyage Out and To the Lighthouse, he comments that "she was sympathetic, understanding, intuitive, flowing; all the things that the angular, intellectual, conceptual father was not."3 Here, by his sentence structure, Poole seems to be demeaning the quality of intellect and the ability to conceptualize, whereas Julia Stephen is not criticized for lacking these attributes. Carolyn Heilbrun believes that Woolf identifies more closely with Mr. Ramsay by virtue of the fact that they are both writers; as she says:

The Mrs. Ramsays not only cannot write novels, they do not

2. LI 211 (Letter to Clive Bell, [?] 7 Feb, 1909); also in LI 383, 471.

3. Poole 7.

even read them . . . Beautiful and loving, Mrs. Ramsay has thrust herself into the midst of our impoverished world and seduced us into worshipping her.⁴

Elsewhere in Toward a Recognition of Androgyny, Heilbrun, arguing against Herbert Marder's view that Mrs. Ramsay represents an androgynous ideal,⁵ replies that

It is only in groping our way through the clouds of sentiment and misplaced biographical information that we are able to discover Mrs. Ramsay, far from androgynous and complete, to be as one-sided and life-denying as her husband.⁶

This critical trend continues in articles with titles such as "'The Deceptiveness of Beauty': Mother Love and Mother Hate in To the Lighthouse"⁷; one wonders when critics will apply the lessons they have learnt concerning the latter novel to the earlier one, thus positing a greater degree of gender balance between the male and female characters found there than has hitherto been conceded, and which seems to be warranted.

Having said this, there is little doubt that Woolf's female characters in The Voyage Out are portrayed on the whole more sympathetically than the males. The novel begins as Ridley and Helen Ambrose walk down a street connecting the Strand with the Embankment on their way to the ship Euphrosyne which is taking them to South America. They stand out from the crowd: he by his "thought"; she by her "sorrow" (5). She is grieving for her children who she must leave behind; Ridley attempts to console her as she stands crying near Waterloo

4. Carolyn G. Heilbrun, Toward a Recognition of Androgyny (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973) 156.

5. In Feminism and Art: A Study of Virginia Woolf (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1968) 133.

6. Heilbrun 155, quoted in Moi 15.

7. Jane Lilienfeld, "'The Deceptiveness of Beauty': Mother Love and Mother Hate in To the Lighthouse," Twentieth Century Literature 23 (1977): 345-76.

Bridge but, feeling embarrassed by the strength of her emotion, he walks along the Embankment reciting Macaulay. "Yes, she knew she must go back to all that" (7).

Here Ridley makes an attempt at identifying with a mother who must leave her children, but ineffectual, and excluded from this province of Helen's life ("she shut her face away from him, as much as to say, 'You can't possibly understand'"(7)), he does the only practical thing possible - to wait for her so that they can go on. Here we encounter what I am going to term, for want of a better phrase, "gender space," those areas in the life of a male or female which are peculiar to his or her gender and which remain incomprehensible to the other, despite attempts at identification. Here Ridley falters confronted with Helen's maternity; she for her part no doubt thinks him callous, not understanding his reserve. Ridley, like his prototype Sir Leslie Stephen, "built a facade of stern commonsensicality and behind it sheltered a quivering bundle of vulnerable feelings" (BI 19).

Upon the Ambroses arriving at the ship and meeting with two other passengers, their niece Rachel and William Pepper, a Cambridge scholar, the men begin characteristic intellectual conversation while

the ladies, being after the fashion of their sex, highly trained in promoting men's talk without listening to it, could think about the education of children, about the use of fog sirens in an opera (13).

There seems to be no attempt by the men to include the women in the conversation, although Helen for her part bears no grudge and respects the men's right to share aspects of their private experience.⁸

8. She and Rachel walk on deck and, looking back into the dining-room, Helen observes: "They're old friends," and smiles (14).

Rachel's father, Willoughby, is now introduced into the novel, and represents all that Woolf detests in her male characters; rugged and unreflective, Willoughby's face "was . . . more fitted to withstand assaults of the weather than to express sentiments and emotions, or to respond to them in others" (16). He is an empire builder (19), "never simple and honest about his feelings" (20), and Helen suspects him of "nameless atrocities" (20) towards his daughter, and of bullying his now dead wife. He imparts information to Rachel with "a smart blow upon the shoulder" (24), and she, helpless against a father whom she admires, laughs at his jokes without thinking them funny (24).

There is more than one possible view of Willoughby's character however, and here Woolf's technique of multiple points of view which Mitchell Leaska discussed in relation to To the Lighthouse⁹ comes into play. Leaska believes that the novel of multiple point of view requires "constant and creative participation"¹⁰ on the part of the reader to determine meaning in the text. Here Richard Dalloway, a Conservative politician who boards the ship in Lisbon with his wife Clarissa, comments on Willoughby:

What a splendid fellow he is! . . . Always keen on something (70).

According to Dalloway, "He's the kind of man we want in Parliament - the man who has done things" (70). This typically masculine emphasis on doing, not reflection; on the active, outer life; not the contemplative, inner one, is one not shared by Helen: "Helen was not much interested in her brother-in-law"

9. Mitchell A. Leaska, Virginia Woolf's Lighthouse: A Study in Critical Method (London: The Hogarth Press, 1970).

10. Leaska 164.

(70).

Willoughby has shown his ineptitude in his upbringing of Rachel:

Helen could hardly restrain herself from saying out loud what she thought of a man who brought up his daughter so that at the age of twenty-four she scarcely knew that men desired women and was terrified by a kiss (77).

He worships his dead wife as a goddess; sitting below her picture in his room,

In his mind this work of his, the great factories at Hull which showed like mountains at night, the ships that crossed the ocean punctually, the schemes for combining this and that and building up a solid mass of industry, was all an offering to her; he laid his success at her feet, and was always thinking how to educate his daughter so that Theresa might be glad (82).

Thus Rachel becomes a pawn in this misguided devotion to a dead woman as Willoughby's false image of his wife becomes a model to be projected onto her development. Although not kind to his wife while she was alive, now he "believed that she watched him from Heaven, and inspired what was good in him" (82). He has an inadequate, split view of women; they are to be exploited but are also angelic beings. He is very ambitious (82), and foolishly wishes to use Rachel as hostess for dinners and evening parties when he gains his projected seat in Parliament (83). Helen is left marvelling at his selfishness and at "the astonishing ignorance of a father" (84).

Another male character in Rachel's world, physically close if not emotionally, is William Pepper. In fact, on Helen asking Rachel early in the novel if she knows many men, his is the only name which arises (78). He appears initially to Rachel and Helen as "a vivacious and malicious old ape" (13). He never yields to a woman on account of her sex and has never married because he has never found a woman who has commanded his respect (21). His self-centred ideal of a woman is one who



can read Greek, if not Persian, is "irreproachably fair in the face, and able to understand the small things he lets fall while undressing" (21). The reader gains an insight into the Victorian suppression, the "Angel in the House," with which Woolf had to deal when reviewing works by male authors and which she described in "Professions for Women,"¹¹ as Rachel thinks ironically of Mr. Pepper: "And now you've chewed something thirty-seven times, I suppose?," but instead asks him whether his legs are troubling him (22). Helen sums up Pepper's character by reflecting on his knowledge, his microscope, his notebooks, and genuine kindness and good sense, but not leaving out his "dullness" (91) and "a certain dryness of soul" (92).

The last male character involved in Rachel's life to be introduced in this first part of the novel is Richard Dalloway; at his first dinner on the ship a conversation ensues involving him, his wife, Willoughby, Ridley and Helen, on the vote for women,¹² and on the merits of politics and social responsibility as against the arts. Dalloway pities the suffragettes who demonstrate outside Parliament because of the discomfort of sitting on steps, and condemns "the utter folly and futility of such behaviour" (39). He would rather be in his grave before a woman has the right to vote in England (39). He identifies his company as being in some way artistic, and comments upon poets and artists:

on your own lines, you can't be beaten - granted; but
off your own lines . . . one has to make allowances.
Now, I shouldn't like to think that anyone had to make

11. Virginia Woolf, "Professions for Women," in DOM 150-1, 153.

12. The vote for women was not introduced in England until 1918.

allowances for me (40).

He is moralistic,¹³ and feels that politicians "see both sides," "get a grasp of things" (40). He believes that artists evade social responsibility, adding the self-justification: "Besides, we aren't all born with the artistic faculty" (40). Mrs. Dalloway instinctively sides with her husband on this point, believing in the more masculine vision, of life as a "perpetual conflict" (41). She has traditional notions of womanhood, and cannot conceive of men in a nurturing role (39). Rachel perceives her as dealing with the world as she chooses, in truly aristocratic style; "the enormous solid globe spun round this way and that beneath her fingers" (42). Similarly Rachel sees Richard Dalloway as coming "from the humming oily centre of the machine where the polished rods are sliding, and the pistons thumping," making his companions "appear like old maids cheapening remnants" (42, 43). This potentially sexual imagery is relevant as it is Dalloway who is to give Rachel her first kiss. Faced with the splendid Dalloway world, larger than any she has experienced before, Rachel, overawed,

thought with supreme self-abasement, taking in the whole course of her life and the lives of her friends. 'She said we lived in a world of our own. It's true. We're perfectly absurd.' (43).

Thus she downgrades the germ within her of an authentic inner life in favour of the glitter and sparkle of the superficial Dalloways existence. Mrs. Dalloway feels that music is "[t]oo emotional" (43), likes looking at painters who look like successful stockbrokers (44) and prefers musicians to be clean (44). Needless to say, Helen attacks her upon all of these points (43-4). As soon as she is safely ensconced in her

13. Note his echoing of Matthew Arnold's comments on Shelley, 40.

cabin, Mrs. Dalloway writes a letter to a friend complaining about the "literary people" on the ship who "think us such poops for dressing in the evening" (45). The letter is full of hyperbole such as "I'd rather die than come in to dinner without changing" and "I'd rather have my head cut off than wear flannel next the skin" (45-6). Richard comes in later, and upon asking Clarissa why the women in that class are "so much queerer than the men," elicits the confirmation: "The men always are so much better than the women" (46). Clarissa is basically an anti-feminist who can afford to live in her husband's shadow as he offers her all she requires financially and in terms of security and freedom. They have no children, but upon their mention Clarissa immediately responds: "We must have a son, Dick" (47); and Dalloway thereupon envisages him to be "a leader of men," like himself, his chest slowly curving beneath his waistcoat (47). The joys of parenting are soon lost in ambition as, note, even Mrs. Dalloway longs for a son, not a daughter.

The Dalloways eventually arrive at the subject of Empire. Mrs. Dalloway feels as if she "couldn't bear not to be English" (47). Dalloway for his part runs his mind back over the line of conservative policy from Lord Salisbury to King Alfred, "King following King, Prime Minister Prime Minister and Law Law" (47) - the official masculine version of history. In his view it is England's God-given right to subjugate the earth.¹⁴ Clarissa here chips in with a piece of aptly-timed self-depreciating womanhood: "Dick, you're better than I am . . .

14. Later in the novel the Dalloways sight "two sinister grey vessels . . . with the look of eyeless beasts seeking their prey" from the English Mediterranean Fleet. Dalloway raises his hat, while Clarissa squeezes Rachel's hand and exclaims: "Aren't you glad to be English!" (65-6).

You see round, where I only see there," pressing a point on the back of his hand (47-8). "That's my business," he arrogantly replies. "What I like about you, Dick," she continues, "is that you're always the same, and I'm a creature of moods" (48). One wonders when sameness was ever a virtue. In bed Clarissa ponders whether it is really good for a woman to live with a man who is her moral superior, as she believes Richard to be, as it makes her too dependent. She presumes she feels for him what women of her mother's generation felt for Christ (48). The Dalloways reveal themselves as having a travesty of a marriage in which sexual passion is based on inequality between the sexes, yet ironically it appears to be one of the most successful partnerships to be found in the novel.

In the following chapter Rachel begins to get to know the Dalloways better. Richard, peeling an apple, tells her of the fate of his Skye terrier which was run over by a cyclist. Food is often used by Woolf as an indicator of emotional shallowness and insincerity, as for instance when Mrs. Paley, hearing of Rachel's death at the end of the novel, nevertheless does not let her sorrow outweigh the importance of the dish of potatoes which lies before her (369). However, in Rachel's preliminary investigations into sexuality with Mrs. Dalloway, one gains another, more positive insight into Dalloway's character when his wife says of him that he is "man and woman as well" (57); he genuinely seems to fulfil his wife's emotional needs. By Woolf's standards this definition is a positive one as it is used to describe the most attractive male figure in the novel, Terence Hewet,¹⁵ with whom Rachel falls in love, and upon whom Woolf projects half of her personality via the Rachel persona.

15. Evelyn Murgatroyd says of Terence: "There's something of a woman in him -" (253).

Also, Dalloway does have a social conscience; one of his major achievements has been to procure better conditions for girls working in mills in Lancashire. I do not agree totally with Joan Bennett¹⁶ when she says that Dalloway's claims that his work is of more value than that of Keats and Shelley are presented with mockery.¹⁷ Certainly they are indicators of his arrogance, but it seems to me that Woolf takes the debate between art and social action far too seriously to simply mock it. As Winifred Holtby says, "one side of [Woolf's] mind was continually rubbing up against the minds of people engaged in securing pit-head baths for miners, educational scholarships for women, or a higher standard of administration in the colonies,"¹⁸ and this in Holtby's opinion helped her to resist the temptation to become detached from life in her fiction. The evidence of Woolf's concern for, and her knowledge of the suffragist movement in the novel, should be sufficient to dispel notions of such detachment if we did not also know that during the period of its writing she addressed envelopes for the Adult Suffrage movement (BI 161).

Here, "It became painful to Rachel to be one of those who write Keats and Shelley" (61-2). She takes the chance to "expose her shivering private visions" to "a man of such worth and authority" (62) as Dalloway. She argues that he, as a politician involved in political action in London, wastes his mind and affections in order to gain a widow living in the suburbs of Leeds a little more tea, a few lumps of sugar or

16. Joan Bennett, Virginia Woolf: Her Art as a Novelist (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1945) 73.

17. Dalloway, talking of his social reform, says: "I'm prouder of that, I own, than I should be of writing Keats and Shelley into the bargain!" (61).

18. Winifred Holtby, Virginia Woolf (London: Wishart, 1932) 33.

perhaps a newspaper, without her mind and affections being touched either. Dalloway's answer to this quite simple argument is that if the widow finds her cupboard bare her "spiritual" outlook will be adversely affected. Rather than finding his work mundane, he can conceive no more exalted aim than to be "the citizen of the Empire" (63). He perceives the state as a complicated machine, with human beings making up the parts, a similar conception to that in Mr. Bax's sermon later in the novel of human community, albeit more mechanistic (63, 237). Rachel finds it impossible to combine her image of the widow with Dalloway's image of the state and the people therein as a machine, and concludes: "The attempt at communication had been a failure" (63). Dalloway's masculine tendency to abstract and reduce human beings into systems seems incompatible with Rachel's more feminine and concrete perception of the deeper needs of the individual. Rachel's summary of Dalloway's political philosophy, that "Under the streets, in the sewers, in the wires, in the telephones, there is something alive . . . In things like dust-carts and men mending roads" (63), surely indicates the deficiency of Dalloway's aesthetic in its sacrifice of the personal to the impersonal. Moreover, Dalloway believes that no woman has political instinct, and hopes he never meets one who does (63). He believes that he has been able to retain his political ideals because he has a wife who is not only not involved in politics and is tied to household affairs, but whom he does not even allow to discuss politics, for then her illusions will not be destroyed and she will continue to give him "courage to go on" (62). This is not only gender segregation through role, but gender segregation of the mind.

Dalloway's character is never without its more human, attractive side however. He remembers an enchanted rubbish heap from his youth and the suffering he experienced as a child, as well as the two great revelations of his forty-two years: the misery of the poor, and love (64, 65). His political vision is not so narrow as to exclude the observation that "It's the philosophers . . . the scholars . . . who pass the torch, who keep the light burning by which we live" (71), although this observation still clings firmly to an exclusively masculine mould. One of the last references to Dalloway in the novel retains the satiric character in which many of the references to him are couched; upon the Euphrosyne arriving at the bay near Santa Marina, the world of the Dalloways left behind, the omniscient narrator, explaining the failure of an English settlement there in the seventeenth century, comments: "had there been men like Richard Dalloway in the time of Charles the First, the map would undoubtedly be red where it is now an odious green" (87).

In the discussion of male and female gender-roles in the novel, crucial issues are the standard of women's education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and, closely associated with this, the knowledge or ignorance of sexuality among young women at the time, as both of these concerns markedly influence Rachel's fate when seen from a social perspective. Early in the novel the reader is told that Rachel

had been educated as the majority of well-to-do girls in the last part of the nineteenth century were educated. Kindly doctors and gentle old professors had taught her the rudiments of about ten different branches of knowledge, but they would as soon have forced her to go through one piece of drudgery thoroughly as they would have told her that her hands were dirty . . . there was no subject in the world which she knew accurately. Her mind was in the state of an intelligent man's in the beginning of the reign of Queen Elizabeth; she would

believe practically anything she was told, invent reasons for anything she said. The shape of the earth, the history of the world, how trains worked, or money was invested, what laws were in force, which people wanted what, and why they wanted it, the most elementary idea of a system in modern life - none of this had been imparted to her by any of her professors or mistresses (29-30).

This is entirely consistent with the documentary evidence we have of women's education at the time. Due to the widely held Victorian belief that intuition was the natural province of woman, and reason of man, it was thought that by learning a woman could impede the functioning of her intuition, the very essence of her femininity. Thus, as Burstyn states in her book on Victorian education and the ideal of womanhood, a woman received only enough learning so as to perform her work well, and only read books which would not disrupt the workings of her intuition.¹⁹ An old number of Punch sets out humorously the expectations incumbent upon the model Victorian daughter:

She looks attentively after the holes in her father's gloves. She is a clever adept in preparing gruel, white-wine whey, tapioca, chicken-broth, beef-tea, and the thousand little household delicacies of a sick-room . . . She does not invent excuses for not reading to her father of an evening, nor does she skip any of the speeches . . . She knows nothing of crochets, or 'Woman's Mission'. She studies housekeeping, is perfect in the common rules of arithmetic . . . She checks the weekly bills, and does not blush if seen in a butcher's shop on a Saturday.²⁰

In short she is Woolf's "Angel in the House." Burstyn confirms the desultory intellectual training given by tutors and governesses in the period.²¹ The Industrial Revolution, necessitating a large scale shift of population to the cities and the creation of a wealthy middle class, facilitated the sharp sexual division of labour: men were paid for work done

19. Joan N. Burstyn, Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood (London: Croom Helm, 1980) 37.

20. "The Model Daughter," Punch 14 (1848): 230, cited in Burstyn 38.

21. Burstyn 40.

outside of the home; whilst women, unpaid, saw to the efficient running of the household and the upbringing of children, making the home a haven to which their husband or father could return at the end of a weary working day. A sermon of the time expresses this ideology well:

Woman's strength lies in her essential weakness
Removed from the stifling atmosphere in which perforce the battle of life has to be fought out by the rougher sex, - she is, what she was intended to be, - the one great solace of Man's life, his chiefest earthly joy.²²

This model having become firmly entrenched in middle-class society, justification was needed to keep it in place. Thus faulty generalization and appeals to science were brought to bear on the issue:

The knowledge of the difference in their physical structure, which we have acquired through science, proves this incontestably - man was created for strength, woman for beauty, whether of body or mind: man's life is of necessity active, woman's quiescent.²³

Despite dissenting opinion early in the nineteenth century by John Stuart Mill among others²⁴ which challenged notions of essential sexual characteristics, women were still encouraged

22. John W. Burgon, To Educate Young Women Like Young Men, and with Young Men, - a Thing Inexpedient and Immodest. A Sermon (Oxford, 1884) 29-30, cited in Burstyn 33.

23. "The Education of Women," Christian Observer 64 (1865): 546, cited in Burstyn 88-9.

24. Letter of John Stuart Mill to Thomas Carlyle (5 Oct, 1833). Francis E. Mineka, ed., Collected Works of John Stuart Mill: Volume XII: The Earlier Letters of John Stuart Mill: 1812-1848 (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1963) 184, cited in Burstyn 90: "The women, of all I have known, who possessed the highest measure of what are considered feminine qualities, have combined with them more of the highest masculine qualities than I have ever seen in any but one or two men, those one or two men were also in many respects almost women. I suspect it is the second-rate people of the two sexes that are unlike in both." Burstyn states that because the chemical basis for sexual differentiation was unknown in the Victorian era, physicians believed that the way one behaved, dressed, worked and played at puberty controlled the proper development of primary and secondary sex characteristics. This view is not totally invalidated even today in relation to secondary sex characteristics.

to look upon themselves as intellectually inferior to men, even by other women. Mrs. William Ellis writes on women's education:

The first thing of importance is to be content to be inferior to men - inferior in mental power in the same proportion that you are inferior in bodily strength.²⁵

Another important aspect in the drive to keep the Victorian ideal in place was society's desire to ensure that girls, and indeed young women, remained as sexually ignorant as possible for as long as possible. Woolf makes Rachel a victim of this system:

She was . . . brought up with excessive care, which as a child was for her health; as a girl and a young woman was for what it seems almost crude to call her morals. Until quite lately she had been completely ignorant that for women such things existed. She groped for knowledge in old books, and found it in repulsive chunks, but she did not naturally care for books and thus never troubled her head about the censorship which was exercised first by her aunts, later by her father (30).

Burstyn says that the press and popular media of the day encouraged young women of the upper and middle classes to lead sheltered lives within the home:

Only through ignorance (referred to as innocence), it was believed, could women truly be preserved from the dangers of vice, for to have knowledge that something existed was to savour its quality, as Adam and Eve had learned in the Garden of Eden.²⁶

Also, in women's imputed role as moral guardians over both sexes, as an adjunct to the limitations in their education, they were not permitted to be exposed to any "unladylike" facts in their reading in order for their purity, and thus the moral fabric of society generally, to remain intact.²⁷ Thus Rachel

25. Mrs. William Ellis, Daughters of England (New York, 1843) 11-12, cited in Josephine Kamm, Hope Deferred: Girls' Education in English History (London: Methuen, 1965) 167.

26. Burstyn 34.

27. Burstyn 37-8.

later, reaching an important moment of awareness, comes to see her life up until the present

a creeping hedged-in thing, driven cautiously between high walls, here turned aside, there plunged in darkness, made dull and crippled for ever . . . a thousand words and actions became plain to her (79).

If Rachel is sexually ignorant in the first section of the novel, her married, in most ways progressive aunt Helen, who takes upon herself the responsibility for Rachel's sexual education, is just as firmly bound to Victorian ideas upon sexual matters. She tells Rachel that she

oughtn't to be frightened . . . It's the most natural thing in the world. Men will want to kiss you, just as they'll want to marry you. The pity is to get things out of proportion. It's like noticing the noises people make when they eat, or men spitting; or, in short, any small thing that gets on one's nerves (78).

The sharp distinction between men as sexual predators who pursue, and women who submissively endure, is one that will haunt Rachel until she meets Terence.

Helen's views upon women are basically negative. She calls Mrs. Dalloway a "thimble-pated creature" (79) and says she would far rather talk to Richard Dalloway any day, and later, in a letter to a friend, she writes that she has "never got on well with women, or had much to do with them" (74). She says, however, that if they were properly educated she does not see why they should not be as satisfactory as men (94). Her views on men though are hardly flattering. She calls her husband Ridley "the vainest man I know . . . which I may tell is saying a good deal" (96). Ridley has similar characteristics to the aspects of Sir Leslie Stephen which emerged in Woolf's later portrait of Mr. Ramsay in To the Lighthouse; despondent about his intellectual reputation, Ridley compresses "his face into the likeness of a commander surveying a field of battle, or a

martyr watching the flames lick his toes, rather than that of a secluded Professor" (96). This is rather like Mr. Ramsay who, cast in the mould of the leader of a doomed metaphoric Polar expedition, searches for a crag of rock from which he may pierce the darkness of his imagined intellectual failure.²⁸ Ridley, like Helen, is a cynic; he "never expect[s] anyone to understand anything" (199).

If Helen's views on men are less than positive, Ridley's on women are equally so. Early in the novel he speculates on "the unkindness of women" (90), and upon Mrs. Thornbury, an elderly character in the novel, asking rhetorically where men would be without women, he grimly evokes Plato's Symposium (199). The Ambroses' relationship however, beneath the superficial tensions, is a strong one. Helen baits Ridley by telling Mrs. Flushing, a guest at the hotel, that he spends his life in digging up manuscripts that nobody wants (198), and conversely spoils him with compliments (208), yet underneath these polarities Helen genuinely respects Ridley and values his judgement: "His observations were apt to be true" (196). Terence, however, has another view of their marriage. In reviewing the pros and cons of marriage for himself, he ponders their marriage and decides that it, like all the other marriages he has known, is a compromise:

She gave way to him; she spoilt him; she arranged things for him; she who was all truth to others was not true to her husband, was not true to her friends if they came in conflict with her husband. It was a strange and piteous flaw in her nature (248).

The minor characters in the novel present Woolf with a further means of expressing the interplay between "masculine" and "feminine" qualities. Miss Allan, an elderly spinster

28. Virginia Woolf, To the Lighthouse (1927; rpt. Frogmore: Triad/Panther, 1977) 36-8.

residing at the hotel, is writing a short Primer of English Literature from Beowulf to Swinburne which is only seventy thousand words in length with a single paragraph on Wordsworth (102, 323). One wonders how Woolf wishes the reader to view her intelligence as, despite these restrictions upon her work, she still finds it difficult "saying something different about everybody" (323). She belongs to a suffrage society (263) and, like many of the other minor characters in the novel, embellishes her conversation with inanities like "Cats are often forgotten" (113).

Another minor character is Susan Warrington, who in her relationship with Arthur Venning provides a contrast to Rachel in her relationship with Terence. The reader first meets her as she prepares for sleep in her hotel room; she writes her diary in the "square ugly hand of a mature child" (103). She is utterly conventional and rather snobbish; she feels that one of the hotel guests, Mr. Perrott, is not "quite" (103). Later, as she sleeps, "her breathing . . . [w]ith its profoundly peaceful sighs and hesitations . . . resembled that of a cow standing up to its knees all night through in the long grass" (104). Soon after this night, at a picnic which Terence arranges, Arthur declares his love for her and they embrace passionately, yet Woolf emphasizes the shallowness of emotion and speech which surrounds the event. Arthur, after their first embraces, declares: "Well . . . that's the most wonderful thing that's ever happened to me," and "looked as if he were trying to put things seen in a dream beside real things" (138). Apart from his obvious lack of sexual experience, this is also a curiously prosaic statement to make after an experience of first love. There follow two periods of silence which always

accompany Woolf's sexual scenes, indicating inexperience or insecurity on the part of the lovers,²⁹ and then another mundane statement by Arthur that one of the first things he noticed about Susan was that she did not take peas, because he did not either (138). "From this," Woolf continues,

they went on to compare their more serious tastes, or rather Susan ascertained what Arthur cared about, and professed herself very fond of the same thing (138).

Woolf sees their relationship as already being defined by Susan's acquiescence to Arthur's interests and needs; in Simone de Beauvoir's terms she is foregoing her liberty and becoming a thing.³⁰ Woolf recognizes impure and ulterior motives in Susan's love for Arthur:

[Susan's] mind . . . flew to the various changes that her engagement would make - how delightful it would be to join the ranks of the married women - no longer to hang on to groups of girls much younger than herself - to escape the long solitude of an old maid's life. Now and then her amazing good fortune overcame her, and she turned to Arthur with an exclamation of love (139).

Love for Susan is not purely romantic passion, but is closely associated with social status and success. One positive effect of her love, nevertheless, is that it increases her love for humanity also, no matter how superficial the expression of this love is (148, 180).

Directly Susan is engaged she begins to arrange for her friends to join her in her blessed state:

Marriage, marriage, that was the right thing, the only thing, the solution required by everyone she knew, and a great part of her meditations was spent in tracing every instance of discomfort, loneliness, ill-health, unsatisfied ambition, restlessness, eccentricity, taking things up and dropping them again, public speaking, and philanthropic activity on the part of men and particularly on the part of women to the fact that they wanted to marry, were trying to marry, and had not succeeded in

29. Notice the frequent use of the words "silence" and "silent" during Rachel and Terence's love scene, 278-9.

30. Beauvoir 20.

getting married. If, as she was bound to own, these symptoms sometimes persisted after marriage, she could only ascribe them to the unhappy law of nature which decreed that there was only one Arthur Venning, and only one Susan who could marry him (180).

Susan perceives marriage as a means of escape from the demands of her family. She foresees a life of greater happiness with Arthur, and this is the source of her feelings of goodwill towards others (180). Hirst for his part scorns their conventionality: "They're gross, they're absurd, they're utterly intolerable!" (184). It is Susan's complacency which Woolf and Rachel find most intolerable - her "mild ecstas[ies] of satisfaction with her life and her own nature" (267). In a much milder way she expresses what later Lily Briscoe in To the Lighthouse experiences about Paul Rayley's love for Minta Doyle - that it is a harsh, excluding love; Lily encounters "the heat of love, its horror, its cruelty, its unscrupulosity" (TTL 95). Later in The Voyage Out Rachel manifests this same unscrupulosity through her love for Terence: the "simplicity and arrogance and hardness of her youth" become concentrated and focussed through her love for him (301). To Rachel Susan and Arthur seem "so certain of themselves; they seemed to know exactly what they wanted" (331). Yet what they want is too limited an ideal, not worth having despite the superficial advantages of a life made secure through order and predictability.

If the major female characters in the novel can be categorized by their acquiescence to the institution of marriage and their conformity to standard contemporary notions of femininity, Susan would be placed at the end of the scale representing total conformity over and above what her society requires, Rachel would form the mean, and the other extreme

would be occupied by Evelyn Murgatroyd who was an illegitimate child (256), and who is incapable of forming any lasting relationship, particularly of the amorous kind. Evelyn represents a peculiarly masculine brand of feminism; her emphasis lies upon action and adventure yet she is incapable of following through a single course of action, and all of her ideas remain at the germinal stage. Her definition of "life" is "Fighting-revolution" (129), and at different times she expresses interest in being in a mining business (189) and in wanting to have been an Elizabethan colonist, cutting down trees and making laws "instead of fooling about with all these people who think one's just a pretty young lady" (192). She rejects that view of herself, as she wants to "do something" (192). Evelyn's sentiments are not totally out of place in an early twentieth-century context, even though Woolf treats them satirically. In 1911 Olive Schreiner wrote regarding the women's movement:

'We take all labour for our province!' From the judge's seat to the legislator's chair; from the statesman's closet to the merchant's office; from the chemist's laboratory to the astronomer's tower, there is no post or form of toil for which it is not our intention to attempt to fit ourselves, and there is no closed door we do not intend to force open.³¹

Evelyn's ideals, however, are not treated by Woolf with the same seriousness as that which Schreiner employs when outlining the future quest of her sex.

Evelyn's nature combines a mixture of aggression, as she engages in verbal warfare with St. John for instance (129), and desire for intimacy; she is "tormented by the little spark of life in her which was always trying to work through to other

31. Olive Schreiner, Woman and Labour (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1911) 167, cited in Winifred Holtby, Women: And a Changing Civilisation (London: John Lane. The Bodley Head, 1934) 71.

people, and was always being rebuffed" (257). In addition to this, like Rachel, and Rhoda in The Waves, she indulges in escapist fantasies; she would "love to start life from the very beginning as it ought to be - nothing squalid - but great halls and gardens and splendid men and women" (135). Underneath her dazzling exterior lies a void. Terence notices that "her features expressed nothing very clearly" (190), and at the end of the novel she herself gazes at a waterless fountain which seems to her the type of her own being (372). Yet despite these shortcomings Evelyn is one of the few characters in the novel who genuinely searches for meaning after Rachel's death. Transparently honest and direct, she seeks to cut through the false expressions of sympathy and the tacit avoidance of difficult issues in order to arrive at the truth.

The minor characters are presented in three major ways in the novel. Firstly, in themselves they provide comic relief through Woolf's satire, which seeks in some ways to show the conventions and character-attributes from which Rachel and Terence desire to escape in their own marriage. Mrs. Paley feeling it unseemly to open her toothless jaw so widely, Mrs. Elliot surveying her round flushed face anxiously in the looking-glass (117) and Mr. Thornbury, sitting saying nothing, "looking vaguely ahead of him, occasionally raising his eyeglasses, as if to put them on, but always thinking better of it at the last moment, and letting them fall again" (244) represent an if not unattractive, then a less than satisfactory view of the human condition to which Rachel and Terence do not wish to subscribe in their marriage.

Secondly, the minor characters act in much the same way as a Greek chorus of ancient Athenian tragedy, commenting upon the

action and the more progressive characters of the novel, thus providing a social perspective from which to view social change as it occurred in the Edwardian era. For instance, Mrs. Elliot and Mrs. Thornbury, two elderly ladies, watch Helen, a woman of forty, dancing at the ball to celebrate Arthur and Susan's engagement, thinking it "a little odd that a woman of her age should enjoy dancing" (159).

Lastly, the major characters in the novel comment on the minor ones to ascertain the obstacles which they will need to overcome in their lives to undo the prejudices and conventionality of the past. Terence, after having invited many of the guests at the hotel to the picnic, steps back a pace to observe them:

'They are not satisfactory; they are ignoble' . . . He glanced at them all, stooping and swaying and gesticulating round the tablecloth. Amiable and modest, respectable in many ways, lovable even in their contentment and desire to be kind, how mediocre they all were and capable of what insipid cruelty to one another! There was Mrs. Thornbury, sweet but trivial in her maternal egoism; Mrs. Elliot, perpetually complaining of her lot; her husband a mere pea in a pod; and Susan - she had no self, and counted neither one way nor the other; Venning was as honest and as brutal as a schoolboy; poor old Thornbury merely trod his round like a horse in a mill; and the less one examined into Evelyn's character the better, he suspected. Yet these were the people with money, and to them rather than to others was given the management of the world. Put among them someone more vital, who cared for life or for beauty, and what an agony, what a waste would they inflict on him if he tried to share with them and not to scourge! (133-4).

Terence goes on to blame these people in some way for the ugliness of his friend, the Cambridge scholar St. John Hirst, who seems in some degree to represent that more vital person who cares for life, yet soon after Rachel is more firmly affixed to this prophecy, and fulfills it through her sacrificial death at the end of the novel. Here Woolf's novel works on an unconscious, archetypal level; almost by chance, it

seems, Woolf has stumbled upon the ancient archetypal pharmakos or scapegoat figure,³² whose role Rachel comes to play in the novel as she dies for her less worthy English tourist friends.³³ Later Hirst reinforces the distinction which Woolf makes between the major characters in the novel who all possess a fair degree of intellect and sensibility, and the minor ones of whom Hirst says: "If these people would only think about things, the world would be a far better place for us all to live in" (184).

Hirst is the second most important male character in the novel after Rachel's lover Hewet. The reader meets both of them for the first time during a late night discussion in Hirst's hotel room. Hewet wants to know whether Hirst makes enough allowance intellectually for feelings (105). Hirst, with his typically anti-romantic pose which he lets drop occasionally, replies that too much allowance is given to feelings already, and love is magnified out of all proportion. The two move on to a discussion of human personality, Hirst arguing from the

32. See Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957) 41.

33. I cannot expand this point any further here but will take it up again in a later chapter. Maud Bodkin summarizes Jung's theory of the connection between the archetypes and literature (here in particular poetry) stated in Contributions to Analytical Psychology as follows:

The special emotional significance possessed by certain poems . . . [Jung] attributes to the stirring in the reader's [or the writer's] mind, within or beneath his conscious response, of unconscious forces which he terms 'primordial images', or archetypes. These archetypes he describes as 'psychic' residua of numberless experiences of the same type, experiences which have happened not to the individual but to his ancestors, and of which the results are inherited in the structure of the brain, a priori determinants of individual experience.

Archetypal Patterns in Poetry: Psychological Studies of Imagination (London: Oxford UP, 1934) 1; C.G Jung, Contributions to Analytical Psychology, trans. H.G. and C.F. Baynes (London: Kegan Paul, 1928). Bodkin's first chapter, on archetypal patterns in tragic poetry, is particularly important for my later argument.

more masculine point of view that people are basically types and can be fitted into categories which he views as being surrounded by circles: "You try to get out, but you can't. You only make a mess of things by trying" (106). Hewet on the other hand takes a more feminine point of view and imagines himself as a dove flitting from branch to branch. He rejects the concept of Hirst's circles and instead sees

a thing like a teetotum spinning in and out - knocking into things - dashing from side to side - collecting numbers - more and more and more, till the whole place is thick with them. Round and round they go - out there, over the rim - out of sight (107).

His view of life is one of chaos and flux; Hirst's is one of order and predictability.

Hirst is cast in the mould of a homosexual after the manner of Lytton Strachey; at the very least his sexuality is portrayed ambiguously. Commenting on Arthur and Susan's engagement he says: "Well . . . so long as I needn't marry either of them - " (141), and later, talking to Terence about Rachel, he claims: "I don't really like young women" (148). His relations with Rachel begin on a disastrous footing at the ball as a Woolfian silence descends between them, always symptomatic of the difficulties which lie in communication between the sexes.³⁴ While Rachel wonders whether St. John thinks her nice-looking and thus operates on a sexual plane, St. John is considering the difficulty in talking to girls with no experience of life and is thus becoming frustrated on an intellectual plane; she seems to him "very remote and inexplicable, very young and chaste" (152-3). He asks her whether she has a mind or whether she is like the rest of her sex and continues:

34. IVO 152, where the words "silent" or "silence" appear three times.

It's awfully difficult to tell about women . . . how much, I mean, is due to lack of training, and how much is native incapacity . . . I suppose you've led an absurd life until now - you've just walked in a crocodile, I suppose, with your hair down your back (153),

comments hardly likely to commend him to Rachel.

From this negative experience with St. John, Rachel constructs her theory of the sexes, which she relates to Terence:

It's no good; we should live separate; we cannot understand each other; we only bring out what's worst [in each other] (155).

Hirst's assumption of the superiority of his nature and experience has seemed to her "not only galling but terrible - as if a gate had clanged in her face" (155). On a personal level she feels the corporate effect of one sex claiming its experience and expression to have absolute value and marginalizing the experience and expression of the other. Terence, however, brushes aside her generalizations as to the nature of the sexes; he believes that the sexes have much more in common than Rachel is willing to admit. He explains to her the lives of St. John and his friends - their intellectual honesty and commitment to truth - and this somewhat elevates Hirst's standing in her estimation.

St. John seems a strange, tortured character amidst the superficial society of Santa Marina; he is "conscious of great powers of affection" (160) within himself, yet, out of place at the ball, he misanthropically dismisses the assembled crowd:

'It makes me sick . . . The whole thing makes me sick . . . Consider the minds of those people - their feelings . . . This kind of thing!' he waved his hand at the crowded ballroom. 'Repulsive' . . . (157-60).

He establishes a friendship with Helen, and they form one of the few male and female combinations in the novel which in some significant way manages to break down the gender barrier

which makes communication so difficult for so many of the characters. In St. John's near-confessional remarks to Helen there is a hint of the liberation which Woolf found through the Bloomsbury Group in which strict Victorian conventions as to the conduct of, and between, the sexes were dispensed with:

I feel as if I could talk quite plainly to you as one does to a man - about the relations between the sexes, about . . . and³⁵

Helen is the first woman whom Hirst has met "who seems to have the faintest conception of what [he] mean[s] when [he] say[s] a thing" (161).

St. John and Helen strike a workable gender balance because they allow their respective genders to complement one another instead of being mutually antagonistic towards the peculiar qualities of the other sex. In one scene Hirst anxiously presses Helen as to whether he should stay at Cambridge or go to the Bar. During the course of their talk she observes him against a background of flowering magnolia, his worried face and highly developed intellect providing a

35. Woolf 161. Quentin Bell discusses the liberating effect that Bloomsbury had on Woolf, I 97-100, 123-5. For further information on the Bloomsbury Group and its effect on Woolf, from a large selection of material see J.K. Johnstone, The Bloomsbury Group: A Study of E.M. Forster, Lytton Strachey, Virginia Woolf and Their Circle (London: Secker and Warburg, 1954); Quentin Bell, Bloomsbury (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968); David Gadd, The Loving Friends: A Portrait of Bloomsbury (London: The Hogarth Press, 1974); S.P. Rosenbaum, ed., The Bloomsbury Group: A Collection of Memoirs, Commentary and Criticism (London: Croom Helm, 1975); Richard Shone, Bloomsbury Portraits: Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant, and Their Circle (Oxford: Phaidon, 1976); Jean Guiguet, ed., Virginia Woolf et le Groupe de Bloomsbury (Paris: Union Generale d'Editions, 1977); Edel; Dowling; Jane Marcus, ed., Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury: A Centenary Celebration (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987); and what is part of what will probably be the most comprehensive account of Bloomsbury for several years to come, S.P. Rosenbaum, Victorian Bloomsbury: The Early Literary History of the Bloomsbury Group: Volume 1 (New York: St. Martin's, 1987). See also works by or about individual members of Bloomsbury, particularly Frances Spalding, Vanessa Bell (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983).

contrast with the unconscious beauty of the bush. Helen gives a casual reply to his concerns, but with a token acknowledgement of his final decision upon the matter, and an assurance that he will be a great man, she instead seeks to initiate him into the majesty of the surrounding countryside. She sweeps her hand around this view until it comes to rest by the side of her and Hirst, two isolated figures in the landscape, thus relieving him of his egotistical concern about his career and allowing it to assume proper proportion within the whole natural order (208-9). Similarly, St. John takes Helen "outside [the] little world of love and emotion" (311) in which she is enraptured by Rachel and Terence. To her he has "a grasp of facts" (311), and hearing him argue with Ridley about finance and the balance of power gives her an "odd sense of stability" (312). St. John allows Helen to express the "masculine" side of her personality: the side of fact and theory and rational argument which involves the world of finance and politics; whereas Helen seeks to soothe Hirst's egotism by encouraging in him an intuitive appreciation of nature.

St. John fears sentimentality and displays of emotion - witness his awkwardness with Terence upon Rachel dying (356) - yet displays considerably more emotional honesty than many of the characters in the novel. In one scene, for instance, he overcomes his perpetual cynicism about love by telling Rachel and Terence that he is glad they are getting married. Despite immediate misgivings about his action - he fears that they will laugh at him or think him a fool - and some doubt as to whether he has expressed what he genuinely feels, nevertheless the gesture works a positive effect upon the two lovers (319). It

is St. John too who comes upon the revelation that love is the key to the meaning of the universe (319).

It is the combination of the positive and negative qualities within Hirst which makes him an interesting character. This duality is expressed well from the feminine point of view by Rachel; "Ugly in body, repulsive in mind," she thinks about him, "Yes, but strong, searching, unyielding in mind" (201). The non-compromising manner of Hirst's rigorously intellectual mind finally commands Rachel's respect. Hirst's physical ugliness, stressed from the very first by Woolf (105-6), is elsewhere commented upon by Helen when she considers "the clever, honest, interesting young men she knew, of whom Hirst was a good example," and wonders

whether it was necessary that thought and scholarship should thus maltreat their bodies, and should thus elevate their minds to a very high tower from which the human race appeared to them like rats and mice squirming on the flat (205).

Imbalance in the mind has its effects upon the body. Helen momentarily considers a future race with the men becoming more and more like Hirst and the women more and more like Rachel, but then concludes that nobody would marry Hirst anyway (205). To her he seems "so ugly and so limited" (206).

Despite the closeness which Hirst and Helen share in the novel, ultimately the barrier of sexual difference proves, at least in part, impenetrable. St. John claims that an abyss lies between him and Helen. He cannot fathom feminine reasoning:

You're infinitely simpler than I am. Women always are, of course. That's the difficulty. One never knows how a woman gets there (207).

He finally concludes that his male Cambridge friends give him what no woman can, not even Helen (208). Similarly, in his

relationship with Rachel, she holds him at arm's length with her appellation for him, "the great Man" (246). She will never forgive him for saying that she was in love with him - as she says, an argument which would not appeal to a man - and she relegates him with pity to the rank of one of

those unfortunate people who are outside the warm mysterious globe full of changes and miracles in which we ourselves move about; she thought that it must be very dull to be St. John Hirst (302).

The last characters who I wish to treat separately in this chapter are two which do not appear directly in the novel, but who supply much of our understanding of Rachel's background and her development as a young woman, her aunts who live in Richmond. Rachel describes the lives of her aunts and the world they inhabit to Terence as they sit talking by the sea a few days after the dance. Her aunts are afraid of her father, she explains, yet he is their only link with the "real," external, male world "represented every morning in The Times" (218). As Rachel continues, her aunts' real identity lies in the home. Her father is contemptuous of this life, and Rachel

had always taken it for granted that his point of view was just, and founded upon an ideal scale of things where the life of one person was absolutely more important than the life of another, and that in that scale they were of much less importance than he was (218).

Terence causes her to rethink these values, and she comes to realize that it has been her aunts who have influenced her most, not her father, as they "built up the fine, closely woven substance of their life at home." She decides that:

They were less splendid but more natural than her father was. All her rages had been against them; it was their world with its four meals, its punctuality, and servants on the stairs at half-past ten, that she examined so closely and wanted so vehemently to smash to atoms (218).

This identification of women with the home was a prime feature of Victorian and Edwardian society of course, as it has

remained a prime feature of Western society throughout much of the twentieth century. Besides the historical link between women, the home and the early stages of childcare due to the predominant practice of domiciliary childbirth in Britain before the mid-twentieth century,³⁶ in the nineteenth century the tendency for women to remain in the home was based largely on a misunderstanding, wilful or not, of their biological and psychological nature,³⁷ and a misuse of evolutionary theory, resulting in the association of women and the home becoming a cornerstone of Victorian ideology and that of later eras. Frederic Harrison, for instance, writes in Realities and Ideals (1908):

Our true ideal of the emancipation of Woman is to enlarge in all things the spiritual, moral, affective influence of Woman; to withdraw her more and more from the exhaustion, the contamination, the vulgarity of . . . professional work; to make her more and more the free, cherished mistress of the home, more and more the intellectual, moral and spiritual genius of man's life.³⁸

The specificity of women's role within the home was seen as humanity's reward after the long struggle of evolutionary development which had culminated in a resting upon the plateau of what was regarded as the greatest civilization which had yet been known to humankind, or ever would be, that of Victoria. Arguments taken from evolutionary theory which postulated the inferior development of women physically and mentally were paradoxically used to maintain the desired status of Victorian

36. "Midwifery," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1973 ed.

37. See for instance Patrick Geddes and J. Arthur Thomson, Evolution of Sex (1889; rpt. London, 1899) 269, which categorizes men as katabolic- "active, energetic, eager, passionate, variable," and women as anabolic- "passive, conservative, sluggish and stable." Cited in Sara Delamont and Lorna Duffin, eds., The Nineteenth-Century Woman: Her Cultural and Physical World (London: Croom Helm, 1978) 63.

38. Frederic Harrison, Realities and Ideals (New York: Macmillan, 1908) 100, cited in Burstyn 32.

women in society:

Home is clearly Woman's intended place, and the duties which belong to Home are Woman's peculiar province . . . it is in the sweet sanctities of domestic life, - in home duties, - in whatever belongs to and makes the happiness of Home, that Woman is taught by the SPIRIT to find scope for her activity, - to recognize her sphere of most appropriate service [Burgon's emphases].³⁹

It is this world that Rachel so vehemently wants to smash to atoms.

Rachel, however, does not reject the world of her aunts outright. Compared with the world of her father outside the home it has its merits. Rachel concedes:

there's a sort of beauty in it - there they are at Richmond at this very moment building things up. They're all wrong, perhaps, but there's a sort of beauty in it . . . It's so unconscious, so modest . . . yet they feel things. They do mind if people die. Old spinsters are always doing things. I don't quite know what they do. Only that was what I felt when I lived with them. It was very real (218).

She reviews the "minute acts of charity and unselfishness" which fill her aunts' days and build a "background" (218), a commendable raison d'être.

In opposition to this are the many examples and the frequent discussion of female emancipation and enlightenment which fill the novel, reflecting the atmosphere of intense debate over the role of women and other women's issues which prevailed in Edwardian and early Georgian English society.

Mrs. Elliot mentions her sister-in-law,

one of those active modern women, who always takes things up, you know - the kind of woman one admires, though one does not feel, at least I do not feel - but then she has a constitution of iron (158).

Here Mrs. Elliot is caught halfway between admiration for the positive qualities which women are newly manifesting in the

39. Burgon 17, cited in Burstyn 32. On contradictions in Victorian theories of the physical inferiority of women see Delamont and Duffin 63-5.

public sphere, and the contemporary debates which had been raging since the Victorian era of the physical danger to women of taking, or of their physical inability to take, an active role in society.⁴⁰ St. John mentions casually in conversation the enlightenment of women and adds that he sometimes thinks that "almost everything [is] due to education" (163). Miss Allan receives a letter from her sister who writes that Lloyd George has taken up the suffrage bill, but "we have our work cut out for us" (179). Mrs. Thornbury eulogizes the new type of woman:

All round me I see women, young women, women with household cares of every sort, going out and doing things that we should not have thought it possible to do . . . And they remain women . . . They give a great deal to their children (326).

The novel bristles with references to the contemporary standing of women in relation to work, education, suffrage and public life. Yet Woolf never allows the positive aspects of development in the position of women to overshadow her representation of the crippling legacy which the Victorian era handed down to them, as is best expressed through Rachel. Rachel tells Terence: "You've no conception what it's like - to be a young woman," and narrates the "terrors and agonies" of sexual ignorance and the particular complications in growing up as a young girl in such a repressive society (219). She continues:

A girl is more lonely than a boy. No one cares in the least what she does. Nothing's expected of her. Unless one's very pretty people don't listen to what you say . . . (219).

Rachel capitalizes upon this isolation, but eventually it proves to be her undoing.

40. A common argument, which appeared in Geddes and Thomson, was that women lacked sufficient energy to participate actively in society, all of their energy being required for reproduction. Cited in Delamont and Duffin 63.

The subjection of women is also enforced institutionally in the novel in subtle ways as when Mr. Bax, the parson at the hotel, preaches on the duties of Christians in one of his "innocent clerical campaigns," claiming that "The humblest could help; the least important things had an influence," as he directs his comments to the women in the congregation (236).

Terence becomes Woolf's self-appointed guide to befriend and lead Rachel out of the labyrinth of Victorian misconceptions about the proper roles of, and relationship between, the sexes. Woolf, in this part of the novel, employs some of the ideas she was to use again over one and two decades later respectively in her polemical essays A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas. Terence begins his discourse to Rachel:

The respect that women, even well-educated, very able women, have for men . . . I believe we must have the sort of power over you that we're said to have over horses. They see us three times as big as we are or they'd never obey us.⁴¹

For that reason Terence is inclined to believe that women will not do anything with the vote when they achieve it. He continues:

It'll take at least six generations before you're sufficiently thick-skinned to go into law courts and business offices. Consider what a bully the ordinary man is (212),

and goes on to paint a picture very like that of the stockbroker and the great barrister in A Room of One's Own who go indoors in the spring sunshine to make money and more money and more money (AR000 38). The daughters of these men must step aside to let their brothers be educated, and so the process continues, women taking a back seat in the whole proceedings.

41. TVO 212. Woolf repeated this idea in AR000 35. She writes: "Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size."

Terence manages to dissociate himself from this process and thus purify himself from the world by means of a private income of between six and seven hundred pounds a year, which enables him to write, as the Woolf persona in A Room of One's Own, Mary Beton, inherits "five hundred a year and a room with a lock on the door" (AROOO 100) enabling her to do the same.

Terence then proceeds to a theme Woolf was to take up later in Three Guineas: "the masculine conception of life" (213). The masculine conception of life is "judges, civil servants, army, navy, Houses of Parliament, lord mayors" (213). As Terence says:

There's no doubt it helps to make up for the drudgery of a profession if a man's taken very, very seriously by everyone - if he gets appointments, and has offices and a title, and lots of letters after his name, and bits of ribbon and degrees (213).

In Three Guineas Woolf served the larger purpose of showing how such a state of affairs breeds competition and jealousy among men, thus leading indirectly to a warlike mentality and then to actual war between nations,⁴² as well as suggesting a viable female alternative, yet here she, through Terence, is particularly concerned with the effect that male ideology has on the individual woman and, by implication, women in general: St. John Hirst's sister, who could be substituted by Thoby and Adrian Stephen's sister, Shakespeare's sister, or the sister of Arthur of the Education Fund.⁴³ St. John's sister is victim to society's emphasis on the male career; she feeds the rabbits. Rachel too has "fed rabbits for twenty-four years" (213).

42. See especially 23-6.

43. Thoby and Adrian Stephen's sister was Woolf herself; Shakespeare's sister appears in AROOO 46-7; Arthur's Education Fund of Thackeray's Pendennis, to Woolf a symbol of all that English girls have sacrificed for their brothers' educations over centuries, is discussed in IG 7-8.

Neither Terence nor Woolf simplify the issues involved in this area of gender conflict. Terence concedes that St. John has to earn his living, just as Mary Beton comes to realize that she cannot blame the whole of the male sex for present and past injustices in the unequal status accorded to the two sexes, but that

Great bodies of people are never responsible for what they do. They are driven by instincts which are not within their control. They too, the patriarchs, the professors, had endless difficulties, terrible drawbacks to contend with. Their education had been in some ways as faulty as my own (TVO 213, AROOO 38).

No doubt Terence can "instinctively [adopt] the feminine point of view" (213) only because he does not have to participate in this system, as Mary Beton can also develop her relatively impartial point of view due to her private income.

Terence continues his discussion with Rachel on the question of women's secret lives, collectively "this curious silent unrepresented life" (217), which has existed for thousands of years, hidden and unheard due to the suppression of women which has made it impossible for them to find a language with which to articulate the unique aspects of their experience. "I have the feelings of a woman," Woolf misquotes Bathsheba in Hardy's Far from the Madding Crowd, "but I have only the language of men."⁴⁴ The review in which this quotation appears provides many interesting parallels with Woolf's text at this point. In this review of a book on the portrayal of women in the nineteenth-century English novel,

44. Virginia Woolf, Books and Portraits, ed. Mary Lyon (Frogmore: Triad/Panther, 1979) 44, in the article "Men and Women," a review of Leonie Villard's La Femme Anglaise au XIXème Siècle et son Evolution d'après le Roman Anglais contemporain which first appeared in TLS 18 Mar. 1920: 182. The correct quotation, supplied by Gordon 34n., is: "It is difficult for a woman to define her feelings in language which is chiefly made by men to express theirs."

Woolf writes

It has been common knowledge for ages that women exist, bear children, have no beards, and seldom go bald; but save in these respects, and in others where they are said to be identical with men, we know little of them and have little sound evidence upon which to base our conclusions (BP 41).

She uses the argument she was to employ later in A Room of One's Own - that the representation of women has been performed in the past largely by men rather than by women themselves, and thus presents a portrait falsified by prejudice, desire and faulty speculation. The true figure of womanhood, Woolf claims, is "the bent figure with the knobbed hands and the bleared eyes" (BP 43). In her essay on George Eliot in The Common Reader Woolf discusses Eliot's heroines who populate the era discussed in her previous review, an age characterized by a crisis in religious belief and providing the stepping stone to the new age of women's reforms and to new definitions of women:

The ancient consciousness of woman, charged with suffering and sensibility, and for so many ages dumb, seems in them to have brimmed and overflowed and uttered a demand for something - they scarcely know what - for something that is perhaps incompatible with the facts of human existence.⁴⁵

Woolf saw Eliot herself as confronting her feminine aspirations with "the real world" of men (CRI 172).

In her essay "Women and Fiction" (1929), the precursor to A Room of One's Own, Woolf touches on the subject of the "lives of the obscure," some of which she had discussed in The Common Reader, and mentions the previously unexplored "dark country" of women's lives.⁴⁶ In both series of The Common Reader; in the many biographical reviews, the autobiographical material and the obituaries which she wrote throughout her

45. "George Eliot," in CRI 171.

46. Virginia Woolf, Granite and Rainbow (London: The Hogarth Press, 1958) 76, 82; CR I, 106-33.

lifetime; and in the experimental, fictional, biographical review "Memoirs of a Novelist" (1909), Woolf shows her concern with

the hidden moments and obscure formative experiences in a life, rather than its more public actions . . . the hidden fact at the centre of character (G 94),

which relates particularly well to the lives of women which had gone hitherto largely unrecorded or else had been viewed mainly through the biographical methods of men.⁴⁷ In biography, as Gordon says, Woolf was able "to hint her discovery of states of mind so muted that they almost defied expression" (G 95).

In The Voyage Out, Terence expresses the plight of women from a male point of view:

it's the beginning of the twentieth century, and until a few years ago no woman had ever come out by herself and said things at all . . . Of course we're always writing about women - abusing them, or jeering at them, or worshipping them; but it's never come from women themselves. I believe we still don't know in the least how they live, or what they feel, or what they do precisely. If one's a man, the only confidences one gets are from young women about their love affairs. But the lives of women of forty, of unmarried women, of working women, of women who keep shops and bring up children, of women like your aunts or Mrs. Thornbury or Miss Allan - one knows nothing whatever about them. They won't tell you. Either they're afraid, or they've got a way of treating men. It's the man's view that's represented, you see. Think of a railway train: fifteen carriages for men who want to smoke . . . Don't you laugh at us a great deal? Don't you think it all a great humbug? (217).

47. A good example of the biographical methods of men is the Who's Who which Rachel reads in the text (80) which provides an interesting parallel with Leslie Stephen's Dictionary of National Biography. A typical life contained therein runs:
Sir Roland Beal; born 1852; parents from Moffat; educated at Rugby; passed first into R.E., married 1878 the daughter of T. Fishwick; served in the Bechuanaland Expedition 1884-5 (honourably mentioned). Clubs: United Service, Naval and Military. Recreations: an enthusiastic curler.

The volume supplies information on "bankers, writers, clergymen, sailors, surgeons, judges, professors, statesmen, editors, philanthropists, merchants, and actresses; what clubs they belonged to, where they lived, what games they played, and how many acres they owned," all the details of the obvious, external life; yet gives no hint of the inner motivations and drives which form the real person.

Rachel's death can be seen as a crisis of articulation; unable to articulate her unique inner experience to the world at large, her "shivering private visions" (62), in a form that will enable her to adapt to the outer world of society through marriage, she has the choice of accepting a marriage that cannot live up to her ideals, a second-rate life, or death. She uncomfortably straddles two ages, and also the states of singleness and marriage, not knowing to which of these she truly belongs. She shares the fate of many heroines of the Victorian and twentieth-century novel, as well as other women in both literature and life. Dorothea Ladislaw rests in an unvisited tomb.⁴⁸ Miss Willatt, the middle-aged writer of Woolf's "Memoirs of a Novelist," is "rolled into the earth irrecoverably."⁴⁹ Clive Bell, writing of Woolf's first drafts of the novel, described Rachel as "mysterious + remote, some strange, wild, creature who has come to give up half her secret."⁵⁰ Rachel herself seems to confirm this as she neglects to reveal to Terence the secrets of her sex: "it seemed to be reserved for a later generation to discuss them philosophically" (299).

Throughout The Voyage Out Woolf makes an exploration of the polarization of the sexes which, Gillian Beer suggests, seems to be a feature of the most autobiographical of the works of both Woolf and George Eliot.⁵¹ Hughling Elliot makes small

48. George Eliot, Middlemarch (1871-2; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965) 896.

49. Virginia Woolf, "Memoirs of a Novelist." Unpublished manuscript, Monks House Papers, U of Sussex. Cited Gordon 97.

50. BI, Appendix D, 210 (Letter to Virginia Stephen, [?] 5 Feb, 1909).

51. Gillian Beer, "Beyond Determinism: George Eliot and Virginia Woolf," Women Writing and Writing About Women, ed. Mary Jacobus (London: Croom Helm, 1979) 91.

talk to Hirst about Oscar Wilde and hip-bones as he has discovered what scholarships and distinctions Hirst enjoys (120), calls out to ask him who writes the best Latin verse in his college as they descend Monte Rosa on donkeys (147), and Hirst and Mr. Flushing discuss abstractly "art, emotion, truth, reality"; while in contrast to this, Rachel, wallowing in the lived emotion of love, murmurs to Terence: "Is it true, or is it a dream?" (283). Terence reads a novel featuring a hero who, marrying, does not realize "the nature of the gulf which separates the needs and desires of the male from the needs and desires of the female" (303), which ends with the banal conclusion:

They were different. Perhaps, in the far future, when generations of men had struggled and failed as he must now struggle and fail, woman would be, indeed, what she now made a pretence of being - the friend and companion - not the enemy and parasite of man (304).

Rachel and Terence discuss the ideal education that they wish their children to have,

how their daughter should be required from infancy to gaze at a large square of cardboard, painted blue, to suggest thoughts of infinity, for women were grown too practical, and their son . . . should be taught to laugh at great men . . . at distinguished successful men . . . who wore ribands and rose to the tops of their trees (301).

According to Terence, Rachel has no respect for facts as she is "essentially feminine" (302). Everywhere the lines of gender-demarcation and sexual war are drawn.

It is Rachel and Terence's task in the novel to wade through society's false expressions of love, sexuality, and what the marriage bond means, and to forge for themselves a unique relationship based on truth and mutual respect, taking into account their individual natures and not bowing to society's emphasis upon convention. It is this relationship which Rachel and Terence desire in the novel, and it is the one

which so cruelly escapes them through a mixture of chance and determinism. Earlier in the novel, before Rachel falls in love with Terence, Helen speculates upon the future of humanity, and after rejecting Rachel and Hirst, Susan and Arthur, and English farm labourers as likely means of advancing the species, places it firmly in the hands of the Russians and Chinese (205).

Although Helen's meditations are somewhat less than completely serious at this point, nevertheless this remains a comment upon the standard of relationships between the sexes in the novel. The more satisfying, if more basic and primitive relationships, are to be found generally between members of the same sex. Helen, for example, feels bound to Rachel by "the indestructible if inexplicable ties of sex" (207).

Rachel and Terence's failure to break out of the narrow bounds of gender to create a meaningful relationship with each other signifies a larger failure within society to marry the masculine and the feminine within the self and between the sexes. In the following chapter I explore more closely the differing and contradictory demands which the discourses of masculinity and femininity exert upon Rachel through Terence, the feared potential patriarch, and Helen, the embodiment of the "Great Mother."

CHAPTER 3

"THE IMAGE IN A POOL ON A STILL SUMMER'S DAY": RACHEL, HELEN AND TERENCE

The two characters in The Voyage Out most intimately involved in Rachel's life and associated with the circumstances surrounding her death are Helen, her aunt and confidante, and Terence, her lover. Helen's assumed guardianship over Rachel provides her with a significant amount of influence over her. It is indirectly through this guardianship that Rachel comes to meet Terence, and Rachel, in a highly symbolic scene (290-1) is forced to break the symbiotic bond she has formed with Helen in order to prepare for her forthcoming marriage with Terence. Thus Helen and Terence are the most significantly placed characters in the novel to be direct influences upon Rachel's still incompletely formed life.

Many early critics, particularly those who invest Mrs. Ramsay in To the Lighthouse with the title "angel,"¹ see in the character of Helen their vision of feminine perfection. To me such a view is mistaken, and more recent critics such as Mitchell Leaska and Louise DeSalvo have redressed the balance and presented more realistic critical views of Helen's character.²

1. Quentin Bell, "The Biographer, the Critic, and the Lighthouse," Ariel: A Review of International English Literature 2.1 (1971): 100, who is reviewing Leaska's book on To the Lighthouse which dismisses such a critical view.

2. Leaska (1973); DeSalvo (1980). For an example of the earlier type of criticism see Bernard Blackstone, Virginia Woolf: A Commentary (London: The Hogarth Press, 1949) 19, who in an effort to equate the Ambroses with the Ramsays of To the Lighthouse presents these one-dimensional portraits:

Like Ramsay, Ridley Ambrose is a scholar, an eccentric given to reciting poetry aloud, jealous of his fame. We don't see much of him in the course of the story because he is always shut up in his study, writing. Helen Ambrose is younger than Mrs. Ramsay; she is only forty, but she also is beautiful, kind, and fond of her children; she hates to leave them behind.

Helen is one of the most complex characters in The Voyage Out and cannot be dismissed through convenient critical platitudes. She is a strange mixture of beauty and cynical pessimism,³ thus more like Woolf's real mother as she appears in Woolf's autobiographical writings or Vanessa, Woolf's sister, than the fictional portrait in To the Lighthouse of Mrs. Ramsay who is seen at least in part through the eyes of the young James Ramsay and the young Virginia Stephen. If a few sentences in a novel can capture some of the essence of a character it is Helen saying that the world is full of bores, "But," the omniscient narrator appends, "her beauty, which was radiant in the morning light, took the contrariness from her words" (52). One is constantly confused in an analysis of Helen's character as to whether one should stress her beauty or her cynicism and pessimism. One of the most interesting critical tasks in relation to her character is to try to ascertain exactly how disinterested she is in her guardianship of Rachel, despite the fact that when she is successful in gaining custody of her she is "beset by doubts, and more than once regretted the impulse which had entangled her with the fortunes of another human being" (84). The nature of the impulse which entangles her is the point of critical contention. Most critics have tended to see Helen's actions towards Rachel in freeing her from the oppressive relationship she experiences with her father as kind, innocent and unselfish, and in part no doubt they are, but a great deal of evidence from the text suggests that this is only half of the story and that a much more subtle analysis can be presented which takes into account Helen's more covert motivations.

Leaska was perhaps the first to take this latter critical

3. Hirst calls Helen "the most beautiful woman I've ever seen" (206).

view. He describes Helen as "a personality characterized by a veiled and controlled aggressiveness,"⁴ and intimates that she enjoys the dependence which she has enjoined upon Rachel. When Rachel begins to fall in love with Terence, "[w]ith a certain pleasure" Helen enjoys expressing her pessimistic ideas to her, being "incredulous of the kindness of destiny, fate, what happens in the long run, and apt to insist that this was generally adverse to people in proportion as they deserved well."⁵ These ideas are spawned due to Rachel's decision to keep her love for Terence a secret from Helen. Later, after Rachel and Terence have declared their love for each other and the issue of Helen's guardianship is no longer in question, Helen feels "strangely old and depressed."⁶ The life which she has sought to control has escaped from her, and she is left with only herself and her less than adequate marriage.

It is at this point in his argument that Leaska introduces the allusions to Milton's Comus which appear at the end of the novel and provide the superficial cause and the symptoms of Rachel's illness. While Terence is reading Comus to Rachel one day, the words suddenly become "laden with meaning," causing her to go off

upon curious trains of thought suggested by words such as 'curb' and 'Lochrine' and 'Brute,' which brought unpleasant sights before her eyes, independently of their meaning (333-4).

Terence is reading Stanzas 398 and 399 of Comus about Sabrina, a virgin pure, formerly the daughter of Lochrine who had inherited a kingdom from his father Brute. She is under the "glassy, cool, translucent wave" which later appears as one

4. Leaska 19.

5. TVQ 226; Leaska 23.

6. TVQ 294; Leaska 24.

of the images in Rachel's illness (334, 336). Leaska locates one of the sources of this mythology in Geoffrey of Monmouth's Historia Regum Britanniae (1137) in which Gwendolyn, who is to become Sabrina's stepmother, kills Lochrine; Estrildis, Sabrina's mother; and finally Sabrina herself, the latter two by drowning them.⁷ Leaska tends to equate Helen with Gwendolyn as they have a similar relationship with the virginal Rachel/Sabrina figures, although Helen is only a surrogate stepmother to Rachel. As supporting evidence he cites images of the possibly oppressive effect Helen has upon Rachel during her illness and delirium, Helen's "form stooping to raise [Rachel] in bed appear[ing] of gigantic size" and "[coming] down upon her like a ceiling falling."⁸

These images have particular significance also for the highly symbolic scene already mentioned, cast partly in the form of a hallucination, in which Helen attacks Rachel while she is walking with Terence; this scene symbolizes the break in Rachel's dependence upon Helen and her subsequent cleaving to Terence in a love relationship. In the version of this scene in the 1909-13 draft of the novel, "Rachel saw Helen's head hanging over her, very large against the sky."⁹ In the Holograph and Later Typescript versions Helen's head is "pendent" over Rachel.¹⁰ In the 1915 standard English edition of the novel, Helen is "a figure, large and shapeless against

7. Leaska 33.

8. TVQ 354; Leaska 34.

9. DeSalvo 44.

10. Leaska 37.

the sky."¹¹ Yet in the published version she is also joined by Terence so that "two great heads" loom over Rachel and kiss above her (290).

This section of the scene has an interesting history. In the Earlier Typescript Rachel defends herself against Helen singlehandedly. In the Holograph Terence appears, defending her against Helen's wishes: "No! . . . I've a right to protect her. We're going to be married."¹² Thus in subsequent drafts of the novel Rachel goes from a state in which she protects herself, to a state in which she senses Terence's protection, to a state in which that protection is withdrawn as he and Helen symbolically kiss above her, foreshadowing the later kiss they are to give each other as she lies on her death-bed (353).

Possibly Helen is seen unconsciously by Rachel as a rival for Terence's love or as her murderess, nevertheless Leaska, in one of the concluding statements of his argument, places the blame for Rachel's death firmly on both Terence and Helen's shoulders rather than on any inner imaginings of Rachel. He says:

11. Hereafter in the text of this chapter this edition is referred to as "the published version" of the novel. The drafts I discuss in this chapter are (in DeSalvo's useful classification) the 1909-13 draft, the 1911-13 draft and the final draft of the novel (the 1915 English edition). The Earlier Typescript is one of the versions of the 1909-13 draft; the Holograph and Later Typescript are versions of the 1911-13 draft. Woolf of course revised her novel again for the first American and second English edition in 1919-20 (DII 17 (4 Feb, 1920); DeSalvo 110-25). Leaska discusses the Earlier Typescript as if it post-dates the Holograph version; it precedes it in fact, and when discussing the Earlier Typescript Leaska is actually describing the changes made to it as part of Woolf's work on the following draft (see DeSalvo 161). There is only one version of the above-mentioned scene in the 1909-13 draft, and as Leaska's version of the "Earlier Typescript" differs from DeSalvo's in this case, he must be describing the revisions and not the original manuscript (Leaska 37; DeSalvo 44, 168).

12. Leaska 37.

[Rachel's] commitment to marry Hewet, who is neither sufficiently grown up himself nor emotionally resourceful enough to 'look after' her, coupled with Helen's obvious withdrawal after the marriage proposal, leave Rachel helplessly overwhelmed and destined to a life, which for her, is potentially filled with recrudescence and uncertainty. Her only recourse, then, on a level far below awareness, is to protect herself; and protection in Rachel's inner world is synonymous with withdrawal.¹³

For Rachel only the ultimate form of withdrawal, death, is sufficient to meet her pressing needs.

DeSalvo's argument concerning Helen is basically a full-scale amplification and extension of Leaska's. She discusses the novel through its drafts; the draft which I will be discussing first in this chapter is actually Woolf's fourth draft, written during the period (1909-13) when the novel was at least initially still called Melymbrosia.¹⁴ One of the major differences between the 1909-13 draft and the published version of the novel is the allusions to a lesbian love between Helen and Rachel in the earlier draft and their virtually complete suppression in the later version. In the early version of what I will term the "river scene," the scene in which Helen attacks Rachel when she is walking with Terence by the river, Helen professes her love for Rachel and tries to force Rachel to admit that she loves her more than Terence.¹⁵ In the same scene, after Rachel tells Helen she is going to be married, Helen physically attacks her

13. Leaska 39. I discuss Leaska's charges relating to Terence later in this chapter.

14. DeSalvo 31, 67. In references to this draft I cite it as Draft 1 and follow the practice of DeSalvo who appends chapter and page numbers when quoting from it. I refer to the 1911-13 draft of the novel as Draft 2 and follow the same practice with that. Draft 2 merely signifies that this is the second draft chronologically upon which Woolf worked which I discuss in this chapter; as DeSalvo suggests (67), this may well in fact be the sixth draft upon which she worked.

15. DeSalvo 33.

and then demands: "Beg my pardon, and say you worship me!"¹⁶ Also contained in this version are the lines, "[the] inevitable jealousy crossed Helen's mind as she saw Rachel pass almost visibly into communion with someone else," lines which reinforce the possessive nature of Helen's character and explain many of her subsequent statements. Upon Rachel and Terence making their intention to marry clear to Helen, she addresses them:

To have two children, to be half through one's life, to be married to a man who's fifteen years older than one is oneself, I'm in the thick of it all and you're just beginning . . . It will be interesting to see what you make of it. I remember telling Rachel that she would always be the dupe of the second rate - and that reminds me, you will have to write to your father.¹⁷

Here Helen, neglecting to congratulate the couple, reveals some of her prime motivations in relation to Terence and Rachel. Ageing, and in a less than happy marriage, she projects her own failure onto the young lovers, insults both of them, and reduces their romance to the practicality of Rachel writing to her father. Disillusioned with her life and her marriage, Helen seeks to spread this disillusionment.

In discussing this draft DeSalvo gives what is probably the most negative view of Helen's character to be given by any critic before or since. Often her criticisms seem unnecessarily harsh or simply mistaken, based on what appear to be misreadings. In accordance with her thesis that Helen has a possessive relationship with Rachel, DeSalvo views Helen as being an "irresponsible and infantile parent"¹⁸ in relation to her own

16. DeSalvo 44; Melymbrosia 25: 11? It is impossible to tell from DeSalvo's context whether this occurs on Page 10 or 11 of the draft manuscript.

17. DeSalvo 44; Melymbrosia 27: 3-4.

18. DeSalvo 37.

children, and "a childish, self-centred mother."¹⁹ She bases these views upon a brief passage on the third page of the draft which describes Helen's reactions at having to leave her children to go to South America, and this colours her whole subsequent attitude towards her character. She comments on Helen's difficulty in expressing emotion,²⁰ which in her view is converted into envy of Rachel and subsequent contempt: "This girl might be a boy."²¹

It seems unlikely that Helen should be envious of Rachel at this stage of the novel, but DeSalvo's suggestion that she deliberately discredits the Dalloways because she has sensed Rachel's closeness to them in certain ways and her admiration for them, particularly in relation to the 1911-13 draft, carries more weight. In the earlier draft, after Rachel confides to her aunt that Richard Dalloway has kissed her, Helen delivers a diatribe to her about the Dalloways: that people like them "poison the air," and that Clarissa's nature is "pitted as by the small pox."²² She concludes with the following rather melodramatic statement which refers to Richard's kiss: "You're doomed Rachel. There's no escape."²³ In the published version Helen is also "slightly irritated" upon seeing Rachel arm-in-arm with Mrs. Dalloway (58).

In relation to the 1911-13 draft which appears to be identical to the published version in the following point, DeSalvo shows how Helen delivers incompatible messages about

19. DeSalvo 39.

20. DeSalvo 38.

21. DeSalvo 39; Melymbrosia 3: 3.

22. DeSalvo 40; Melymbrosia 9: 5, 6.

23. DeSalvo 40; Melymbrosia 9: 7.

sexuality to Rachel in this section of the novel, telling her that sexual relations are natural, but upon Rachel exclaiming that sexuality is terrifying and disgusting, echoing her: "It is."²⁴ In the 1909-13 draft Helen also mocks Rachel before others on account of her gullible innocence when she says, "Having Rachel is like having a puppy in the house . . . She's always bringing underclothes down into the hall," lines only slightly altered in the published version.²⁵

According to DeSalvo, in the 1911-13 draft one of the major changes from the earlier draft is that "Helen becomes less overtly self-centred, less obviously malicious, but is now seething with an inward, suppressed rage."²⁶ In what DeSalvo calls "an expurgated version of Melymbrosia,"²⁷ "the figure of Helen has been rarefied, purified, and purged of her negative - and human - qualities."²⁸ In the 1909-13 draft for instance, in the scene in which Mr. Pepper leaves the villa, Woolf has Helen think of him:

if one had not the courage to use live words instead of dead ones one must expect to be treated as a log; to be smothered in refuse."²⁹

In the later version, identical to the published version at this point, in a considerably toned-down and less violent version of this scene, Helen "could not help feeling it a relief when William Pepper . . . took his departure . . . she could not help feeling it sad that friendships should end

24. DeSalvo 83; Draft 2 9: 3; IVQ 78.

25. DeSalvo 42; Melymbrosia 14: 25; IVQ 144.

26. DeSalvo 68.

27. DeSalvo 102.

28. DeSalvo 76.

29. DeSalvo 41; Melymbrosia 10: 12.

thus."³⁰

In relation to this draft, DeSalvo also advances a theory of Helen's so-called "masochism." This again is based on slim evidence; as in the charge relating to the earlier draft that Helen was a childish mother, it is based on a misreading and comes to assume the status of a full-blown argument. The passage upon which DeSalvo bases her theory is one in which Helen is analysing Willoughby's character:

'Of course one sees all that' she thought, meaning one sees that he is big and burly and has a great booming voice and a fist and a will of his own; 'but - ' here she slipped into a fine analysis of him which is best represented by one word 'sentimental' by which she meant that he was never simple and honest about his feelings.³¹

Concerning this passage DeSalvo writes:

Helen confuses obtuseness, dishonesty, hypocrisy, burliness - indeed even the threat of physical violence - with sentimentality and with tenderness. One now understands how this woman has remained married to Ridley, a man with whom she cannot share her griefs and emotions: she really cannot identify honest expressions of sentiment. Helen envies someone whose husband has bullied her and abused her because Helen is herself a masochist. In this draft, Woolf analyzes how a masochistic, self-denying mother figure relates to a young woman whom she perceives as an innocent, how the repressed hostility against the male becomes transmitted to the innocent female child.³²

Helen does not confuse the qualities DeSalvo names with sentimentality and tenderness, as is indicated by the conjunction "but" halfway through the quoted passage. Helen's view of Willoughby's character is that the first named, socially acceptable, traditionally masculine virtues are not enough to weigh the balance in favour of his character when considered against his negative quality of false sentimentality - negative and false because he is "never simple and honest

30. DeSalvo 77; Draft 2 11; 15; TVO 92.

31. DeSalvo 81; Draft 2 3: 1.

32. DeSalvo 81-2.

about his feelings." The issue of tenderness is not raised in the text. DeSalvo does not induce the issue of Helen's masochism from the draft, but simply appends it to it, as seen in the third sentence I quote from her. Far from being unable to identify honest expressions of sentiment, Helen through her thought exposes Willoughby's falsity of emotion. Rachel may be a victim of Helen's "repressed hostility against the male," but this is not stated explicitly in the text and can be deduced only upon the basis of a psychological sub-text.

From DeSalvo's theory of Helen's masochism she develops certain views. For instance, from the scene (retained in the published version) in which Helen embroiders while reading Plato on the Nature of Good, portraying in her tapestry among other things natives whirling darts, DeSalvo concludes that "Helen transforms her masochistic tendencies . . . into a preoccupation with goodness," despite the fact that she is also reading about the Reality of Matter!³³

There is additional material supporting the position that Helen is jealous of Rachel's relationship with Terence in this draft, insofar as Terence describes himself soon after meeting Helen and Rachel as being in love with "them."³⁴ This, however, may be nothing more than Rachel's initial feelings in the published version towards both Hewet and Hirst who were enveloped in a "haze of wonder," all life seeming to radiate from them (175).

In the river scene in this draft, as Helen and Rachel roll

33. DeSalvo 82; Draft 2 4: 3; TVQ 28-9. DeSalvo also fails to take into account the fact that Helen, as a Vanessa Bell figure, would be quite at home in a context with Plato and the Nature of Good as these were essential elements of G.E. Moore's philosophy from which all the Bloomsbury members imbibed.

34. DeSalvo 73.

in the grass, they impart "handfuls of grass together with gestures which under other conditions might have been described as kisses,"³⁵ perhaps the only reference left to the lesbian love between Rachel and Helen to which DeSalvo says all overt references in the manuscripts were "eradicated" between 1910 and 1913.³⁶ DeSalvo, like Leaska, associates Rachel's tumble with Helen in the grass with her illness, due to the similarity of some of the images which appear in both contexts, and concludes: "Rachel cannot love or kiss a man without betraying a mother [Helen as mother-substitute] or encountering her wrath."³⁷

In the 1909-13 draft which is the version of the novel containing the earliest extant illness and death scenes,³⁸ there is an oblique reference to lesbianism in the fact that Mrs. Flushing reads Sappho's Ode to Aphrodite during Mr. Bax's sermon at the hotel. DeSalvo believes that this refers to an embrace by Helen and Rachel outside the villa (not in the published version) and to their struggle in the grass, and more fancifully adds:

Rachel's leap into watery pools [in her delirium] can be interpreted either as a self-inflicted phantasied punishment for the Sapphist life, as a way for Rachel to escape Helen's Sapphist tyranny, or as a parallel to Sappho's own suicide by drowning because she suddenly and inexplicably found herself in love with a man, in love with Phaon.³⁹

More deserving of merit is DeSalvo's observation of the fact that in the Holograph version of the 1911-13 draft Rachel falls, rather than plunges, into the sticky pool of her delirium;

35. DeSalvo 87; Draft 2 24: 9.

36. DeSalvo 102, 155.

37. DeSalvo 128-9.

38. DeSalvo 126.

39. DeSalvo 134.

by now she is perceived by Woolf much more as a victim.⁴⁰ Also, DeSalvo claims that a page in the Holograph contains a passage equating the South American river of the expedition (the Orinoco) with the Severn of Sabrina's abode in the Comus allusions.⁴¹ If we accept DeSalvo's point here (she does not quote the relevant passage), we may well concur with her therefore that the events which occur on the banks of the Orinoco (and in Rachel's delirium) are analogues of events in Comus. Thus "[Sabrina], guiltless damsel, flying the mad pursuit/ Of her enraged stepdame, Guendolen" (Comus 829-30) jumps, or as Woolf has it later, falls into the Severn and is rescued into the hall of Nereus, whose daughter revives her with ambrosia until she becomes the immortal "Goddess of the river."⁴²

The only possible analogue to Milton's conclusion here in The Voyage Out follows Mrs. Thornbury's summation after Rachel's death: "she thought how the soul of the dead had passed from those windows. Something had passed from the world. It seemed to her strangely empty" (364). Rachel returns again symbolically at the very end of the novel with the rainstorm which revives the land and causes life to go on, forming an analogy, as previously mentioned, with the restoration of order at the conclusions of such dramatic tragedies as Shakespeare's Hamlet and Macbeth, and also finding a parallel in the conclusion of To the Lighthouse as Mrs. Ramsay returns at the crucial moment

40. DeSalvo 135; Draft 2 27B: 33. The plunging scene (Draft 1 29: 6) is discussed in DeSalvo 128.

41. DeSalvo 139.

42. Comus 842. This section of Comus and DeSalvo's comments quoted DeSalvo 139.

so that Lily may finish her painting.⁴³ Thus in a sense Rachel has become a rain-goddess, transcending the material world while at the same time becoming incorporated into it, merging with the impersonality of the elements which in life she loved.

Further insights can be gained into Helen's character and her relationship with Rachel through the published version of The Voyage Out. Often evident is Helen's patronizing attitude towards Rachel. After Helen has assassinated the characters of Richard and Clarissa Dalloway, Rachel's models early in the novel, Rachel responds: "It's very difficult to know what people are like . . . I suppose I was taken in [by the Dalloways]," and Helen sees "with pleasure" that she speaks more naturally (79).

This is one of the many junctures in the text where interpretation of character becomes intriguing as the reader must judge between the apparently innocent, yet subconsciously complex mixture of Helen's motives in relation to Rachel. Helen feels that there is little doubt that Rachel was taken in, but restrains herself from saying so, thus gently providing her with the conviction that what Helen says upon this matter is unshakeable truth: "One has to make experiments" (80). Here, in Helen's failure to state plainly to Rachel that she thinks that she did make a mistake, she reveals ulterior motives within herself on an unconscious, unstated level; although appearing in the guise of a kindly guardian, she does not respect Rachel sufficiently to speak to her with total honesty. Here Woolf,

43. TTL 186. Interesting to consider also in this context is Maud Bodkin's discussion of the archetypes underlying the structure of Coleridge's Rime of the Ancient Mariner, and of Coleridge's longing for the "slant night-shower" which "Might now perhaps [its] wonted impulse give,/Might startle this dull pain, and make it move and live!" (Bodkin, Chapter 2, particularly 35).

like Terence in his novel, continues her exploration of "the things people don't say" (220). As DeSalvo has pointed out, whereas Helen's explicitly stated aim is for Rachel to "go ahead and be a person on [her] own account," in actual practice she discredits Rachel's judgement about the Dalloways, thereby asserting her own views.⁴⁴

In other contexts in the novel Helen is just as patronizing. In a letter to a friend she writes that due to her enlightenment of Rachel, Rachel is now "more or less a reasonable human being" (94). She says that she now prays for a young man to talk openly to her and "prove how absurd most of her ideas about life are" (95). Yet paradoxically, in her vested interest in maintaining an exaggerated sense of Rachel's deficiencies, Helen underrates Rachel's attempts to educate herself. "Books - books - books . . . More new books - I wonder what you find in them" (125), Helen says, but fails to fully credit Rachel with the initiative to structure her own education. When Hewet, Hirst and Rachel share their religious beliefs at the picnic, Helen is contemptuous of Rachel's expression of hers: "Nonsense . . . You're not a Christian. You've never thought what you are" (144). According to Helen, Rachel "changes her view of life about every other day" (162). Many of these statements may have more than a grain of truth in them, but it is Helen's attitude towards Rachel that is the telling-point in her relationship with her; inhibited in some ways in her personal relationships, and maintaining her distance from other people, Helen finds in Rachel the perfect subject for the projection of her unwanted emotions.

Woolf says in the text that Helen possesses "a shyness which

44. IVO 81; DeSalvo 84.

she felt with women and not with men," (77) which is converted into a scorn of other women, a case in point being Mrs. Dalloway. This scorn is accompanied by a certain snobbishness: Helen advises Rachel that "It's a pity to be intimate with people who are well, rather second-rate, like the Dalloways, and to find it out later" (81). Yet once again the reader must confront the problem of authorial intention - perhaps Woolf herself feels the Dalloways to be "rather second-rate" and has created them to be so. On the issue of Helen's aloofness, Hirst challenges her: "I suppose you've never paid anyone a compliment in the course of your life," and indeed she can produce no instance except her misdirected pampering of Ridley (208).

Closely related to Helen's aloofness is her skepticism, pessimism and cynicism: the hardboiled qualities in her nature. In his discussion of the life of the politician, Richard Dalloway complains to Helen that "We can't make you take us seriously," and when he claims that being a politician does not blind him to the merits of philosophers and scholars, Helen wryly responds: "No. Why should it? . . . But can you remember if your wife takes sugar?" (71), which effectively deflates his argument and reduces his ego to manageable size. By moving the discussion onto a practical level Helen signifies her profound lack of interest in Dalloway's philosophy of life. Rachel, however, in another part of the novel, calls Helen's own, pessimistic views on life the "croaking of a raven in the mud" (226). Helen expands on some of these views later in the novel:

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

blood . . . (316).

Ironically, despite Ridley's hatred of "even the semblance of cynicism in women" (316), some of Helen's "croaking . . . in the mud" is vindicated by Rachel's premature death.

It is the aspect of Helen which could be termed mythological which provides one of the more interesting facets of a quite complex character. Perhaps the first indication in the text of this side of Woolf's characterization of Helen occurs at the picnic as Terence surveys his fellow picnickers and focusses upon Helen's "largeness and simplicity" which make her stand out from the others "like a great stone woman" (134). Here Helen is compared to a pagan idol, and in several other places in the text she is linked by analogy to the forces of nature; in another section of the text, again through the consciousness of Terence, the reader is told that "Helen's sense seemed to have much in common with the ruthless good sense of nature" (335).

Madeline Moore in her essay "Some Female Versions of Pastoral: The Voyage Out and Matriarchal Mythologies"⁴⁵ views the novel through Jane Harrison's appropriation of the Greek nature myth of Demeter and Persephone in a section called "Mother and Maid" in Harrison's Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion (1903), which Moore claims Woolf had read.⁴⁶ In

45. In Jane Marcus, ed., New Feminist Essays on Virginia Woolf (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1981) 82-104. This essay is reprinted and the themes therein expanded in Moore's book The Short Season Between Two Silences: The Mystical and the Political in the Novels of Virginia Woolf (Boston: George Allen and Unwin, 1984).

46. Moore initially incorrectly records the publication date of this book as 1908 (Marcus 88). There is no actual proof that Woolf had read the Prolegomena or ever did. By an examination of her diaries, letters, and the list of contents of her reading notebooks compiled by Brenda R. Silver (Virginia Woolf's Reading Notebooks (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983)) there is only evidence of her having read Ancient Art and Ritual (Silver 103) and possibly Epilegomena to the Study of Greek Religion (DII, 136 (12 Sept., 1921)). The fact that four

this approach to the novel, Helen becomes the archetypal Great Mother who is associated with corn and vegetation, and Rachel becomes her "Daughter" who is assigned to the underworld to marry Hades. In this context Moore sees the embroidery which Helen is working upon throughout the novel as an indication of her identification with the Goddess of vegetation:

she was working at a great design of a tropical river, running through a tropical forest, where spotted deer would eventually browse upon masses of fruit, bananas, oranges, and giant pomegranates.⁴⁷

At a later stage in her embroidery the reader is invited to come closer to her to try to capture the essence and archetype of her being:

With one foot raised on the rung of a chair, and her elbow out in the attitude for sewing, her own figure possessed the sublimity of a woman's of the early world, spinning the thread of fate - the sublimity possessed by many women of the present day who fall into the attitude required by scrubbing or sewing (208).

Like "circumspect Penelope" of Homer's Odyssey, Helen spins/weaves the thread of fate in the novel, fulfilling her archetypal function, whilst the mention of scrubbing and sewing serves to place her character within a framework of greater realism also. Such numinous images as the one above invite further investigation on the part of the reader, as Lily Briscoe in To the Lighthouse longs to penetrate the "dome" of Mrs. Ramsay to uncover her knowledge and wisdom (III 50-1). The image of Helen is a profoundly feminine one while she fulfils this female archetype; as Gordon states, her posture is quite different from that of the heroic statue,⁴⁸ one of the -----
of Harrison's books graced the Woolfs' library is not sufficient proof that Virginia herself had read them (see Marcus 104, note 19).

47. IVQ 28; Marcus 89.

48. Gordon 104.

great classical forms which is based upon masculine values.⁴⁹

The mythological aspect of Helen's character in the novel functions in her role as prophetess and seer as, quite contrary to the generally accepted (masculine) rules of logic and reason which are used to interpret the universe, she alone seems to intuit from afar Rachel's death:

Underneath the likings and the spites, the coming together and partings, great things were happening - terrible things, because they were so great. Her sense of safety was shaken, as if beneath twigs and dead leaves she had seen the movement of a snake. It seemed to her that a moment's respite was allowed, a moment's make-believe, and then again the profound and reasonless law asserted itself, moulding them all to its liking, making and destroying (269).

Helen's quality of incisive intuition is seen again when Rachel and Terence emerge from the jungle after having declared their love for one another. Without having to be told what has transpired between them, Helen quietly states: "[Mr. Flushing] has gone to find you. He thought you must be lost, though I told him you weren't lost" (280).

The final and climactic example of Helen's prophetic powers occurs at the native camp, which marks the furthestmost point to which the English travellers venture as they enter their own Heart of Darkness. Helen becomes exposed to "presentiments of disaster":

How small the little figures looked wandering through the trees! [Helen] became acutely conscious of the little limbs, the thin veins, the delicate flesh of men and women, which breaks so easily and lets the life escape compared with these great trees and deep waters. A falling branch, a foot that slips, and the earth has crushed them or the water drowned them. Thus thinking she kept her eyes anxiously

49. Interestingly Rachel takes up the subject position of a heroic statue as she portrays Nora Helmer of Ibsen's A Doll's House in fantasy after arriving at Santa Marina (122). In this powerfully feminist work of Ibsen, Nora takes a "voyage out" with marked similarities and differences to Rachel's: Nora takes a "voyage out" from an unfulfilling marriage, whereas Rachel's "voyage out" manages to avoid the conflicts of marriage altogether.

fixed upon the lovers, as if by doing so she could protect them from their fate (293).

Helen blames the Flushings for having instigated the expedition, "for having ventured too far and exposed themselves" (293). To what they have been exposed I will discuss in a later chapter.

In concluding this chapter I will make only a few remarks upon the character of Terence, and concentrate on Mitchell Leaska's critical evaluation of him, as I shall discuss his character at greater length in my next chapter when dealing with his relationship with Rachel.

Terence, like Helen, is a complex character, and no neat critical theory can fully enclose the range of his personality. At the outset of his relationship with Rachel he seems merely to be the answer to Helen's prayer for a young man to teach Rachel about life, thus taking over in part the role that Helen had heretofore fulfilled. Yet almost against his will he finds himself attracted towards Rachel,⁵⁰ and when this feeling is reciprocated by her their relationship moves to a quite different, higher plane. Several of the characters in the novel comment on, not Terence's effeminacy, but his ability to transcend the barrier of gender and to identify with certain aspects of the opposite sex. Evelyn Murgatroyd claims: "There's only one man I really like . . . Terence Hewet. One feels as if one could trust him . . . There's something of a woman in him - " (253). It seems that an association exists in Evelyn's mind between an ability to trust Terence and the feminine aspects of his nature. In another section of the novel Mrs. Thornbury states that Terence reminds her "of a dear old friend of mine - Mary Umpleby" (111). Mr. Thornbury

50. "With something like anguish Hewet realized that, far from being unattractive, her body was very attractive to him" (211).

replies that "No young man likes to have it said that he resembles an elderly spinster," yet Hewet feels it a compliment "to remind people of someone else" (112). This seems to point to a weakness in character - to a desire to be imitative or to evidence of the lack of a strong, stable identity - which does not seem to match other instances in the novel where the reader perceives Terence's strengths. Other examples of possible weaknesses in Terence's character include the narratorial comment that Terence finds reading novels by other authors to be an essential process in the composition of his own (302). Also, at the end of the novel as Rachel lies dying in bed, Terence shows general ineptitude both in remaining oblivious to the fact that she is seriously ill, and when confronted by Helen with this fact, managing to rationalize her concern by maintaining she is overwrought (344). Leaska in his criticism of the novel has concentrated on these weaknesses in Terence's character, yet has failed to consider also his strengths.

Leaska's criticism is both paternal and moralistic. He perceives an apparent contradiction between Terence's insight that

relations between different people were so unsatisfactory, so fragmentary, so hazardous, and words so dangerous that the instinct to sympathize with another human being was an instinct to be examined carefully and probably crushed

and his "appeasing and conciliatory nature."⁵¹ One may hold the above sentiments which Terence endorses and yet not act upon them, and in this respect this contradiction in Terence's character, if that is what it can be correctly termed, matches the contradictions in the outer and inner Helen which Leaska has already discussed - between the seemingly charitable yet

51. IVQ 194; Leaska 24.

inwardly, unconsciously possessive. Helen too has sentiments attributed to her very similar to those which Woolf attributes to Terence when the text states that, upon taking charge of Rachel, "more than once [she] regretted the impulse which had entangled her with another human being" (84).

In relation to Hewet's "many" loves (107), Leaska applies a doctrinaire approach:

Hewet's feeling capable of loving so many people suggests his need to suppress such things as striving for ambitious goals or expressing any assertiveness, for ambition and assertion largely tend to hamper unconditional or affectionate acquiescence. And it is in this aimless suppression that we understand better Hewet's difficulty with authority, his inhibition to work towards a worthwhile goal, his directionless drifting.⁵²

These comments move out of the range of the novel; they seem to refer more to Leaska's personal philosophy than to anything objectively in the text. I take issue with several points: why does love preclude ambition or assertiveness; where in the text is there evidence of Hewet's difficulty with authority, except perhaps in his righteous indignation at fifteen carriages being set aside on a train for the use of male smokers wherein he is in fact representing the female point of view; and is not writing a novel a worthwhile goal? Also I feel that Leaska fails to appreciate Terence's privileged position and special circumstances as the possessor of a private income. Moreover, Terence does claim to be ambitious, so much so that he needs to state this as a confession (287). Nevertheless, I do agree with Leaska's point that exactly how many loves Terence has had is open to conjecture, even though Terence himself confesses to Rachel

52. Leaska 25.

that he has "had" other women.⁵³

Leaska points to the fact that Hewet does nothing to prevent Hirst from taking Rachel away from him at the time that he suspects him of doing this, calling him a "compliant . . . individual" and pointing to his lack of "strong and spontaneous masculine assertion - something alien to his conscious set of attitudes."⁵⁴ He states later:

Avoidance . . . is the way Hewet copes with life. He wants to be intimate, but on his terms, which means that he wants also to be free - free to seek out limitless sources of affection from all directions and in all quantities . . . this is a way of life for one who is uncertain of his own adequacy.⁵⁵

These seem to be rash and unfair remarks to be made in the context of Terence's serious and thoughtful meditations upon the subject of marriage.

Leaska makes much of the fact that Terence loses his way back to the rest of the expeditionary group after his scene of intimacy with Rachel in the jungle. His remarks upon this matter conclude:

Rachel, in declaring her love for [Terence], has yielded to his leadership and in that sense, both literally and poetically, she is being fatefully led by a lost leader.⁵⁶

53. IVQ 287; Leaska 25. Part of the critical problem here may lie in Woolf's characterization of Terence. Most of the men with whom Woolf associated were homosexual or bisexual, and even though it is generally assumed that Terence is modelled on Clive Bell, this is not a one-to-one transposition of character. Edel's characterization of Bell as a "hungry-for-experience heterosexual" (45) does not concur with the more tender and romantic qualities which Terence displays in the novel, and Woolf had few other close heterosexual male friends upon which to base her character. Thus Terence appears to be a composite figure; an uneasy compromise between Clive Bell's ardent heterosexuality and the softer qualities of Woolf's male homosexual friends. See also footnote 5, Chapter 5, in which I discuss Terence's characterization further.

54. Leaska 25.

55. Leaska 26.

56. Leaska 26.

Yet in my reading of this scene the two aspects which stand out most clearly are Rachel's dumb acquiescence in Terence's leadership, and the peculiarly soporific, enchanting effect which the jungle seems to have upon both of them.

The final point which I wish to make in relation to Leaska's article involves the introduction of biographical evidence into my argument. Leaska comments on Terence's confession of his faults to Rachel:

beneath the manifest content we sense the covert statement with its particular inaudible claims: 'If you accept me now, flawed as I am, remember that I have warned you. Therefore, whatever freedoms I take or future claims I make, I am entitled to; and you must never desert me, for alone I am helpless.'⁵⁷

Besides the extraordinary amount of imaginative critical licence Leaska takes, a comparison between Terence's statement of his faults to Rachel and Leonard Woolf's statement of his faults to Virginia Stephen in a letter written a few months before she agreed to marry him in 1912 yields surprising similarities, and makes it unlikely that Woolf should impute similar thoughts as those of her (prospective) husband to a character in her novel if she took an attitude towards Terence similar to Leaska's. In the text Terence tells Rachel:

I've never been in love with other women but I've had other women . . . I've great faults. I'm very lazy, I'm moody . . . You've got to know the worst of me. I'm lustful . . . I ought never to have asked you to marry me (287).

Leonard writes to Virginia:

God, I see the risk in marrying anyone + certainly me. I am selfish, jealous, cruel, lustful, a liar + probably worse still. I have said over + over again to myself that I would never marry anyone because of this.⁵⁸

The fact that one of the suicide notes which Woolf left her

57. Leaska 27.

58. Letter Leonard Woolf to Virginia Stephen, reproduced in Bell I 181.

husband in 1941 contains almost identical words to those framing Terence's thoughts immediately after Rachel's death in the novel is additional proof that Woolf identified the relationship between Rachel and Terence at least in part with the relationship she shared with Leonard. Leaska himself notes this. Terence thinks: "No two people have ever been so happy as we have been" (360-1). Woolf writes: "I dont think two people could have been happier than we have been."⁵⁹

In concluding this chapter I would like to examine the precise relation in which both Helen and Terence stand in regard to Rachel's death. Implicit in much of the discussion in this chapter is the fact that both Helen and Terence by their very personalities assist in precipitating the forces which lead to Rachel's death. Furthermore, the Electran triangular configuration through which Helen and Terence relate to Rachel at the end of the novel increases her anxiety about her forthcoming marriage. On a more superficial level also, it is because of the competition between Helen and Terence that Rachel does not receive the medical attention which could have saved her life. Even after her break away from dependence upon Helen in the hallucinatory river scene, Helen maintains a possessive control upon Rachel; when Terence suggests a walk to the hotel one afternoon, Helen pleads with Rachel: "You won't stay with me?," and this causes Rachel to feel uncomfortable between Helen and Terence as she senses the alternating pull of competing loves (317-8). The unstated hostility between Helen and Terence emerges at this point in the novel, and continues until Terence ironically embraces Helen to comfort her as

59. LVI 481, 3702, [18?] Mar, 1941.

Rachel lies dying.⁶⁰

The tragic combination of Helen's possessiveness and Terence's inexperience and inability to protect Rachel from harm sound her death knell. Yet much of the cause of Rachel's death can be found to emerge from within the woman herself, both due to the fact of who she is in herself - in her nature shaped by sociological forces and personal forces external to her - and to the various conflicts battling within her which find their resolution through her complete withdrawal from life. I discuss the former issue in my fifth chapter, and examine a single major conflict within Rachel in the fourth, the competing claims of the inner and outer lives upon her. Thus from investigating the cause of Rachel's death from a sociological angle in my second chapter, and from there examining the influence which the two characters closest to her in the novel exert upon her, I now come to the heart of the matter.

60. TVQ 353. On p. 317 the text states that "There were moments when [Helen and Terence] almost disliked each other," and this trend continues through Terence's attempt to explain to Rachel why Helen annoys him so much sometimes (318) and the subsequent opposition over the correct medical care for Rachel (341, 342, 344).

CHAPTER 4

"AS IF THEY STOOD ON THE EDGE OF A PRECIPICE": RACHEL'S QUEST TOWARDS DEATH: ASPECTS OF THE INNER AND OUTER LIFE

Rachel's death can be seen in Lacanian terms as a failure to enter fully into the Symbolic Order from the Realm of the Imaginary, or at least a failure to integrate fully these two aspects of being which are closely linked with the conscious and unconscious minds. In Rachel's experience in the novel the unconscious and conscious are also linked to the differing demands of the inner and outer life. The conflict within Rachel between the desire to maintain and guard her independence and the desire to merge into the individuality and being of another through marriage gains in intensity as the novel progresses. Although victories are won alternately on both sides of this question, in the final analysis it is Rachel's inability to consent to marriage with Terence with her whole being - and thus affirm the outer life - that precipitates her delirium and subsequent death.

In Lacanian terms once more, by failing to consent to marriage Rachel fails to conform fully to the dictates of the Symbolic Order, marriage being the very origin and foundation of society, yet while turning her back on the Law of the Father she can find no reassuring comfort in the Presence of the Mother as her own is dead, and her substitute, Helen, is possessive and life-denying on a realistic level, and on a mythical level is Guendolen from Comus who desires to kill Sabrina/Rachel so that she may marry Sabrina's father/Rachel's lover, Terence.

Also, in an autobiographical reading of the text, Trombley suggests a link between the body of Woolf's mother, forever

tainted for Woolf as it gave birth to the incestuous attentions of her step-brothers George and Gerald Duckworth, and Rachel's dream of the tunnel/vagina leading to the little deformed man.¹ Thus, caught as she is between the Law of the Father with its demand of sexual surrender and the non-Presence of the Mother, Rachel opts for the dark side of the Imaginary, a realm characterized by the absence of any reassuring mother-like figure. This realm consists simply of Rachel, the objects immediately surrounding her in her sick-room, and the phantoms of her psyche. As Elaine Showalter has commented, justly or unjustly, in an aphorism which I believe expresses a mistaken view of Woolf's sexual politics and vision of womanhood, yet which can be applied with apt relevance to Rachel's fate in this novel: "The ultimate room of one's own is the grave."² Or as Toril Moi has commented on Lacan's theory of the Imaginary: "to remain in the Imaginary is equivalent to becoming psychotic and incapable of living in human society."³

In anthropological or sociological terms Rachel's death can be seen as her willed self-expulsion from society because of her unconscious unwillingness to conform to it through marriage, marriage being one of the hallmarks of civilization and the foundation of patriarchy.⁴ It can also be seen as the

1. Trombley 20.

2. Showalter 297.

3. Moi 100.

4. I use the term "civilization" in the sense given it by Friedrich Engels following Lewis H. Morgan: "the period in which man learns the further reworking of the products of nature, the period of industry proper and of art" (The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State: In Connection with the Researches of Lewis H. Morgan, 4th ed. (1891; trans. Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1978) 30). Engels argues that the monogamous family developed out of the "pairing family" in the "period between the middle and upper stages of barbarism; its decisive victory is one of the signs that civilization is

natural outcome of an inability to synthesize the individual and social aspects of her being meaningfully to create a workable balance of freedom and security in which her psyche is left free to range through both her inner world and that external to her.

Although Rachel's may be a willed self-expulsion, nevertheless it reflects the conditions which have governed human societies ever since such a concept as "society" first came to have meaning, and can be thus viewed anthropologically. It also has particular relevance to the society within which Rachel finds herself, thus can also be viewed from the standpoint of sociology. Societies have always needed to have a set of rules or principles, spoken or unspoken, with which to govern themselves, and deviations from these rules or principles have always incited sharp censure. In addition, societies have always had a need to propagate themselves. Rachel's almost literal dive into pools or seas as the spectre of the marriage-bed looms before her is a reflection of Woolf's own (perceived or contemplated) sexual failure early in her marriage to Leonard; the decision taken by him in January 1913 that she should not have children; and the insanity which followed the submission of her novel for publication in March 1913. It is fair to say that Woolf's novel worked as much upon her as she worked upon her novel, events therein determining her own life, thus a retrospective reordering of the events of the novel in Woolf's own life after the process of its writing such as the last instance above affords is critically and biographically justifiable; Woolf was taken to a nursing home in the full throes of a further mental breakdown the day before -----
beginning" (70-1).

the publication of her novel in 1915. The Victorian shame of spinsterhood and childlessness hangs over Rachel's death as an echo from the immediate past; many deaths find their focus in hers as it stands as a type for its era.

The voyage out for Rachel is a quest of discovery, both of herself and of the world around her. This quest partakes of a typical Bildungsroman form, but as Abel, Hirsch and Langland have suggested⁵ this form, which originated in particular historical circumstances in eighteenth-century Germany, does not always suit the portrayal of the development of a female subject, and in part Woolf's novel subverts this form in at least two major ways.

As the above editors have stated, the Bildungsroman genre originated in the idealist tradition of the Enlightenment with its belief in human perfectibility, and embodies the Goethean notion of total organic growth; as they say, this understanding of human growth assumes the possibility of individual achievement and social integration. Such categories have little relevance to Rachel's development as her life is cut off far too prematurely when most of the possibilities for the eventual development of her character still lie dormant within her, and, significantly, she sidesteps one of the most important cultural symbols of social integration, marriage, by dying. Thus Woolf subverts the most common conclusion to the female novel of development, at least in the nineteenth century, marriage, by having her heroine escape from this usually inevitable, conventional device of plot.

The quest motif is developed early in the novel. In a thinly disguised analogy, Rachel is compared to a lonely ship

5. Abel, Hirsch, Langland 5-9.

crossing the sea:

an immense dignity had descended upon her; she was an inhabitant of the great world, which has so few inhabitants, travelling all day across an empty universe, with veils drawn before her and behind. She was more lonely than the caravan crossing the desert; she was infinitely more mysterious, moving by her own power and sustained by her own resources. The sea might give her death or some unexampled joy, and none would know of it. She was a bride going forth to her husband, a virgin unknown of men; in her vigour and purity she might be likened to all beautiful things, for as a ship she had a life of her own (28).

This passage serves as a description of Rachel in several ways: the veils symbolizing her virginity and the later explicit mention of it; the loneliness, mystery and self-sufficiency of the ship; the suggestion of marriage; the combination of the ship's energy and purity, equating with the active and passive sides of Rachel's personality; the ship with a life of its own matching Rachel's intense individuality; and the mention of the "empty universe" and death which serve as ominous signs. This figure reaches fulfilment later in the novel as Rachel truly becomes "a ship passing in the night - an emblem of the loneliness of human life, an occasion for queer confidences and sudden appeals for sympathy" (85). Again the theme of loneliness is mentioned, and the "queer confidences and sudden appeals for sympathy" suggest the reactions of several of the characters in the novel after Rachel's death.

This ephemeral aspect becomes even clearer in the American edition of the novel (1920) as Rachel describes her life (and by analogy every human life) as "the short season between two silences."⁶ Thus it is probable that Rachel's death, despite its peculiar circumstances, on another level of the novel also symbolizes every human death, as later in Woolf's career

6. Virginia Woolf, The Voyage Out (New York: George H. Doran, 1920) 82 (DeSalvo 120).

Bernard's death in The Waves becomes the archetypal fictional death par excellence.

Rachel's quest in the novel takes place beside the quests of several of the other characters: Ridley Ambrose, for instance, "worked his way further and further into the heart of the poet" (170) as he prepares his edition of Pindar, this being his quest; Evelyn Murgatroyd searches for truth and meaning. If Rachel is conscious of being on a quest at all she does not know initially for what she is seeking. The quest at first presents itself to her simply as a desire to escape from the confines of the life within which she has up until the present been entrapped.

Perhaps the first indication in the novel of Rachel's dissatisfaction with her present life is a projection which she makes back to her life at Richmond after she has already embarked on her voyage, and as her mind wanders from Cowper's Letters on its second day. She considers a subject which she has examined frequently at Richmond - the characters, views and lives of her aunts:

Why did they do the things they did, and what did they feel, and what was it all about? Again she heard Aunt Lucy talking to Aunt Eleanor. She had been that morning to take up the character of a servant, 'and, of course, at half-past ten in the morning one expects to find the housemaid brushing the stairs.' How odd! How unspeakably odd! But she could not explain to herself why suddenly as her aunt spoke the whole system in which they lived had appeared before her eyes as something quite unfamiliar and inexplicable, and themselves as chairs or umbrellas dropped about here and there without any reason. She could only say with her slight stammer, 'Are you f-f-fond of Aunt Eleanor, Aunt Lucy?' to which her aunt replied, with her nervous hen-like twitter of a laugh, 'My dear child, what questions you do ask!' (31-2).

From her unsuccessful attempts to arrive at any sort of truth regarding her aunts, Rachel concludes that it is better not to try as it will only hurt their feelings:

To feel anything strongly was to create an abyss between oneself and others who feel strongly perhaps but differently. It was far better to play the piano and forget all the rest (32).

Thus Rachel falls back upon the strategy which she consistently employs of withdrawing into her art - music - whenever the conflicts of the outside world become too intense; later in the novel her creativity is raised to the level of death through the hallucinations of her final illness. She strikes upon the method of making those who surround her into symbols, which thus diminishes their immediacy and reduces their individuality. In this way the conflicts of the outer world become lessened as the people who surround her are cast in moulds which serve her needs: Helen becomes a symbol of motherhood, Ridley of scholarship. They fill out Rachel's aesthetic but rather over-refined universe; they are "featureless but dignified . . . and beautiful often as people upon the stage are beautiful" (32). Rachel concludes her meditations:

It appeared that nobody ever said a thing they meant, or ever talked of a feeling they felt, but that was what music was for. Reality dwelling in what one saw and felt, but did not talk about, one could accept a system in which things went round and round quite satisfactorily to other people, without often troubling to think about it, except as something superficially strange (32-3).

Thus music for Rachel becomes the centre of her sense of reality as it can express truly her perceptions and feelings, and stands in stark contrast to the external world which seems to her marked by falsity and a veneer of pretence, masking true thoughts and feelings. As a consequence of this devaluation of the external world Rachel, compensating, creates a space for herself centred on her own being and the impersonal, not personal, world surrounding her, and thus "[i]nextricably mixed in dreamy confusion" (33) her mind merges with the whitish

boards on deck, the sea, Beethoven Op. 112 and (most unfortunately when one considers his fate) the spirit of William Cowper. The only expressions of an attempt to make a meaningful connection with the outer life in this part of the novel are Rachel's fortnightly blazes of indignation, but these always subside. The whole novel traces the course of Rachel's attempt to combine her inner and outer worlds meaningfully, and in particular to find a secure and significant rite de passage into the external world, but in this, as in the case of the virgin in Blake's "The Book of Thel," what she sees there, and the spectre of death in its physical and sexual aspects (the loss of innocence) proves too threatening, and she retreats into the vales of Har.⁷

The inner life of Rachel in the novel is charted principally through a number of intense visionary or revelatory experiences which elsewhere Woolf has termed "moments of being,"⁸ or corresponding intellectual perceptions of an idiosyncratic, intuitive nature which nevertheless seem to arrive at some truth central to an understanding of the universe. A particularly good example of this latter type of intuitive perception is Rachel's thought, her "absurd jumbled ideas" that

if one went back far enough, everything perhaps was intelligible; everything was in common; for the mammoths who pastured in the fields of Richmond High Street had turned into paving stones and boxes full of ribbon, and her aunts (64).

7. "The Book of Thel," in Keynes 127-30.

8. For Woolf's concept of moments of being see Jeanne Schulkind's introduction to MOB 17-22, or "moments of vision": Morris Beja, "Matches Struck in the Dark: Virginia Woolf's Moments of Vision," Critical Quarterly 6 (1964) 137-52 or Epiphany in the Modern Novel (London: Peter Owen, 1971) 112-47. "Moments of Being" was the title of one of Woolf's short stories, and was one of the projected titles for The Waves (Beja (1971) 114).

This sort of thought is expanded later in a different context as Rachel reads Gibbon for the first time:

Never had any words been so vivid and so beautiful - Arabia Felix - Aethiopia. But those were not more noble than the others, hardy barbarians, forests and morasses. They seemed to drive roads back to the very beginning of the world, on either side of which the populations of all towns and countries stood in avenues, and by passing down them all knowledge would be hers, and the book of the world turned back to the very first page (175).

As an indication of the extent to which these thoughts of Rachel are dependent upon actual experiences of Woolf, a comparison with Woolf's second extant diary (30 June - 1 October [1903?]) will prove interesting at this point. In this diary Woolf writes:

I read some history: it is suddenly all alive, branching forwards and backwards and connected with every kind of thing that seemed entirely remote before. I seem to feel Napoleon's influence on our quiet evening in the garden for instance. I think I see for a moment how our minds are all threaded together - how any live mind today is of the very same stuff as Plato's and Euripides' . . . I feel as though I had grasped the central meaning of the world, and all these poets and historians and philosophers were only following out paths branching from that centre in which I stand.⁹

The literal significance with which Rachel invests words in the Gibbon passage above, where words become almost living objects for her, has a precedent in Rachel's response to Terence's invitation to go on the picnic to Monte Rosa. After the words of the invitation seeming initially as "vague as ghosts" to Rachel after her experience of derealization, the loss of primary consciousness, they become "astonishingly prominent; they came out as the tops of mountains come through a mist" (125). It is almost Rachel's urgent need to believe in the empirical existence of a solid, outer world which motivates her prompt affirmative reply to the invitation, and it is not by

9. Virginia Woolf, Diary No. 2 ("Hyde Park Gate": unpublished, 30 June - 1 Oct. [1903?]), Berg Collection, New York Public Library, cited in Gordon 83.

chance that this affirmation of the outer world brings with it a closeness in relationship to Terence. The acceptance of the invitation is suffixed by the following explanation: "such was the relief of finding that things still happened, and indeed they appeared the brighter for the mist surrounding them" (125). The events in Rachel's world are surrounded by a mist which is always threatening to envelop her world of consciousness, and in addition, as in the simile of the mountains and the mist, there is a sharp differentiation between her conscious and unconscious worlds so that in the dichotomous relationship between them the happenings and events of the ordinary, everyday world are invested with an unusual intensity, being informed by the unconscious.

Again in Rachel's derealization experience (124-5), significant parallels can be drawn with a similar experience of Woolf,¹⁰ and Rachel's progression from the virtual absence of beholding conscious reality to an experience of extreme reality compares interestingly with Woolf's notion of "shocks" appearing from behind the "cotton wool" of everyday life in "A Sketch of the Past."¹¹ Rachel's most significant encounter with the reality of words, however, occurs at the end of the novel in the episode which precipitates her slide into delirium, as Terence reads Comus to her.

Rachel's voyage from her inner world to the outer world of

10. Described in DIII 113 (30 Sept., 1926) and, transmitted in a fictional form, and attributed to Rhoda, it becomes a motif in The Waves (43, 107). This and similar experiences of Woolf are discussed in the section "Ecstasy, Fear, Gloom and Shame" in Jean O. Love, Virginia Woolf: Sources of Madness and Art (Berkeley: U of California P, 1977) 222-7, which also discusses Woolf's concepts of "being" and "non-being." For Woolf's discussion of many of these experiences and her aesthetic theory derived from them see her autobiographical piece "A Sketch of the Past" in Schulkind 64ff.

11. Schulkind 71.

social reality occurs in various stages. In the room which Helen has provided for her in the villa at Santa Marina, her "room of one's own," the "room in which she could play, read, think, defy the world, a fortress as well as a sanctuary" (122), Rachel identifies and merges with the characters in the plays and novels which she reads. Partly as herself, and partly as Nora in A Doll's House, she asks the question of the world about her: "What is the truth? What's the truth of it all?" (122). She is an heroic statue in the landscape, but Helen realizes that Rachel's identification with the heroines in the literature she reads is not just a game, and that "some sort of change was taking place in the human being" (122-3). Although Rachel, upon closing the play she has read, is transported from "the imaginary world to the real world" (122), nevertheless the characters and themes which she has encountered there are not so easily dismissed, and they are transformed to come to form a part of her being as she continues to think "of women and life" (123). Again the literalness of words influences Rachel - she handles "words as though they were made of wood . . . possessed of shapes like tables or chairs" - and in the conjunction between the inner, fictional world which she inhabits in her solitude and the "adventures of the day" in which she participates in the outer world, the conclusions at which her reading causes her to arrive are "recast as liberally as anyone could desire, leaving always a small grain of belief behind them" (123). In this way, Rachel, through modelling herself on the heroines of literature and exposing herself to the life of the intellect, begins to achieve a sense of her own subjectivity, and continues the process begun by Helen when she encouraged her to

see herself as "a real everlasting thing, different from anything else, unmergeable, like the sea or the wind" (81).

The next stage in Rachel's development and emergence from her chrysalis again involves a semi-mystical experience as she exults over Hirst and Hewet the day after the dance. This experience begins as she is "filled with one of those unreasonable exultations which start generally from an unknown cause, and sweep whole countries and skies into their embrace" (173), causing her to become confronted by the reality of a tree. It is an ordinary tree, but to Rachel

it appeared so strange that it might have been the only tree in the world. Dark was the trunk in the middle, and the branches sprang here and there, leaving jagged intervals of light between them as distinctly as if it had but that second risen from the ground (174).

This is not unlike Woolf's early childhood experience, narrated in "A Sketch of the Past," of realizing that a flower was "part earth; part flower" (§ 71). As in the scene in which Rachel witnesses Susan and Arthur's lovemaking and consequently "a certain intensity, of vision" (140) remains with her, so here in a slightly different way she has seen "a sight that would last her for a lifetime, and for a lifetime would preserve that second" as the tree "once more sank into the ordinary ranks of trees" (174). Rachel's ability to invest the objects of the natural world with a symbolic as well as a mundane purpose has its parallels in Lily's investiture of the Ramsays as symbols of marriage (ITL 69); in Lily's desire in her art to be "on a level with ordinary experience, to feel simply that's a chair, that's a table, and yet at the same time, it's a miracle, it's an ecstasy" (ITL 186); in Hewet's observation of the assembled picknickers seeming like unfamiliar and noble "naked statues" (131); and in Woolf's

writings on the characters in The Waves that she had got her "statues against the sky" and that "their lives hang lit up against [Hampton Court] Palace."¹²

Passing beyond Gibbon, Rachel comes upon "a suspicion which she was . . . reluctant to face" (175), "the discovery of a terrible possibility in life" (176) - that she may be in love with either Hewet or Hirst. This thought is focussed for her by her observation of a butterfly which is perched on a stone very slowly opening and closing its wings, symbolizing Rachel's alternate openness and closure to this possibility. As Rachel asks herself what it is to be in love, "each word as it came into being seemed to shove itself out into an unknown sea" (176). She is hypnotized by the movement of the butterfly's wings, and as it flies away she rises, as if following it, returning to the villa "much as a soldier prepared for battle" (176), which return however paradoxically signifies her acquiescence in the process which love is to work upon her.

The butterfly appears again in the guise of a moth that evening at the hotel; the moth too is large and it shoots from light to light eliciting the response from several of the young women that somebody ought to kill it. This episode is not significant in itself except as it is augmented by the fact that the same moth appears very late in the novel, after Rachel's death, still colliding with lamps, still provoking the response that somebody should kill it, yet

nobody seemed disposed to rouse himself in order to kill the moth. They matched it dash from lamp to lamp, because they were comfortable, and had nothing to do (377).

Besides this being a comment on the futility and senselessness of life as portrayed in the novel, chiefly

12. DIII 300 (9 Apr., 1930); 334 (2 Dec., 1930).

manifested in Rachel's untimely death, it is also a reflection of the abandonment which visits both Rachel and Terence when they give way to love's seductive lure. The association of love and sexuality with suffering and death is quite apparent in the latter stages of the novel; Rachel pays for love with death, and Terence comes to realize that

underneath the life of every day . . . pain lies, quiescent, but ready to devour . . . what depths of pain lie beneath small happiness and feelings of content and safety" (351-2).

From the point in the novel when Rachel decides to follow the butterfly of love, the novel seems chiefly concerned with Rachel and Terence's relationship, particularly the difficulties in communication which beset it from the outset, causing Rachel's journey into the organized world of society to be hazardous indeed. In part these difficulties in communication are due to the differing needs and expectations which Rachel and Terence bring to their relationship, these being in turn partly gender-related, and they are also a reflection of a wider lack of communication found in the novel between all human beings.

This theme of faulty communication emerges early in the novel independently of its central context in Rachel and Terence's relationship. Richard Dalloway says to Rachel:

How little, after all, one can tell anybody about one's life! Here I sit; there you sit; both, I doubt not, chock-full of the most interesting experiences, ideas, emotions; yet how communicate? I've told you what every second person you meet might tell you (65).

Although Rachel somewhat tempers this pessimistic view of the ability of human beings to communicate with the response: "It's the way of saying things, isn't it, not the things?" (65), nevertheless Dalloway continues this line of thought later:

What solitary icebergs we are, Miss Vinrace! How little we can communicate! . . . This reticence - this isolation - that's what's the matter with modern life! (72).

Although these comments of Dalloway take on a somewhat ironic tone in the light of his later passionate embrace and kiss of Rachel, nevertheless Helen takes up the theme again later in relation to William Pepper. As he leaves the villa, Helen reflects that she has not yet asked Pepper the question she has been intending to ask since the beginning of the voyage, whether he has ever been in love - she has moved away from the question rather than drawn towards it - and, in order to console herself for her suspicion that she has hurt him, she reflects that "one never knows how far other people feel the things they might be supposed to feel" (92).

Hewet and Hirst take up the discussion on a more philosophical plane a little later in the novel as they contemplate isolation and communication. Hewet states:

The truth of it is that one never is alone, and one never is in company . . . You can't see my bubble; 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 what we feel . . . supposing my bubble could run into someone else's bubble - (107-8).

Terence's bubble does run into someone else's - Rachel's - both bubbles to some extent do "burst" or at least merge, and for a time it does become an "e - nor - mous world" (108), but ultimately the difficulty that Rachel has in surrendering her independence for the shared quality of married life, and particularly her body for the purposes of male sexual passion, precipitates her delirium and death. Again, in relation to the theme of communication, it seems appropriate to invoke Lily Briscoe's frustration at not being able to penetrate the "dome-shaped hive" (TTL 51) of Mrs. Ramsay. Lily is a character who

is a more mature restatement of Rachel Vinrace, and who more surely, and more resolutely, consciously evades Mrs. Ramsay's attempts to coerce her into marrying in the later novel.

The theme of difficulty in communication takes place within the more general cynicism about the quality and efficacy of human relationships in The Voyage Out. Hirst replies to Hewet that he has long ceased to look for the reason of any human action after Hewet doubts the wisdom of bringing together the diverse collection of tourists at the hotel and villa for his picnic:

Cows . . . draw together in a field; ships in a calm; and we're just the same when we've nothing else to do . . . do we really love each other . . . ? (126-7).

This pre-dates Mrs. Ramsay's consideration of

the inadequacy of human relationships . . . the pettiness . . . of human relations, how flawed they are, how despicable, how self-seeking, at their best (ITL 41, 43).

Later in the novel, after a run-in with Evelyn, Terence philosophizes:

Why was it that relations between different people were so unsatisfactory, so fragmentary, so hazardous, and words so dangerous that the instinct to sympathize with another human being was an instinct to be examined carefully and probably crushed? (194)

He leaves her in the hall of the hotel with no idea of what she had really wished to say to him or of what she is presently feeling. The image of a woman crossing from one room to another in the corridor leading to his hotel-room (identified later in the novel as being a prostitute) seems to represent in concrete form the insubstantiality of life which engages Terence in this part of the novel: the vain attempts to arrive at any central truth which will sum up all experience, or to understand the sources or the quality of one's feelings.

Later Terence expresses similar sorts of thoughts to

Rachel about one's view of others:

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 judgements . . . 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; but one really doesn't know (222).

Terence's thoughts seem confused at this point in the novel, as possibly also are Woolf's, for a paragraph later these thoughts are reneged when the narrator states that "What he said was against his belief; all the things that were important about [Rachel] he knew" (223), which in turn is replaced by Terence's final assessment after Rachel departs from him, that he is "ignorant still of what she felt and of what she was like" (224). This demonstrates well the uncertainty in Rachel and Terence's relationship at this point, if it does not also reflect Woolf's own premarital confusion in her conflicting emotions towards Leonard.

Rachel and Terence's love may be said to have its true beginning a few days after the dance during their talk by the sea. In a parallel action to Rachel's entrancement by the butterfly, Terence, on the evening following Rachel's dreamy morning walk, interrupts Hirst from sleep to ask how one knows what one feels, and then proceeds along a line of thought which concludes with Rachel and the constantly repeated phrase "dreams and realities" (184-8). Two or three days later he has a chance to test out his new feelings with Rachel by the sea, and immediately they discover their compatibility with each other. No barriers in communication exist as Rachel realizes "how easily she could talk to Hewet, those thorns or ragged corners which tear the surface of some relationships being smoothed away" (212).

Rachel is not afraid of Terence as it could be deduced she is of her father (213, 218). At different moments in their conversation both Terence and Rachel desire physical intimacy with one another, when suddenly Rachel swings away from him verbally by mentioning the love she has of her independent life, walking in Richmond Park alone, being like the wind or the sea. To Terence, "It seemed plain that she would never care for one person rather than another; she was evidently quite indifferent to him; they seemed to come very near, and then they were as far apart as ever again" (220). He seems almost too afraid to disturb her solitude, which in its own way is beautiful and thus justifies its own existence. Yet Rachel has similar anxieties in relation to Terence, in his ability to become suddenly impersonal when discussing his writing:

He might never care for anyone; all that desire to know her and get at her, which she had felt pressing on her almost painfully, had completely vanished (221).

When Terence tells Rachel that he is as good a writer as Thackeray, "his self-confidence astounded her, and he became more and more remote" (221).

This first serious, extended discussion between Rachel and Terence lays down the ground-rules by which their relationship will be conducted, and shows already clearly the tension between the assertion of independence and individuality, and the desire for intimacy, which afflicts both Terence and particularly Rachel. More significantly perhaps, the recognition of each other's individuality is perceived as an excluding factor by both of them, and it is only later that Terence particularly comes to terms with this issue to some extent with his exclamation concerning Rachel:

you're free! . . . and I'd keep you free. We'd be free together (250),

and by his expression of this to her:

you're free . . . To you, time will make no difference, or marriage, or - (288).

By the time of this latter statement, however, the peculiarity in their relationship is the surprising lack of any form of sexual jealousy or possessiveness; Rachel, in fact, intuits:

Although they sat so close together, they had ceased to be little separate bodies; 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 (322).

This basically passionless love, fraught nevertheless on Rachel's side by underlying, unconscious sexual fear, is the calm before the storm of Rachel's delirium.

Rachel and Terence's outwardly smooth friendship and love is beset by internal and relational difficulties from the outset. Similar themes constantly recur in the novel as the couple graze against the same problems again and again.

Terence says of Rachel at one stage:

He did not know her, and he did not know what she felt, or whether they could live together, or whether he wanted to marry her, and yet he was in love with her (249).

He loathes marriage, hating "its smugness, its safety, its compromise" (249), hating the thought of Rachel interfering in his work and hindering him (249-50), yet at the same he is utterly obsessed by her and expresses anxiety lest she should not love him or be disposed to feel anything for a man (249, 250). On the morning following the day upon which Rachel and Terence decide to marry, as they walk on the bank of the river and talk:

Nevertheless, they remained uncomfortably apart; drawn so close together, as [Rachel] spoke, that there seemed no division between them, and the next moment separate and far away again (289).

Rachel realizes that their marriage "will be a fight" (289),

but typically, as soon as a negative sentiment is expressed in regard to their relationship, the tide turns again and they surmount some sort of major barrier, thus confirming that their love will be a lasting one: "She was his for ever . . . innumerable delights lay before them both" (289). However, it is now Terence's turn to experience derealization. As he touches his face he feels an "overpowering sense of unreality." It seems to him that his body is unreal, that "the whole world was unreal" (289).

Once again Rachel and Terence's relationship reveals itself as having no firm base. All of the events surrounding their decision to be married are covered in a mist of unreality, so much so that Terence cannot remember why or how he asked Rachel to marry him, and Rachel cannot even remember if he asked her at all the day after the event. Terence quite literally drifts into love (273); too close to Rachel for rational thought to be possible, he gives up any attempt to think rationally and follows the course of his feelings. He seems to suggest that love is an easier course for a man rather than for a woman to take; when Rachel laments that she must fight to keep their relationship together, and contrasts this with Terence's "compassion," Terence implies that this quality is due to him being "a man, not a woman" (289). Society is structured in such a way that love, whether in an early twentieth-century novel or late twentieth-century reality, is often not the same burning issue for a man as it is for a woman, or at least aspects of personality such as tenderness and vulnerability are more repressed in men, therefore Terence is probably correct in his implication that a man is generally more secure in a love-relationship than a

woman.

Rachel seems more insecure than Terence in their love-relationship, and it is she who most constantly escapes from their close bond to commune with impersonal nature. Terence reproaches her with the accusation that she has forgotten him as they stand on the deck of the steamer the night after their engagement, yet she claims that she was only enticed by "the stars - the night - the dark - " (296). This scene ends symbolically with the prophetic spectre of Rachel and Terence standing together in the darkness, alone with the dark.

Rachel is also in two minds on the issue of separateness and togetherness as it relates to the love question; she both longs for the time when the world, including Terence, will be "one and invisible" (sic Grafton ed. 303; indivisible (Duckworth 1915) 296), yet also realizes, and comes to enjoy the realization, that "she was independent of him; she was independent of everything else" (322). Rachel invents a new definition for love which, rather than stressing the two-way communication usually implied by the word, instead foregrounds the personal benefits derived by the state: "independence" (paradoxically), "calm" and "certainty" (322). Love is a very important lever for Rachel to consolidate her sense of personhood. Nevertheless Rachel's sense of an independent part of the personality remaining aloof from the love-relationship as a whole is not just confined to herself; she also realizes that part of Terence is, and will always remain, independent of her, and this not because either of them have willed it, but because it is simply an inescapable fact. This is the final formulation which Rachel arrives at in her attempts to balance the tension between the competing claims of individuality and

intimacy, the inner and the outer life of love. Rachel says "She wanted nothing else" (than her kind of love), but it may be salutary to examine in the light of Rachel's later delirium the most intense scene of conflict between Rachel and Terence over this issue, placed slightly before the above in the text.

The scene begins with Rachel talking to Terence, but she drifts away from the conversation, only half talking to him and becoming increasingly vague. Terence becomes angry as "She seemed to be able to cut herself adrift from him, and to pass away to unknown places where she had no need of him" (309). He remonstrates with her:

I don't satisfy you in the way you satisfy me . . .
There's something I can't get hold of in you. You don't
want me as I want you - you're always wanting something
else (309).

The argument involves some of the male/female issues discussed in my second chapter; Terence articulates some of them again:

Men and women are too different. You can't understand -
you don't understand - (309).

Rachel agrees with Terence's points, and admits to herself that she wants more than the love of a single human being; she wants a relationship with impersonal nature as well. Inwardly they both decide:

They were impotent; they could never love each other
sufficiently to overcome all these barriers, and they
could never be satisfied with less (310).

Yet they are too closely committed to each other to break off their engagement; they stand "on the edge of a precipice" and cling together:

They knew that they could not separate; painful and
terrible it might be, but they were joined for ever (310).

Although their anxiety subsides somewhat by the mere fact of sitting very close to one another and by their having faced and

to some extent resolved a difficult issue, nevertheless, as they look at themselves in the mirror, "it chilled them . . . for instead of being vast and indivisible they were really very small and separate, the size of the glass leaving a large space for the reflection of other things" (310).

It shocks Rachel and Terence that their love is not the centre of the universe; that it is also, to some extent, subject to cosmic forces. The emotional separation(s) between them is/are revealed in the physicality of the mirror which does not lie, and most disturbingly, the mirror (world) shows a complete disregard for the love or the aspirations of the couple, relegating them to a corner of its reflecting surface.

This chapter-ending parallels the one cited before, in which Rachel and Terence stand together in the darkness. In both cases two finite human beings stand opposed to the largely impersonal world which surrounds them: the dark of night on a river leading to the primitive origins of the world and the disturbing depths of the unconscious mind; and a mirror which represents the world, which in Woolf's tragic, and ultimately ironic vision, has no favourites and, impersonally, spares none from their appointed fate.

Rachel's entry into the Symbolic Order proper, or to use alternative terminology, from the inner to the outer world, is fraught with problems, yet some of these she brings upon herself. An early version of The Voyage Out represented Rachel, in DeSalvo's terms, as "a woman both fascinated with and repelled by her own sexuality,"¹³ and perhaps some of this fascination and repulsion is retained in a watered-down version in the published edition of the text in Rachel's alternating

13. DeSalvo 102.

feelings towards the consequences of abiding by either her policy of solipsistic individuality or total intimacy. She cannot bring these two extremes to embrace any intelligent and workable mean. Nevertheless, it is not so much the trials of love which make Rachel's quest into the outer world such a hazardous one, but the sudden advent of sexuality into her life and the consequences which it brings with it, and this, more than any other factor, digs her grave for her.

CHAPTER 5

THE SLIDING OF A RIVER AS IT RACES TO A WATERFALL;

RACHEL, SEXUALITY AND DEATH

Love and sexuality are not synonymous in Rachel's private world. Love is sparked within her by Terence's entrance into her life, but sexuality has a murkier and more violent beginning for her through Dalloway's sudden embrace and kiss early in the novel as the Euphrosyne lurches and Rachel falls towards him. Rachel receives little introduction into this scene of passionate sexuality, which is seen through the novel's still Victorian outlook as being the result of uncontrollable male desire; she is a blank page upon which Dalloway prints "the hardness of his body and the roughness of his cheek" (73).

In the chapter immediately preceding this scene, the very word "love," used in its sexual sense, was enough to "unveil the skies for Rachel" (65). She is the classic victim of the typical Victorian upbringing for girls and young women, one of the most prominent features of which in her case is a complete ignorance of the fact that sexual relations even exist. Granted that Rachel's over-reaction to Dalloway's kiss is partly explicable in terms of the fictional needs of the novel, and as a reflection of the sociological background which undergirds it, still, as Gordon suggests, this is one part of Woolf's novel in which she was unable fully to transmute life into art without leaving autobiographical traces behind (G 101). Dalloway's kiss, and particularly Rachel's reaction to it, still have upon them the taint of Woolf's sexual abuse through the actions of her half-brothers.

Before Dalloway's kiss, but after his mention of "love" to

Rachel, when her undefined and uncomprehended feelings for him have reached a certain stage, and while she is still asking questions of Clarissa Dalloway such as "Why do people marry?" (57), Rachel is found by Helen sitting silently, looking "queer and flushed" (66). With the subject of sexuality effectively introduced to Rachel, not in a conscious fashion at all but only as something vague and unstated, lurking on the edges of life, Woolf now quite appropriately introduces a sea-storm into the novel which confines most of the ship's passengers to their cabins.

Roger Poole has suggested¹ that at least one event in this section of the narrative bears resemblance to Leonard Woolf's description of a storm at sea on his honeymoon, the honeymoon which was characterized for Virginia Woolf by (perceived) sexual failure, and which she relived again in Mrs. Dalloway:

she had failed [her husband]. And then at Constantinople, and again and again. She could see what she lacked . . . It was something central which permeated; something warm which broke up surfaces and rippled the cold contact of man and woman (MD 29-30).

It is fair to say, in an intertextual reading, that Rachel too has "a virginity . . . which clung to her like a sheet" (MD 29). In the immediate context of Leonard Woolf's description of his honeymoon, in which his wife is presumably left recuperating silently in her cabin, he eats "an enormous gherkin swimming in oil and vinegar."² This passage uses similar language to that describing Richard Dalloway's facing of three meals in The Voyage Out, "eating valiantly at each," when at last "certain glazed asparagus swimming in oil . . .

1. Poole 52.

2. Leonard Woolf (1980) II 56-7.

conquered him" (67). In the novel Dalloway's wife too lies seasick in her cabin.

In some respects the fictional sea-storm which Woolf has chosen to introduce at this point in the novel mirrors Rachel's later delirium. To the passengers trapped in their cabins upon the ship, "The world outside was merely a violent grey tumult" (67-8). This description anticipates Rachel's later isolation and entrapment in her sick-room, as the outside world recedes more and more each day, yet becomes progressively more threatening as stark images derived from it stalk her consciousness. Some of the regressive imagery of the sick-room scenes appears here in a less threatening form as Rachel becomes "a donkey on the summit of a moor in a hail-storm, with its coat blown into furrows" or "a wizened tree, perpetually driven back by the salt Atlantic gale" (68). This section, and also many comments earlier in the novel, anticipate the underwater imagery which forms so great a part of Rachel's delirium as she dives into Sabrina's lake. Mr. Pepper quotes a passage from the Antigone, translated by Watling as:

Wonders are many on earth, and the greatest of these
Is man, who rides the ocean and takes his way
Through the deeps, through wind-swept valleys of perilous
seas
That surge and sway.³

Clarissa Dalloway comments on Mr. Grice's collection of dead fish: "They have swum about among bones," to which he responds by citing Shakespeare: "Full fathom five thy father lies." Literary allusions in the novel support the notion of death at sea and under deep water, and water generally in the novel retains its archetypal significance as a symbol of the

3. Sophocles, The Theban Plays: King Oedipus: Oedipus at Colonus: Antigone. Trans. E.F. Watling (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1947) 135, 11. 339-42; IVQ 41.

unconscious.

Rachel's voyage away from her confining life at Richmond by sea to South America is allegorically a journey into the unconscious and into the unrealized depths of the self, and this voyage is further reinforced by her second journey down the Orinoco to a primitive village. The first voyage brings enlightenment and self-realization, but the second brings death. Sexuality stands in an ambiguous relation to these two possible outcomes via the water-symbolism. Water stands for sexuality in the novel, but ideas of sexuality are frequently laced with death and disaster there. As Rachel suffers with lovesickness for Terence, the authorial voice comments:

All these moods ran themselves into one general effect, which Helen compared to the sliding of a river, quick, quicker, quicker still as it races to a waterfall: Her instinct was to cry out Stop! but even had there been any use in crying Stop! she would have refrained, thinking it best that things should take their way, the water racing because the earth was shaped to make it race (227).

Rachel is the innocent victim of a love which is catapulting her towards the apex of a waterfall. Yet she is also in part a willing victim, and not wholly the pawn of fate, as she reveals in a masochistic thought associated with her relationship with Terence:

To be flung into the sea, to be washed hither and thither, and driven about the roots of the world - the idea was incoherently delightful" (305).

Interestingly this idea is juxtaposed with Terence's fantasy that Rachel will throw him into the sea. Therein lies the strange mixture of aggression, and passive acquiescence and surrender, which characterizes Rachel's dealings with the world and with love and sexuality. As Trombley has argued in his book on Woolf's relationships with her doctors, All that Summer She was Mad, in which he employs Merleau-Ponty's theories, it

is impossible to construct a subject's relationship to reality as a whole without first investigating his or her sexual stance in the world - the two are in fact inseparable.⁴

The association which Woolf makes between water and sexuality is seen particularly clearly in Rachel and Terence's love-scene in the jungle. As they move away from the river and into the depths of the jungle, the narrator comments:

the noises of the ordinary world were replaced by those creaking and sighing sounds which suggest to the traveller in a forest that he is walking at the bottom of the sea (227).

After their first kiss, as they sit silently beside each other, there is mention of "the senseless and cruel churning of the water," that of the river which Rachel associates with her own feelings at this time. Upon returning to the steamer which proceeds on its way down the river, it seems to Terence that "he and Rachel had dropped to the bottom of the world together" (281). They sit "perfectly silent at the bottom of the world" (283). Finally, the next morning, as Rachel and Terence walk on the banks of the river and discover happiness in each other for the first time, they are described as being in "waters in which they were now sunk" (290). Sexual happiness cannot be mentioned without the accompanying mention of water which threatens to drown or submerge. The next significant allusion to water is in the second Comus quote in Chapter 25, by which time Sabrina is already submerged in her silver lake, and the headache which precipitates Rachel's submersion has just begun.

In the recovery of the Euphrosyne from the sea-storm early in the novel, we have a model for the dichotomy between the conscious and unconscious mind which manifests itself at several points in the novel. Indeed, this dichotomy works

4. Trombley 23-5.

itself into the very structure of the novel via the central dichotomy of the superficially personal Santa Marina society, which is simply upper middle-class Edwardian English society transposed to another setting; and the impersonal, unconscious, mystically aware and hallucinating consciousness of Rachel. As Gordon implies, Rachel has yet to take her place in this society, if indeed a place exists for her at all. She is "encased in a set of English characters like an embryo in a shell." (G 99). Gordon sums up her character:

Rachel seems blurred because she is fixed on a social structure that is unreal to her, 'reality dwelling in what one saw and felt, but did not talk about . . .'. Using anonymity as cover and freed by humility, her restless intelligence stirs but is too unconventional to risk exposure on the platform of action. She lurks obscurely beneath the sea. Her affinity is for imagined monsters of the deep who 'would explode if you brought them to the surface, . . . scattering entrails to the winds.'⁵

The recovery from the storm is described in these terms:

the world dropped into shape; [Rachel and Ridley] were no longer atoms flying in the void, but people riding a triumphant ship on the back of the sea . . . the mind of man . . . once more attached itself to the old beliefs (69).

This prefigures the conditions of Rachel's delirium: above the sea Rachel's mind is rational, and outwardly she conforms to and merges into the society surrounding her; below the sea her mind is allowed to take eccentric shape, and no structures or conventions can impede its progress. Whether its progress is to prove a positive or a negative experience, however, is the relevant question.

In another comparison between the underwater world and the world of calm, ordered society, Woolf writes on the recovery of the Euphrosyne:

after their view of the strange underworld, inhabited by phantoms, people began to live among tea-pots and loaves

5. G 110; IVQ 32, 18.

of bread with greater zest than ever (69).

Little imagination is needed to compare these two states to the respective situations of Rachel and the other Santa Marinites at the close of the novel. Only Terence can follow Rachel to any extent into her delirium as he realizes "what depths of pain lie beneath small happiness and feelings of content and safety" (352).

Rachel recovers from this first, physical sea-storm, only to come upon an "English gentleman" (70) in the guise of Richard Dalloway, who plunges her into the depths again. He shows Rachel that he himself has depths of which she has never dreamed; he elicits depths and feelings within her of which she was equally unaware.

Dalloway, in a manner typical of many Victorian men if much sociological theory concerning that era can be considered to have adequate historical backing,⁶ projects onto Rachel the

6. There has been much questioning in recent years of the sort of sociological analysis of Victorian sexuality which Steven Marcus' book, The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-Nineteenth Century England (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), helped to generate. In recent attempts to grapple with the apparent paradoxes and contradictions in the attitudes with which Victorians regarded their experience of sexuality, there has been less emphasis on the Angel in the House/whore dichotomy and on the virtuous Victorian gentleman who also attended brothels, and more of an attempt at trying to discover a relatively "normal" pattern of sexuality in the nineteenth century with, for instance, recognition of the number of seemingly happy, monogamous heterosexual couples well known to Victorian society (in F. Barry Smith's essay, "Sexuality in Britain, 1800-1900," in Martha Vicinus, ed., A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of Victorian Women (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1977) 187). For good examples of the first type of approach see Vicinus (1972); Françoise Basch, Relative Creatures: Victorian in Society and the Novel: 1837-67. Trans. Anthony Rudolf (London: Allen Lane, 1974); Eric Trudgill, Madonnas and Magdalens: The Origins and Development of Victorian Sexual Attitudes (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1976); and George Watt, The Fallen Woman in the Nineteenth-Century English Novel (London: Croom Helm, 1984). For the second approach see Vicinus (1977). Especially enlightening perhaps in understanding Richard Dalloway's attitudes towards women and sexuality is the essay by Carol Christ, "Victorian Masculinity and the Angel in the House,"

sexual conflict within himself between fidelity to his wife and the temptation which Rachel affords him; he tells her that she has "an inestimable power - for good or for evil" (73). The kiss and embrace which follow are not primarily important as being an example of Dalloway's moral violation and hypocrisy, but rather they provide a convenient literary trigger to activate Rachel's sexual fear, and autobiographically they serve as a dim reminder of the far worse abuse which Woolf experienced at the hands of another member of the Mayfair set, her half-brother George Duckworth.

Dalloway's potentially harmless, yet in reality fatal attentions, do their work so effectively because they simultaneously alert Rachel to the fact that powerful male sexual passions exist, as well as incite corresponding passions within her. She is totally unable to deal with the strength of such passions because hitherto she has not been aware that such things existed, let alone within herself. The guilt which the episode generates in Dalloway complicates the sexual issue for Rachel, making sexuality seem to be something frightening and alien:

'You tempt me,' he said. The tone of his voice was terrifying. He seemed choked in fight. They were both trembling (73).

146-62. Virginia Woolf in her autobiographical "A Sketch of the Past" in *Schulkind* 103-4 gives an insight into how she understood Victorian male attitudes towards sexuality. She says that it was Jack Hills, her step-sister's husband, who first spoke to her openly about sex and "the part played by sex in the life of the ordinary man . . . He told me that young men talked incessantly of women; and 'had' them incessantly." According to him, "Sexual relations had nothing to do with honour. Having women was a mere trifle in a man's life . . . and made not a jot of difference to [men's] honourableness." In contrast Woolf had the example of her father who "loved one woman only," and who considered male chastity to be as important as women's. Interestingly Terence Hewet employs some of Jack Hills' terminology about "having" women while being basically sympathetic to their cause; he seems to be a composite figure of these contrasting attitudes.

Rachel's reaction is extreme, but also ambivalent; the thoughts which she forms immediately following this experience, including those relating to her body, justify Trombly's use of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology in his analysis of Rachel, and also plot the future course of her sexuality and the delusions related to it:

She leant upon the rail of the ship, and gradually ceased to feel, for a chill of body and mind crept over her. Far out between the waves little black and white sea-birds were riding. Rising and falling with smooth and graceful movements in the hollows of the waves they seemed singularly detached and unconcerned. 'You're peaceful,' she said. She became peaceful too, at the same time possessed with a strange exultation. Life seemed to hold infinite possibilities she had never guessed at. She leant upon the rail and looked over the troubled grey waters, where the sunlight was fitfully scattered upon the crests of the waves, until she was cold and absolutely calm again. Nevertheless something wonderful had happened (73).

It is typical of Rachel that in a time of crisis she turns to nature to comfort and instruct her. Like the sea-birds she becomes "singularly detached and unconcerned" about her sexuality. Many critics point to the initial lack of feeling which Rachel experiences, the "chill of body and mind" which overcomes her, and relate this to her later sexual anaesthesia seen particularly just before her delirium ensues, but there is another, contrasting element apparent in this passage. Rachel also experiences "a strange exultation": "something wonderful had happened." Dalloway's advance opens her to all that sexuality has to offer, and despite the suddenness and the shock of his kiss, this cannot entirely efface the positive pleasure which it gives her. It is on an unconscious level that she experiences its harmful effects, and in the nightmare sequence which follows the kiss the novel most closely parallels Woolf's own experience with George Duckworth. Rachel may wish to be detached and unconcerned like the sea-birds, but

the waters lapping the ship are "grey" and "troubled." The "Nevertheless" prefixing "something wonderful had happened" shows how deeply ambivalent she is concerning her experience on an unconscious level.

Ambivalence gives way to terror in the dream Rachel has that night. She dreams that she is walking down a long tunnel which is growing gradually narrower so that she could "touch the damp bricks on either side" (74). The tunnel opens and becomes a vault in which she finds herself trapped, and where she also encounters a gibbering "little deformed man" with long nails and a pitted, animal-like face, squatting on the floor. The walls of the vault ooze with damp, and then in a smooth, almost non-transition between Rachel, the character in the dream and Rachel, the dreamer sleeping, the narrator writes:

Still and cold as death she lay, not daring to move, until she broke the agony by tossing herself across the bed, and woke crying 'Oh!' (74).

Rachel, by lying as still as death in her bed, shows that she identifies completely on an unconscious level with her persona in the dream, and thus really fears the "little deformed man" or whatever he symbolizes. Trombly's suggestion that he represents, in Freudian terms, a "taboo libidinal object"⁷ seems unquestionable, particularly because of the context in which he appears, following Dalloway's unprompted and entirely unexpected kiss. Yet the strength of Rachel's terrified response, and the identification that she is already making with death as a response to sexual fear, can be understood only in terms of the autobiographical sub-text of the novel. Critics have repeatedly pointed to passages in Woolf's autobiographical writings, particularly in the pieces -----
7. Trombly 22.

which appear in Moments of Being and in her letters, which describe her childhood and adolescent experience of incest, and have related these to Rachel's sexual anxiety in her first novel. On the whole this critical approach, despite the inherent danger which it contains of "explaining away" the novel purely in terms of a biographical reading, seems justified. Since much of the relevant material in Woolf's writings has been dealt with extensively in criticism of The Voyage Out since Bell's biography appeared in 1972, it seems more useful here, rather than surveying frequently explored critical ground, to take only a cursory glance at some of it, and to seek instead to gauge more carefully the tone in which Woolf discusses these events in her life.

In a letter written by Woolf to her sister Vanessa on [25?] July, 1911, she discusses the reactions of Janet Case, her former Greek teacher, to her disclosure of George Duckworth's "malefactions" towards her. Since Woolf says in the letter that the topic arose in conversation from a discussion with Case on intercourse, one can imagine that George's "malefactions" were no light matter, even if they precluded actual vaginal penetration.⁸ This reference by Woolf, appearing as it does almost incidentally in the course of a regular letter to her sister, makes it difficult to judge the intensity with which Woolf regarded her experience. Vanessa too was a victim of George, and it is clear from the letter that the issue of molestation must have been discussed by the two sisters on several occasions previous to this.

8. LI, 472, 576. Woolf records in "22 Hyde Park Gate" (Schulkind 169) that George Duckworth, according to Jack Hills, lived . . . in complete chastity until his marriage" which seems to place some limit on his attentions towards Woolf. Yet, as Bell comments (I, 43n), "it depends on what one means by complete chastity."

Here, in the detached ironic, comic tone in which Woolf usually composed her letters, she lightly breezes over the subject of incest, making comic mileage out of it:

To my surprise, [Case] has always had an intense dislike of [George Duckworth]; and used to say "Whew - you nasty creature," when he came in and began fondling me over my Greek. When I got to the bedroom scenes, she dropped her lace, and gasped like a benevolent gudgeon. By bedtime she said she was feeling quite sick, and did go to the W.C., which, needless to say, had no water in it (LI 472, 576).

A more detailed account of these "bedroom scenes" appears in "22 Hyde Park Gate," an autobiographical piece which Woolf read to the Memoir Club, a group formed out of the nucleus of the Bloomsbury circle of friends, where memoirs were read at periodical gatherings in the early 1920s. In this particular memoir, after Woolf's depiction of a disastrous evening at the theatre as the companion of an unsuspecting Duckworth at a ribald French play, she describes the midnight scenario which awaited her homecoming:

Sleep had almost come to me. The room was dark. The house silent. Then, creaking stealthily, the door opened; treading gingerly someone entered. "Who?" I cried. "Don't be frightened", George whispered. "And don't turn on the light, oh beloved. Beloved - " and he flung himself on my bed, and took me in his arms (§ 177).

The narrative intriguingly concludes: "Yes, the old ladies of Kensington and Belgravia never knew that George Duckworth was not only father and mother, brother and sister to those poor Stephen girls; he was their lover also" (§ 177).

Once again Woolf's tone is hard to determine, as these excerpts appear in a paper originally read at an informal gathering of friends, the tone of which was (if at all typical of its kind) predominantly comic and light; yet the appellation affixed to George, "lover," seems to indicate a serious note upon which Woolf chose to complete her talk. She repeats her

allegations in another paper read to the Memoir Club soon after this one, "Old Bloomsbury," in which she covers by way of introduction some of the same ground as that in the previous memoir. Here, "long past midnight," on the same evening:

There would be a tap at the door; the light would be turned out and George would fling himself on my bed, cuddling and kissing and otherwise embracing me in order, as he told Dr Savage later, to comfort me for the fatal illness of my father - who was dying three or four storeys lower down of cancer (§ 182).

The note of savage irony is evident here, even through much of the high comedy of this memoir.

"22 Hyde Park Gate" also contains the physical descriptions of George which critics have likened to those of the "little deformed man" with the "pitted, animal-like face" in Rachel's dream in the novel. Once again, it is salutary to stress, in response to many Woolf critics who have not bothered to contextualize, that Woolf is writing in a predominantly comic mode in her memoir presentations; nevertheless, she records that "if you looked at [Duckworth] closely you noticed that one of his ears was pointed; and the other round; you also noticed that though he had the curls of a God and the ears of a faun he had unmistakably the eyes of a pig" (§ 166). The animal metaphors continue later in the same piece, as Woolf describes George's visage upon persuading her to join him in the London upper-class social set:

His face was sallow and scored with innumerable wrinkles, for his skin was as loose and flexible as a pug dog's, and he would express his anguish in the most poignant manner by puckering lines, folds, and creases from forehead to chin (§ 172).

By an unforeseeable progression, acquiescence by Woolf in this first set of Duckworth's demands led to his later sexual licence with her; similarly, Richard Dalloway's promise to send Rachel a copy of one of Burke's works, a purely social and

intellectual exchange, ends in his falling into markedly anti-social and uncerebral activity (72-3). In both cases the comparatively innocent motives of desire for social status and the desire to educate a young girl become confused and proceed to violation.

Possibly the most accurate indication of the attitude with which Woolf regarded her Memoir Club contributions is contained in her diary entry of 26 May 1921, in which she mentions a conversation she had had the day before with Maynard Keynes concerning "22 Hyde Park Gate." He had said that in his opinion this was the best thing which Woolf had written: "You should pretend to write about real people and make it all up." Woolf responds in her diary: "I was dashed of course (and oh dear what nonsense - for if George is my climax I'm a mere scribbler)."⁹ The rider which Woolf appends in brackets demonstrates that her chief anxiety about Keynes' opinion, what, unbracketed, she was "dashed" about, is not that he thinks "22 Hyde Park Gate" her best piece of writing, but that he doubts the veracity of her portrait of George.

Elsewhere¹⁰ Woolf allows herself the liberty to hint at the treachery which she (and Vanessa) underwent at the hands of Duckworth:

under the name of unselfishness he allowed himself to commit acts which a cleverer man would have called tyrannical; and profoundly believing in the purity of his love, he behaved little better than a brute" (§ 58).

Also in a letter to Vanessa dated February 20, 1922, Woolf mentions a conversation she had had with Elena Richmond, the -----
9. DII 121, cited in Schulkind 162.

10. In "Reminiscences" for instance, a biographical sketch of Woolf's mother, her half-sister Stella Duckworth, and her sister Vanessa, begun in 1907 according to Quentin Bell (I 122, mentioned in Schulkind 25) in preparation for the birth of Vanessa's first child.

wife of Bruce Richmond, editor of the Times Literary Supplement, a few days before. The topic of conversation moving to George Duckworth, Woolf felt safe, upon Elena's derision of him, to say that "if she had known all she would have hated him." Upon implying in the letter her revelation of George's incest to Elena, Woolf concludes:

Now she'll tell Bruce, who being a perfect gentleman will probably have to spit in George's face in the Club. Don't you think this is a noble work for our old age - to let the light in upon the Duckworths - and I dare say George will be driven to shoot himself one day when he's shooting rabbits (LII 505, 1218).

All of these references highlight the fact that Duckworth's sexual abuse of Woolf cannot have been a series of trivial incidents, despite the comic/ironic framework in which Woolf couches many of them; the situation is further complicated when one remembers Woolf's mentioning of Gerald Duckworth's exploration of her genital area in "A Sketch of the Past" (§ 69), an event which she later located, in a letter to Ethel Smyth, as having taken place when she was "aged about 6."¹¹

Many of Woolf's references to her molestation bear the mark of a voice which was effectively silenced at the crucial time, a common pattern especially for young victims of sexual abuse, and one can note Woolf's gradual unfolding of volubility on the subject through her veiled reference in her 1907 "Reminiscences"; to her confiding in Janet Case, a relatively close female friend, in 1911; to her semi-comic treatment of the subject among a close group of friends in "22 Hyde Park Gate" (1920-21); to her openness with Elena Richmond in 1922; to her philosophical speculations in letters to Ethel Smyth in the last years of her life, where she mentions both Gerald and -----
11. LVI 460, 3678 (12 Jan., 1941).

her other "incestuous brother."¹² Yet if Woolf was relatively guarded in discussing her personal experience of incest in 1907, the year she began writing her first novel, the subject receives vicarious attention through the figure of Rachel who, the victim of nothing but a carelessly directed kiss and embrace, nevertheless is made to bear the full weight of the vicissitudes of patriarchal injustice and what I will term impersonal fate.

The other important autobiographical references in the Schulkind collection relate to the operation of this impersonal fate, the fate which decided the deaths of four close family members of Woolf within a space of eleven years, and to the connecting link between it and the abuse of the Duckworths - the false atmosphere of gloom and despair which prevailed at 22 Hyde Park Gate, Woolf's childhood home, between her mother's death in 1895 and her father's in 1904. The "Time Passes" section of To the Lighthouse is an obvious attempt by Woolf to come to terms with this period of her life; so too, I believe, is the vicarious "mock death" of Rachel in The Voyage Out, a death which reaches beyond Woolf's nine "dark years"¹³ of 1895 - 1904 to encapsulate, as To the Lighthouse does, the four tragic deaths of Woolf's early life - those of her mother, father, half-sister Stella, and elder brother Toby.

Woolf drew on her experience of the death of close family members to construct the atmosphere which surrounds the death of Rachel in The Voyage Out. In "Reminiscences" she describes

12. LVI 56, 3153 (14 Jul., 1936).

13. Gordon 43 speaks of twenty "dark years" in Woolf's life between 1895 and 1915, but it seems that the death of Woolf's father in 1904 and her move with her brothers and sister to Bloomsbury represent a substantial break with the miseries which she experienced at Hyde Park Gate.

the atmosphere which prevailed at Hyde Park Gate after her mother's death as a "sultry and opaque life which was not felt, had nothing real in it, and yet swam about us, and choked us and blinded us" (§ 45); this finds a place in the novel as the "mist of unreality" (356) which surrounds Terence as he waits for Rachel to die. Actual concrete details of certain responses of Woolf's family towards illness find their way into the novel; the details of an argument between Thoby and Adrian as to whether or not the Portsmouth Road was macadamized through Hindhead, which took place when Vanessa was sick in Greece in 1906, are replicated exactly in an argument between Terence and St. John in the novel (BI 109; TVQ 349).

Throughout her early letters Woolf constantly mentions the ordeal of concerned relatives and friends who haunted Hyde Park Gate during her father's final illness, a situation repeated in the novel as Rachel lies ill, and Woolf describes in "Reminiscences" and "A Sketch of the Past" the corresponding situation following her mother's death. She sums up the effect of her mother's death upon her family in "A Sketch of the Past":

The tragedy of her death was not that it made one, now and then and very intensely, unhappy. It was that it made her unreal; and us solemn, and self-conscious. We were made to act parts that we did not feel; to fumble for words that we did not know. It obscured, it dulled. It made one hypocritical and immeshed in the conventions of sorrow (§ 95).

In the novel this is one of the few situations in which Woolf is able to deflate the strong, poignant correspondence between life and art; she undoes some of the false machinations of her earlier grief by presenting a more realistic approach towards suffering through Terence and St. John's reactions towards Rachel's illness. Terence feels "a desire to escape,

to have done with this suffering, to forget that Rachel was ill" (349) until he reaches a state where "nothing mattered" (350). He experiences a crisis of feeling in which he questions the very substance of feelings and their objects (342). Upon Rachel dying he feels "nothing at all," "Instead of feeling keenly, as he knew that he ought to feel" (359).

St. John has similar responses to Terence in his reactions to Rachel's illness, taking them one step further which his greater distance from her allows him to do, not minding whether she dies or not if only it will relieve the unending strain that the days of her illness have wrought in him, Terence and the inhabitants of the villa. The common elements in both Terence and St. John's experiences are the desire to escape from the situation at hand and the collective absence of feeling: "it seemed to [St. John] that he had no feelings left" (356).

These are affirmations of the more private approach to grief which accompanied Woolf at her mother's death; the reference to the absence of feeling is a theme repeated throughout her work, both fictionally and non-fictionally, significantly in The Years, "A Sketch of the Past," and in Woolf's references in her diaries to her fear of not being able to feel, a fear linked with her insanity.¹⁴ The public approach to grief is represented by "the curtain" which covers Terence, isolating him from the world and resulting in him being unable to see or feel anything clearly (355), yet paradoxically enabling him still to function and perform the

14. Virginia Woolf, The Years (1937; rpt. Frogmore: Granada, 1977) 66, 68; Schulkind 92; DIV 242 (12 Sept., 1934). In To the Lighthouse after Mrs. Ramsay's death, Lily asks herself: "Why be always trying to bring up some feeling she had not got?" (141).

small tasks which he believes will assist in Rachel's recovery. The public approach to grief was taken to ridiculous lengths by Woolf's family as she illustrates in "A Sketch of the Past"; the presentation of death and grief in The Voyage Out is partly an attempt to balance this out as well as an expression of Woolf's coming-to-terms with the four deaths which marred her early life.

The operation of impersonal fate in The Voyage Out - "the force outside [Rachel and Terence] which was separating them" (339) - and the personal abuse of Woolf by her two step-brothers are met in the central symbol of the novel, Rachel's death, by a third element - Woolf's analysis of the patriarchal oppression which existed in the home of her youth. This analysis of patriarchal oppression figures in the novel through the motif of Rachel's death, and partly necessitated its writing as a fictional vehicle for the representation of the flight which Woolf and many women felt in the English middle-class society represented in the novel or under patriarchy generally, the "death-in-life" as Christine Froula terms it,¹⁵ which causes Rachel to die physically as well, and which causes her creator to choose this fate for her as a symptom of the limited possibilities which particularly women writers faced in the forms of narrative closure available to their heroines before the mid-twentieth century. Gillian Beer has commented on this quandary faced by women writers in her discussion of The Mill on the Floss in her essay on George Eliot and Woolf¹⁶;

15. Christine Froula, "Out of the Chrysalis: Female Initiation and Female Authority in Virginia Woolf's The Voyage Out," Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature 5 (1986): 85.

16. Jacobus 80-99. See Beer also for her analysis of how Eliot escaped from the determinism of the limited availability of fictional closures in Daniel Deronda; see also her chapter "Descent and Sexual Selection: Women in Narrative" in

in that novel the heroine Maggie Tulliver dies by drowning, this time in reality and not symbolically, yet both Rachel and Maggie's fates represent the divided loyalties faced by women under patriarchy whether, like Maggie, they choose to identify themselves with it in what Beer calls "an infantile, passionate, incestuous recovery of love,"¹⁷ or whether, like Rachel, they escape from sexual fear and "the momentum of the wedding-bell plot" (G 108). Ironically, both women's fictional solutions have the common denominator of death.

Woolf's analysis of patriarchal oppression, though receiving its most eloquent form in A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas, nevertheless finds a place in her autobiographical writings also, particularly "A Sketch of the Past." In "Reminiscences," Woolf mentions casually in passing "those tyrants and demi-gods who ruled [the] world [of her youth]; George, Waller [Jack Hills], and Madge Symonds" (S 31). Here George's tyranny receives scant attention among the more benevolent figures of Woolf's youth; Woolf is principally concerned in this memoir to convey the effect that Julia Stephen and Stella Duckworth's deaths had on her family and how the various factions within it "threatened to meet in conflict over [Stella's] body" (S 57). This metaphor anticipates the conflicts pendant over Rachel's body: the various signifiers of patriarchy and personal freedom which fight to possess her life, and the personal conflict between Helen and Terence as to their right to her. Through the confusion engendered by Stella's death, George somehow established himself as head of -----
Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983) 210-35.

17. Jacobus 88.

the Stephen household, and thus followed the psychological and sexual abuse wrought upon the Stephen girls. Woolf described George in 1907:

His affections, his character, his soul, as we understood, were immaculate; and daily achieved that uncomfortable and mysterious victory which virtue, in books, achieves over intellect . . . George was in truth, a stupid, good natured young man, of profuse, voluble affections, which during his mother's lifetime were kept in check. When she died however, some restraint seemed to burst; he showed himself so sad, so affectionate, so boundlessly unselfish in his plans, that the voices of all women cried aloud in his praise, and men were touched by his modest virtues . . . Stupid he was, and good natured; but such qualities were not simple; they were modified, confused, distorted, exalted, set swimming in a sea of racing emotions until you were completely at a loss to know where you stood. Nature, we may suppose, had supplied him with abundant animal vigour, but she had neglected to set an efficient brain in control of it. The result was that all the impressions which the good priggish boy took in at school and college remained with him when he was a man; they were not extended, but were liable to be expanded into enormous proportions by violent gusts of passion; and [he] proved more and more incapable of containing them (§ 57, 58).

The dichotomy which Duckworth created between his public mien designed to impress the "old ladies [and gentlemen] of Kensington and Belgravia" (§ 177), and the private injustices which he inflicted upon the Stephen girls, between appearance and reality, must have created confusion in their minds as to the proper bearing of a gentleman or a prospective husband towards young ladies. George also, as presented in the description above, unconsciously caused intellect to be superseded by what was in fact a debased virtue at Hyde Park Gate, and at the parties to which Duckworth wished Woolf to accompany him, her rare intellectual adventures were usually greeted with scorn or shocked horror. Woolf, in later life, blamed Duckworth for "the old complex which the misery of youth stamped on one - the sense of being with people who laugh at the things one cares about."¹⁸ In her analysis of her

18. Letter to Philip Morrell. LII 373, 1065 (30 Jun., 1919),

relationship with Philip Morrell in 1919 she wrote:

you, invariably, produce in me sensations I've not had since I was 18, and dragged by my half brother to a ball, where I knew nobody, couldn't dance, and as for dress, and hair, and conversation . . . I'm certain that I contract once more to the condition of a miserable school-girl; I become rigid; I say priggish things; I fancy that you smile (LII 373, 1065).

It was the derision of intellect by a certain section of the Stephen household which caused Woolf to forge her own intelligence within the privacy of her bedroom; in her description of this room in her 1939-40 memoir, Woolf imagines a "business man from Birmingham" or "lady from Cheltenham up to see the Royal Academy" staying in the guest house into which it was converted, having read To the Lighthouse, A Room of One's Own or The Common Reader, and exclaiming, "This room explains a great deal" (§ 123-4). Within the terms of the novel St. John Hirst represents the derision of women's private experience, particularly in the episode at the dance; Richard Dalloway represents the male abuse of the female body in the episode on the Euphrosyne; and Woolf's room becomes the room in the villa in which Rachel can "play, read, think, defy the world" (122).

The descriptions of the Duckworth brothers which continue in "A Sketch of the Past" again vaguely stress the similarities between them, the "taboo libidinal object" of Rachel's nightmare, and the "very hairy hands" (336), "hairy wrist" (341) and "hairy face" (345) of Dr. Lesage, the quack doctor who treats Rachel initially. As the novel gathers momentum towards Rachel's death, both male and female figures of horror and deformity appear more frequently, among them "little deformed women sitting in archways playing cards" (338) in a tunnel under the Thames, who in a feminist reading of the ----- cited in Trombley 21.

novel may represent the limited possibilities and particular oppressions which women faced in early twentieth-century England, or, as they become Helen and Nurse M^CInnis, the particular oppressions which these women exert upon Rachel. The Duckworths appear in "A Sketch of the Past" with "little brown eyes that were so greedy and twinkling" (§ 97), George Duckworth's eyes being "small" and "stupid" (§ 152). However, it is within a broader analysis of the operation of power within the Stephen household, and within the society at large in which Woolf lived, that these descriptions receive their proper context.

Woolf, in "A Sketch of the Past," in the single instance among her writings, makes a connection between her analysis of patriarchy and her personal experience of its operation, without the need for personae such as she employed in A Room of One's Own, or the cover of fiction. In her description of the Victorian values which both her father and George Duckworth sought to inculcate at Hyde Park Gate, she analyses her father's imbibition of the spirit of his age, and in contrast, Duckworth's slavish acquiescence to the most minute details of the Victorian code and ideal: "No more perfect fossil of the Victorian age could exist" (§ 151). She explicates further:

while father preserved the framework of 1860, George filled in the framework with all kinds of minutely-teethed saws; and the machine into which our rebellious bodies were inserted in 1900 not only held us tight in its framework, but bit into us with innumerable sharp teeth (§ 151-2).

This image of the Victorian patriarchal machine is used elsewhere in Woolf's memoir to describe the extraordinary advantages which men held over women in this age, particularly in regard to educational and vocational opportunities; she reflects on the life of her uncle-by-marriage on her mother's

side of the family:

What, I asked myself, when I read Herbert Fisher's autobiography the other day, would Herbert have been without Winchester, New College and the Cabinet? What would have been his shape had he not been stamped and moulded by that great patriarchal machine? (§ 153).

In juxtaposition to this, Woolf describes the position she and her sister were expected to hold towards intellectual achievement:

We were only asked to admire and applaud when our male relations went through the different figures of the intellectual game (§ 153).

Woolf analyses the particular nature of the power which Duckworth held over her, taking into account the sixteen-year age-difference between them, the discrepancy between their power of earning ("he had [a] thousand pounds [a] year whereas I had fifty" (§ 152)) and, in a phrase deleted from the final version of the "A Sketch of the Past" manuscript, perhaps the most telling and subtle comment on the power-relationship existing between them, "he gave us presents" (§ 152n). She sums up succinctly the combined effect which these various displays of power had upon her:

I must obey because he had force - age, wealth, tradition - behind him (§ 154).

This obedience did not just take a personal form - to George himself - but implied an obedience to the whole patriarchal order of which he was a representative. Women too were implicated in this system. Woolf describes how in considering whether she should succumb to George's requests for her to accompany him to his simultaneously boring and terrifying society parties, the "ghosts of mother and Stella presided" over the "turbulent whirlpool" of duty and emotion which dictated that Woolf should attend, and did: "How could we do battle with all of them?" (§ 156). No doubt Woolf felt

keenly the pressure of her mother's dictates, refined by death, some of which found expression through the ethos of the feminine ideal of Mrs. Ramsay in To the Lighthouse, who stands in opposition to her daughter Nancy in her approach to relating to men:

[Mrs. Ramsay] had the whole of the other sex under her protection; for reasons she could not explain, for their chivalry and valour, for the fact that they negotiated treaties, ruled India, controlled finance; finally for an attitude towards herself which no woman could fail to feel or to find agreeable, something trustful, childlike, reverential; which an old woman could take from a young man without loss of dignity; and woe betide the girl - pray Heaven it was none of her daughters! - who did not feel the worth of it, and all that it implied, to the marrow of her bones (TTL 11).

The obverse side of this seemingly unimpeachable ideal was the actual concrete situation which Woolf experienced in her youth at Hyde Park Gate, where she "felt like an unfortunate minnow shut up in the same tank with an unwieldy and turbulent whale" (§ 169), the whale of course being George Duckworth. Rachel is more fortunate in her experience with Richard Dalloway in the novel, who is subtly linked to Duckworth by means of the Austen novel Persuasion in which he hears of "Sir Walter Elliot, of Kellynch Hall, in Somersetshire . . . who . . . never took up any book but the Baronetage," Somersetshire being the Duckworths' ancestral home (59). Mitchell Leaska has noted another subtle reference to Duckworth in the novel through the mouth of Dalloway; Dalloway comments that the deadliest perils for a ship on a voyage are Sedgius acquatici, which he took "to be a kind of duckweed."¹⁹ It is significant that in the further example which Leaska supplies of this recurring image in Woolf's fiction, Woolf at the very

19. TVQ 38; Mitchell A. Leaska, "Virginia Woolf: the Pargeter: A Reading of The Years," Bulletin of the New York Public Library 80.2 (1977): 181, cited in Gordon 302.

end of her career is seen to be still intrigued by the theme of purity strangled by pollution. In Between the Acts Isa imagines the "snow-white breast" of the farmer Haines, whom she loves from a distance, "circled with a tangle of dirty duckweed" which represents the unfulfilling relationship he shares with his wife.²⁰

Woolf killed off the Rachel-half of her personality (in Rose's formulation) through the writing of The Voyage Out, but as many critics have suggested, the Terence-half, the writing self, lived on. In "A Sketch of the Past," Woolf described the life of her early adolescence, in which she had to cope with the deaths of her mother and step-sister, in terms of

the intensity, the muffled intensity, which a butterfly or moth feels when with its sticky tremulous legs and antennae it pushes out of the chrysalis and emerges and sits quivering beside the broken case for a moment; its wings still creased; its eyes dazzled; incapable of flight (§ 124).

She writes that at the time of Stella's death her wings were still creased and she was "sitting there on the edge of my broken chrysalis" (§ 124). The chrysalis being broken, there remained only one direction for Woolf to advance; the possibilities afforded by the butterfly symbol are taken up by Rachel in Chapter 13 of The Voyage Out as this elusive figure comes to represent the possibilities of love, and of life and death. The moth appears again in the last chapter of the novel, having outlived the exhaustion by Rachel of the three fictional possibilities which it offered. It can be seen as a survival mechanism placed within the novel by Woolf; in

20. Virginia Woolf, Between the Acts (1941; rpt. Frogmore: Granada, 1978) 8; Leaska 181; Gordon 302.

its aspect of, in Richter's analysis,²¹ symbolizing the creative imagination, it flies beyond the novel to design the works of Woolf's later artistic maturity.

21. Harvena Richter, "Hunting the Moth: Virginia Woolf and the Creative Imagination," in Virginia Woolf: Revaluation and Continuity, ed. Ralph Freedman (Berkeley: U of California P, 1980), 13-28, cited in Froula 86.

CONCLUSION

If a moth can be used as a figure for the creative imagination of Woolf outlasting her first fiction, and Derrida's concept of the floating signifier can illuminate the fate of the signifier "Rachel" in the hands of this century's critics, the figure of the stone rejected by the builders becoming the cornerstone of late twentieth-century Woolf criticism is apt when one considers the recent status afforded The Voyage Out. The Voyage Out is now regarded by most critics more favourably than it has ever been, except perhaps in the few years before Woolf's experimental fiction began to be published and critics began to debate the worth of Woolf as a writer from this broader perspective. It is now considered chiefly as an important first novel, indispensable for an understanding of Woolf's later novelistic innovations, and, with its wealth of allusion, situated in a convenient position for critics to sum up the major influences on Woolf's writing from the first thirty-one years of her life. In these concluding pages I wish to suggest some future directions which Woolf, and particularly Voyage Out, criticism could take over the next decade, in the context of a summation of my own position(s) in this thesis.

Much critical endeavour over the past decade has looked to Woolf's literary heritage as a useful tool to illuminate aspects of her novels, and possibilities still latent for research exist in this area. Louise DeSalvo (1980) made great inroads into this field by her extensive investigations into what Woolf was reading during, or had read previous to, her composition of The Voyage Out. Eric Warner in the same year submitted his D.Phil. thesis which investigated Romantic

preoccupations in Woolf's work. Gillian Beer in her article "Virginia Woolf and Pre-history"¹ has discussed evolutionary ideas and motifs in Woolf's first novel which link her in yet another significant way to nineteenth-century writers, this time George Eliot, Hardy and the vast mass of popular evolutionary authors. Janis Paul (1987) further seeks to establish a strong link between Woolf and the nineteenth century. Finally, Alice Fox has recently (1990) published a book-length study of Woolf's associations with the literature of the English Renaissance, associations discussed by critics as early as Holtby (1932) and forming a large number of the allusions gathered by DeSalvo which made their way into The Voyage Out or its various drafts.

In this context, an obvious area for further research by Woolf scholars, apart from the renewed interest in her links with the nineteenth century, is her associations with eighteenth-century writers. In The Voyage Out alone, reference is made to Cowper, Fielding, Burke, Gibbon, Defoe, Pope, Swift, Johnson and Addison. Woolf's essays on the novel such as "Phases of Fiction" (GR 93-145) clearly show an appreciation of eighteenth-century fiction and acknowledge the continuance of its stylistic properties in later European fiction. Whereas the narrator of Woolf's Orlando discovers the "unparalleled brilliance" of eighteenth-century society to have the "force of illusion," nevertheless she revels in the "light, order, and serenity" of the age before the cloud of the nineteenth century settles.² Reference sources such as Brenda R. Silver's

Virginia Woolf's Reading Notebooks (1982), Elizabeth Steele's

1. Warner 99-123.

2. Virginia Woolf, Orlando: A Biography (1928; Frogmore: Granada, 1977) 121, 125, 140.

Virginia Woolf's Literary Sources and Allusions (1983) and Virginia Woolf's Rediscovered Essays: Sources and Allusions (1987), and Andrew McNeillie's six-volume edition of Woolf's complete essays (in progress) will be indispensable tools for such a critical project.³

The second major untapped source of material for Woolf scholars is her diaries and letters. Although ostensibly available in complete versions since the early '80s, in reality new Woolf letters continue to be found, as witnessed by the publication in 1989 of Congenial Spirits, which contains twelve new letters found subsequent to the new batch published in Modern Fiction Studies in 1984,⁴ itself only a selection of the one hundred or so found between then and 1980. Whereas Woolf's mature diaries (1915-41) have existed in a reliable edition since 1984, nevertheless her early journals, once again, were only published in 1989. Much material in the whole range of Woolf's autobiographical writings lies waiting for appropriation, as for Woolf, perhaps more than for any other English writer, large traces of her life (I use the Derridean term advisedly) remain in print, and themselves point to discourse upon discourse hitherto unexplored in relation to her novels.

The third major field of critical endeavour lies in the theoretical realm. Countless possibilities suggest themselves here. To adumbrate one, in relation to a woman who said she

3. Elizabeth Steele, Virginia Woolf's Literary Sources and Allusions: A Guide to the Essays (New York: Garland, 1983) and Virginia Woolf's Rediscovered Essays: Sources and Allusions (New York: Garland, 1987); Andrew McNeillie, The Essays of Virginia Woolf (London: The Hogarth Press, 1986-).

4. Virginia Woolf, Congenial Spirits: The Selected Letters of Virginia Woolf. Ed. Joanne Trautmann Banks (London: The Hogarth Press, 1989) and "Some New Woolf Letters," ed. Joanne Trautmann Banks. Modern Fiction Studies 30 (1984): 175-202.

had been attracted to only two men in her life, neither of whom was her husband, with whom all sexual relations had stopped, it seems, shortly after their marriage, and who had had one major physical love-affair with a woman and several affairs of the heart and mind, lesbian feminist theory and criticism has been conspicuous by its absence in Woolf studies. Woolf's statement in "Professions for Women" of her difficulty in transmuting her experiences as a body into fiction (DOM 153) would seem to be a crucial theoretical starting-point here; in her diaries no account of personal heterosexual passion exists, but on several occasions she describes lesbian feelings or her ability to know, on one occasion, what a man would feel in relation to a particular woman to whom she was attracted. The lesbian material contained in The Voyage Out and particularly its earlier drafts, the Sally Seton episode in Mrs. Dalloway as contrasted with the barren relationship Clarissa shares with her husband, the androgyny of Lily Briscoe in To the Lighthouse and her love for Mrs. Ramsay, the creative bisexuality of Orlando and the emancipatory independence of Miss La Trobe in Between the Acts are all grist for the mill of lesbian scholarship, a necessary palliative from the juicy sexual anecdotes of the Bloomsbury industry.

A second major possibility of theoretical activity in relation to Woolf will continue to be the work of French philosophers and semioticians, feminist or otherwise, and here Michèle Le Doeuff's work on the "philosophical imaginary"⁵ could be instructive when applied to Woolf. Whereas Le Doeuff concentrates particularly on the deconstruction of philosophical texts through an analysis of their metaphoricity,

5. See Elizabeth Grosz, Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists (Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1989) 184-203.

which has been traditionally fenced off from the "pure thought" or "pure philosophy" found in these texts, in Woolf's case a study of similar figures she employs in texts presumably as disparate as her fiction, her criticism and essays such as A Room of One's Own, and of their functions in these various texts, could reap rewarding insights.

Whereas post-structural thought has deeply influenced English studies as a whole, Virginia Woolf criticism has often remained surprisingly conservative. I see a positive future for it in a linking of the now somewhat outdated concept of "scholarship" with challenging new readings of Woolf's texts which explore postmodern concepts of language, textuality and the self. In this light discourses such as neo-historicism and a revamped concept of biographical criticism seem to offer the greatest hope for a criticism which need not render its author totally dead, but instead can avoid the excesses of some of its progenitors. In this context, my thesis has sought to open up The Voyage Out to a number of relevant discourses which converge upon its central event, the death of Rachel Vinrace. In this way the richness of Woolf's text as viewed by a single critic with a finite historical perspective has been brought out. New stories are already fighting to surface; thus criticism, as a self-replicating activity which also gives birth to its Other, will continue to keep Woolf's novels alive its very divisions and differences from itself.

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