THE POETICS OF VIRGINIA WOOLF'S FICTION: TIME, SPACE, AND THE MATERIAL WORLD

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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DECLARATION

Versions of some chapters of this thesis have appeared / will appear in journals, specifically, Chapter 1 in *Virginia Woolf Bulletin* 26 (2007); Chapter 2 in *English Studies* 89 (2008); and Chapter 3 in *Virginia Woolf Review* 22 (2005).

ABSTRACT

The second Industrial Revolution at the turn of the twentieth century complicated temporal and spatial perceptions. Time and space came to be understood as heterogeneous and multiple. This perceptual complexity was rendered in many modernists' works, which produced a common "rhythm" among their fictional worlds: the alternation between distance and proximity. Like her contemporaries, Virginia Woolf employs in her fiction a number of material motifs involving this modern rhythm in order to investigate the change in perception. These motifs include traditional as well as technological objects and activities, producing a fictional world that diverges from those of her contemporaries.

This study argues that Woolf's experimentation with material motifs reflects her ambivalence towards the preceding and her own generations; and that she employs these two kinds of motif to draw attention to a new sense of the complexity of the issue of change and continuity. Practically, her motifs—whether traditional or technological—function beyond their original time- and space-bound existence, interpenetrating one another and complicating the relationship between past and present, near and far. This transgression of the boundaries undermines both the authoritarian view of the world aided by the advent of technology and the Enlightenment notion of time in which the past has hegemonic effects upon the present.

Chapter 1 investigates the function of the telephone in association with books and portraits in Woolf's attempt to represent the new world and the generation of a modern ideology. Chapter 2 focuses on women knitting, exploring the motif's oscillation between a representation of Victorian womanhood characterised by reticence and detachment, and a modern, expressive feminine figure. Chapter 3 deals with the searchlight, discussing its oscillation between a military weapon and two traditional devices for aiding sight, thus both integrating and separating spatial and temporal distances. Chapter 4 explores the alternation in the description of the empty summer home in *To the Lighthouse*, between a storehouse of Victorian memories and the embryo of a new life, and discusses it as a paradigm of Woolf's modernist universe.

ABBREVIATIONS AND REFERENCES

All references to the following books in the text are to these editions unless otherwise indicated.

AROO	*A Room of One's Own/Three Guineas*, ed. Michèle Barrett (London: Penguin, 2000)
BA	*Between the Acts* (London: Hogarth Press, 1941)
CH	*Virginia Woolf: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Robin Majumdar and Allen McLaurin (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975)
CR 1	*The Common Reader: First Series*, ed. Andrew McNeillie (San Diego: Harvest/Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984)
CR 2	*The Second Common Reader*, ed. Andrew McNeillie (San Diego: Harvest/Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986)
CSF	*The Complete Shorter Fiction of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Susan Dick (San Diego: Harvest/Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989)
*D*1-5	*The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Anne Olivier Bell and Andrew McNeillie, 5 vols (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979-85)
*E*1-4	*The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Andrew McNeillie, 4 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1986-94)
F	*Flush: A Biography* (London: Hogarth Press, 1958)
JR	*Jacob's Room* (London: Hogarth Press, 1960)
JRH	*Virginia Woolf's Jacob's Room: The Holograph Draft*, transcribed and ed. Edward L. Bishop (New York: Pace UP, 1998)

*L*1-6	*The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann, 6 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1975-80).
MD	*Mrs. Dalloway* (London: Hogarth Press, 1980)
MOB	*Moments of Being*, ed. Jeanne Schulkind (London: Pimlico, 2002)
ND	*Night and Day* (London: Hogarth Press, 1960)
O	*Orlando: A Biography* (London: Hogarth Press, 1960)
TL	*To the Lighthouse* (London: Hogarth Press, 1960)
TLH	*To the Lighthouse: The Original Holograph Draft*, transcribed and ed. Susan Dick (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1982)
VO	*The Voyage Out* (London: Hogarth Press, 1957)
W	*The Waves* (London: Hogarth Press, 1960)
Y	*The Years* (London: Hogarth Press, 1958)

Full references to other works are given in the Bibliography.

INTRODUCTION

In a letter to Vita Sackville-West in 1926, Virginia Woolf writes:

> Style is a very simple matter; it is all rhythm. Once you get that, you can't use the wrong words. But on the other hand here am I sitting after half the morning, crammed with ideas, and visions, and so on, and can't dislodge them, for lack of the right rhythm. Now this is very profound, what rhythm is, and goes far deeper than words. A sight, an emotion, creates this wave in the mind, long before it makes words to fit it; and in writing (such is my present belief) one has to recapture this, and set this working (which has nothing apparently to do with words) and then, as it breaks and tumbles in the mind, it makes words to fit it: But no doubt I shall think differently next year. (*L*3: 247)

Although here Woolf anticipates a change of mind as to the significance of rhythm in her practice of writing—if not the loss of her "belief" in it—rhythm was to become a backbone of an important aspect of her poetics of fiction. Four years later, in 1930, when composing *The Waves*, Woolf confides in Ethel Smyth: "I am writing to a rhythm and not to a plot" (*L*4: 204). Also, although Woolf here means by "rhythm" only a physical sensation in her practice of writing, her statement recalls—as she herself acknowledges the profundity of the issue of rhythm—the series of pairs of contradictory notions and conditions in Woolf's fictional and non-fictional works: up and down, inner and outer, solid and fluid, evanescent and permanent, light and darkness, sound and silence, unity and disunity, and so forth. Some of them form binary rhythms of language; others

form those of content. Indeed, it may hardly be an exaggeration to say that every pair of these opposite concepts which permeate the Woolfian world is produced on the basis of, or at least, associated with, her notion of physical rhythm.

In the critical literature, Woolf's appreciation of interchanging rhythm has often been regarded as presenting a conjunction of her art and feminist thought. This trend was, indisputably, produced by feminist readings which were largely fostered by Julia Kristeva and have developed over the past two decades. They note rhythmical patterns in Woolf's texts which were more prominent than in the works of many of her male modernist contemporaries, relating their use to her feminist politics. Makiko Minow-Pinkney, among other critics, sees Woolfian rhythm as significant for her attempt to redefine subjectivity. By pointing to the primordial feature of rhythm implicit in her writing, Minow-Pinkey reveals its potential for overturning the authoritative power of language and representation in literature.[1] Feminist critics' contribution to Woolf studies cannot be overestimated, especially in that they have opened up Woolf's texts, some of which were previously considered apolitical and isolated, to the possibility of various interpretations related to

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[1] See Minow-Pinkney, *Problem of the Subject* 187-96. Laurence also observes: "Her [Woolf's] conscious use of rhythm is a kind of meta-syntax that relieves the oppressiveness of 'words with short wings for their heavy body of meaning' (*Complete Shorter Fiction*, p. 88) [. . .]" (*Silence* 170). Stonebridge's recent study continues this argument, yet makes amendments to it at the same time.

socio-political issues in her time.[2]

Yet this does not mean that this trend is altogether unproblematic. Feminist readings of Woolf's works have "absorbed" various dimensions of Woolfian rhythm, some of which could have been explored in other ways. Feminist approaches have become so dominant in reading Woolf that when encountering rhythmic patterns in her texts, one is tempted to explain them as representations of "écriture féminine." This seems to undermine the dynamic nature of the issue of rhythm in Woolf's aesthetic.

One possible solution to this debilitation is to reconsider Woolfian rhythm in relation to a shared modernist background. As will be discussed later, the early twentieth century saw the advent of the second Industrial Revolution.[3] Technological advances brought about changes in human life, especially in the urban life which generated modernists and became popular settings of their works.

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[2] It should be noted that the discussion of Woolf and feminism itself had long existed when the second-wave feminist criticism flourished in the 1970s and the 1980s. Laura Marcus observes that "[t]he question of Woolf's 'feminism' played a central role in the earliest critical discussions of her work" ("Feminism" 225), taking up as examples the feminist critic Winifred Holtby's book, *Virginia Woolf: A Critical Memoir* (1932) and E. M. Forster's unfavourable comment (1941) on Woolf's overtly feminist polemic *Three Guineas*. Yet it was not until the advent of 1970s and 1980s feminist criticism that any complexity was added to socio-political interpretations of Woolf's texts.

[3] The origin of this term is explained by Minow-Pinkney ("Age of Motor Cars" 159). Schleifer also uses this term, in his detailed study of cultural and social phenomena in early twentieth-century Europe. He defines it as "the powerful revolution in culture, experience, and social organization" associated with technological development in Western countries at the turn of the twentieth century (x).

Significantly, as will be explored further in a later discussion, complicated perception in modern life produced a common "rhythm"—a rhythm of content, not of language—among modernists' works: an alternation between distance and proximity in time and space. This "modern rhythm" is particularly important for Woolf, given that her experimentation in fiction stems from an awareness of the complexity of urban life and its complication of the perception of the world.[4] When situating our current problem in this context, we may pose some questions: how does Woolf work out this modern rhythm in the structuring of her works?; further, how can we relate her way of incorporating the rhythm into her concern with social issues in her time? These questions bring our investigation of Woolfian rhythm back to a close analysis of each individual text by Woolf, rather than relating it first to any theoretical frameworks.

To be sure, this social phenomenon—the second Industrial Revolution—itself is intimately related to the advent of the concept of feminism. Therefore, it is hardly possible to elude traces of feminist consciousness in this approach to Woolf's texts. The purpose of this thesis is not to shun the influence of feminism, but rather to

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[4] Woolf believed that human minds were becoming more complex, because of the development, and prevalence of, technological tools in living environments, and that, accordingly, it is necessary to alter ways of creating fiction. In "Poetry, Fiction and the Future" (1927), for example, she describes "modern men" as living in separate "boxes" to "insure some privacy," yet being "linked to [their] fellows by wires which pass overhead, by waves of sound which pour through the roof and speak aloud to [them] of battles and murders and strikes and revolutions all over the world" (*E*4: 432-33).

integrate it as part of our discussion. At the same time, this thesis seeks to avoid explaining any findings in convenient jargon, exemplified for instance by the phrase "écriture féminine." Since the modern rhythm we are investigating—the alternation of distance and proximity—is a phenomenon related to material, quotidian life as well as to visions and intellectual life, an exploration of its presentation in the Woolfian world will, at least, divert our urge to relate our findings directly to theories, of whatever kind.

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Like many other modernist writers and critics, Woolf believed that human perception of time and space underwent a dramatic transformation at the turn of the twentieth century. And, like her contemporaries, she adopts in her fiction a number of material phenomena—objects, conditions, and activities—involving the concepts of proximity and distance as motifs with which to investigate the perceptual change. The motifs adopted in her fiction for this purpose may be roughly divided into two: motifs of the present—the technological—and of the past—the traditional. The former type of material motif is common in modernist fiction, while the latter is more specific to the Woolfian world. The use of technological motifs is associated with the cultural and social context shared by modernist contemporaries, while the use of traditional motifs is related to Woolf's personal background and her unique status as a modernist. To explore these points, let us examine them separately.

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The last decade of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century saw, as many historians have observed, a remarkable change in temporal and spatial perceptions.[5] Newly developed technologies engendered a number of new media and inventions, such as the telegraph, phonograph, cinema, and telephone. They were introduced firstly to government and public institutions, and then gradually permeated the lives of ordinary people. With their ability to record, store, and transmit voices and sounds (and, in the case of the cinema, visual images), these inventions presented different times and spaces as fused into actual life. In effect, they changed the notion of time as homogeneous, linear, and irreversible: time was rediscovered as heterogeneous and reversible. And space came to be understood as multiple rather than, as had until then been assumed, single and unvaried.

It is common knowledge that the period of the popularisation of these technological inventions corresponds to the flowering of modernism on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Writers in Europe and America at that time attempted to render new human experience, particularly in the urban environment, by adopting electrical and other inventions as motifs in the creation of their fictional worlds, to give the simplest example of their methods. A common feature of modernists' experimentation is that the newly gained bodily experiences of time and space are rendered as alternate senses of

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[5] See, for example, Kern 10-35, 131-80.

closeness and separation. Ford Madox Ford's *A Call* centres on an incident involving a mysterious phone call received by Dudley Leicester. Dudley is with his former lover in her house when the telephone rings and he answers it. Later, Dudley regrets this act, imagining that his illicit love affair has been discovered by the anonymous caller. His anxiety stems from a complicated sense of the seeing and the hearing produced by the telephone; being invisible to each other yet hearing each other's voices in close proximity, two speakers on the phone are easily driven into their personal fantasies. In this case, the invisible caller, with his oscillating existence between the uncertain and the certain, embodies the vague fear of detection Dudley has at that moment. A famous episode in Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* is also concerned with the telephone. While talking with his grandmother by phone, Marcel has a curious perceptual experience: his grandmother's voice reveals to him a usually latent aspect of her personality, enabling him to gain immediate access to her. At the same time, her disembodied voice seems to him to suggest the insurmountable boundary between them, foretelling her death in the near future.

In Joyce's *Ulysses*, Bloom entertains the fantasy of the dead communicating with the living by telephone in their graves, thus blurring the distinction between the dead and the living, the past and the present, across time and space. Yet a salient characteristic of Joyce's narrative is "[t]he dissociation of the visual and the aural," the sense of the autonomy of sight and hearing generated by new

technologies (Danius, "Orpheus and the Machine" 135). Thus, the fictional worlds of many modernists are characterised by the experience of interchanging senses of proximity and distance.

This formula also applies to Woolf's fictional works. As if reflecting her own urban life, her novels are saturated with motifs of modern inventions, such as the telephone, car, omnibus, taxi, and train. In *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), an expensive car appears in the city street. It arouses a sense of awe and reverence in all those who are observing its passage, thereby uniting them. Yet also, by representing the pinnacle of the British social class, the car points to the hierarchical structure of the social system, in which people are strictly categorised. This event is soon followed by a scene involving an aeroplane, which suddenly appears in the sky above the city, drawing the attention of many people with its skywriting. The aeroplane thus unites the feelings of the people through the act of gazing, yet displays distinctions among them at the same time: the letters written in the sky convey not the same meaning, but different messages to each of them. *To the Lighthouse* (1927) sees William Bankes talking with Mrs. Ramsay by phone; all the while, he is torn between a sense of closeness to her—for they are talking about an ordinary matter—and a sense of her inaccessibility—for the invisibility of Mrs. Ramsay brings to Bankes the perfect image of her ethereal beauty. It seems that Woolf shares the modernist trend of attempting to render human perception complicated in the technological world by means of several motifs involving late

nineteenth- and early twentieth-century inventions. Set in the age of technological innovation, her fictional world, like that of her fellow modernists, is inhabited by the alternating rhythms of proximity and distance.

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Yet it is also noteworthy that Woolf's fictional world is not completely modern: there exists the other type of material motifs in her fiction—motifs belonging to former generations, such as carriages, books, and portraits. And more importantly, these traditional motifs are also associated with the investigation of changes in the perception of time and space. Like technological motifs, these motifs produce the alternation of closeness and separateness in human relationships in the Woolfian world. For example, books are mentioned and cited by many of her characters in their conversations with other people, in order to broach a private matter in an indirect manner. In *Flush* (1933), the carriage enables Elizabeth Barrett and her servant Wilson quickly to leave Wimpole Street, their refined living district, to rush to Whitechapel, a London slum, yet the speedy travel also makes them immediately notice a remarkable difference between the world they discover and their own world, and soon draws them back to their own place. Although the critical literature has pointed out the Victorian strand of the Woolfian world by, for instance, noting the inclusion of Victorians in Woolf's fiction, little attention has been drawn to her way of taking up traditional motifs accompanying these Victorians, let alone possible relationships

between the "old" and "new" material motifs in her fiction.

My contention is that Woolf renders new human perceptions produced in the contemporary world by investigating senses of closeness and separation in time and space, thereby aligning herself with other modernists' experimentation in fiction, yet also complicates the attempt. She uses not only motifs of material phenomena of the present as do many of her contemporaries, but also those of the past. This study aims to explore an aspect of Woolf's modernist poetics of time and space through an analysis of her use of traditional and modern motifs. Before turning to our targeted motifs, further exploration is required of the idiosyncrasy of the Woolfian world.

Two aspects of Woolf's life and writing are relevant to our present discussion: the autobiographical and the aesthetic. Since they are related to each other, they are dealt with together in the following investigation.

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The fact that Woolf's relationship with the Victorian age is ambivalent rather than, as one might expect in a modernist, antagonistic, is now widely acknowledged. In 1980, Virginia R. Hyman observed that despite the common assumption that Woolf's aesthetic as a modernist was opposed to that of the preceding generation, Woolf as a literary critic inherited her father's way of evaluating literary works. Woolf placed emphasis, as did Leslie Stephen, on "the moral value of literature and the social role of the

critic," not hesitating to reveal her own sense of values when assessing each individual work (147). So Hyman concludes: "[H]er criticism exemplifies her conscious attempt to preserve the best traditions of English fiction by reasserting the critical values that she had inherited from her father" (152). Eight years later, this Victorian strand of Woolf's thought was traced by Gillian Beer in her writing career as a whole. "Woolf did not simply reject the Victorians and their concerns, or renounce them," states Beer. "Instead she persistingly rewrote them [in her fiction]" ("The Victorians" 215-16). Taking up Woolf's satire on the Victorian age in *Orlando* ("The Victorians" 220), for example, Beer regards it as a "pastiche" of John Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, intended to demonstrate both her detachment from the Victorians and "collusion and celebration [with and of them]" ("The Victorians" 222).

In *Flush*, her quasi-biography of a cocker spaniel in the Victorian era, Woolf, according to Beer, aimed at disclosing "the censored version of the past" through the spaniel's unrefined senses, thereby "releas[ing] the Victorians from the stodginess of self-approval," that is, their conventional way of depicting their lives in an exaggerated form ("The Victorians" 225, 227).[6] This argument

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[6] Another example of Woolf's ambivalent relationships with the Victorians is found in Shires' argument about Tennyson's literary influence upon Woolf. Like Tennyson, Woolf, according to Shires, was "eager to record the flux of experience," exploring ways of rendering the unstable nature of subjectivity (21). Yet her experiment in this respect was not as extreme as Tennyson's. Even *The Waves*, Woolf's most remarkable exploration of fluidity, "accepts stasis and a centralized authority," yearning for "a core of unity" (23, 24).

was underlined in Hermione Lee's biography, *Virginia Woolf* (1996), in which she traced Woolf's half-modern, half-Victorian characteristics back to her childhood environment. Lee's biography elucidates Woolf's relationship not only with Leslie Stephen, but also with the entire Victorian household in her childhood. More recently, Michael Holroyd has pointed out that Woolf had an affinity with Lytton Strachey as a writer "on the border-line between the new and the old" (29), a writer who called into question the Victorian "belletrist" form of biography by disclosing hidden aspects of a number of Victorian lives with his unrestricted "deviant fantasy" (37).

Despite her manifold affiliations with the preceding generation, it is common knowledge that Woolf also showed great curiosity about contemporary issues, especially the technological innovations introduced since the end of the nineteenth century. In her 1996 essay, "Physics, Sound, and Substance: Later Woolf," Beer pointed out that Woolf's experimentation in fiction from the middle of her career onwards was intimately related to "the new physics" of the 1920s and the 1930s, which is represented by Albert Einstein, Arthur Eddington, and James Jeans. It was a groundbreaking claim, for it had until then been believed that one of Woolf's limitations was her indifference to technological matters. This position was soon echoed by other critics and scholars. *Virginia Woolf in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (2000), edited by Pamela Caughie, partly discusses possible relationships between Woolf's aesthetic and the advent of

new technological inventions. More recently, Michael Whitworth has published *Virginia Woolf* as part of the Authors in Context Series, relating Woolf's works to contemporary phenomena, including new discoveries in science. The publication of the book as an Oxford World's Classic, an edition available to a large academic readership, seems to suggest that the relationship between Woolf and contemporary science and technology has become one of the key issues in Woolf criticism.

Yet it is important to note that Woolf, again, did not uncritically accept every aspect of new technologies. As several contributors to *Mechanical Reproduction* suggest,[7] and Whitworth clearly observes, Woolf was politically cautious of their possible pro-war functions, as exemplified in the use of telecommunications for augmenting authoritarian power.[8] This attitude is often explained in terms of her position as a feminist, a position which attributes the idea of imperialism and fascism prevailing in European countries in the 1930s to the patriarchal social system advocating totalisation and authoritarianism. (There is another reason for Woolf's critical attitude towards technologies, which will be explored in Chapter 1.) Thus, Woolf's relationship with contemporary technology is, as is her relation with the Victorian age, ambivalent.

Fascinated by the new phenomena brought about by the advent of new technologies, on the one hand, Woolf "deviate[s] from the

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[7] See, for example, Scott, Cuddy-Keane, Minow-Pinkney.
[8] Whitworth, "Woolf's Web."

prevalent literary discourse of her time, which condemns the contemporary age as 'a barren and exhausted age' and advises that 'we must look back with envy to the past'" (Minow-Pinkney, "Age of Motor Cars" 180). Yet her feminist position (and another reason that will later become explicit) also distance her from the cult of technology—a phenomenon among the general public in her time. On the other hand, as a half-Victorian, she shared several thoughts and ideas with the preceding generation, but, again, not without criticism of them. Thus, Woolf's position as a writer was poised between the Moderns and the Victorians. At first sight, this seems to provide a plausible explanation of the disparity between her modernist aesthetic and her employment of traditional motifs in her fiction. That is, her hopeful view of the new experience generated by technologies makes her art of fiction modern, but on the other hand, her scepticism about the uses to which they might be put makes her fictional world not completely new, retaining some characteristics of the world of the preceding generation.

If we again note, however, the fact that Woolf's use of traditional material motifs is not an indication of her retrogression, but an aspect of her modernism (remember my earlier statement that her traditional motifs function in the same way as her technological motifs), we may offer a more complex reason for her inclusion of "old" material motifs as well as "new" motifs in the creation of her modernist world. For this purpose, we will further explore Woolf's relationships with the past and the present through an examination

of her complicated treatment of the contemporary and the earlier material worlds.

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Although Woolf was interested in depicting the real world of material phenomena, there is a common consensus that she did not limit what these phenomena could suggest. In a letter to Roger Fry, who asks her what the lighthouse means in *To the Lighthouse*, she writes that she "meant *nothing* by The Lighthouse. [. . .] I saw that all sorts of feelings would accrue to this, but I refused to think them out, and trusted that people would make it the deposit for their own emotions [. . .]" (*L*3: 385). Woolf thus leaves the meaning of her material motifs undefined, handing over the right to decide to her readers. This suggests that material motifs in her fiction are real substances set in a particular place in a particular age, yet at the same time resonate with symbolic connotations.

Rachel Bowlby's essay, "Things" (included in the collection of her essays, *Virginia Woolf: Feminist Destinations*) (1988), gives a good explanation of this feature of material motifs in the Woolfian world. Woolf, according to Bowlby, often connects historical change to "changes in 'things'," and "often marks the change as affecting the very forms of language and thought: new things are connected to new ways of conceptualizing the world and the person's relation to it" (179). (This points to Woolf's desire to depict the contemporary world by means of real objects specific to it.) On the other hand, observes Bowlby, things in Woolf's novels can be "ambivalent signs of the

questions of continuity and change" (127). (Objects as "signs" suggest their symbolic resonance.) For an example of this contradictory theorem on Woolf's use of material objects, Bowlby draws attention to three modern objects in *The Years*: the car, the cinema, and the telephone. The car and the cinema impress Peggy with their demonstration of modern life as "a spectacle perpetually in motion, without a firm point of rest or origin" (125). Their paralysing effect upon her sense of sight debilitates her perception of the world in its entirety: Peggy wonders how to define "a bygone period" and "the present time" she belongs to (125). Peggy's bewilderment about the phenomena generated by these inventions and consequent confusion of temporal definitions emphasise the character of modern life as distinct from that of the past, in which one could feel a sense of "safety and stability" (125). At another point in the novel, the telephone connects two separate rooms in a moment. But the emphasis is not placed upon its remarkable swiftness in connecting one person to another and the possible change in "the form of subjectivity" it induces (127). Rather, the telephone, by separating the visual from the acoustic, "show[s] up disjunctions and uncertainties that were there all the time, unobserved" (127). In other words, the telephone discloses facts about human existence and ontological questions which have hitherto been latent and neglected. The latter episode suggests, by contrast with the former one, a sense of association between the past and the present, a sense (re)discovered in the age of new technologies.

Similarly, traditional material motifs in Woolf's fiction appear as a device to hint at something elemental in human life. A case in point is found in Erich Auerbach's essay "The Brown Stocking" (1953), an influential exploration of a scene of a traditional activity in *To the Lighthouse*: Mrs. Ramsay is with her son James, measuring a stocking against his leg. A noticeable feature of the scene is that it is interrupted by many other seemingly irrelevant scenes and observations, namely, Mrs. Ramsay's conversation with the Swiss maid, a sign of sadness in Mrs. Ramsay's face, what people would think about her, her talking with Mr. Bankes by phone. Yet irrelevant and disconnected as they seem, these interrupting passages are, in fact, related by one theme—the investigation of Mrs. Ramsay as an "objective reality" (536). They represent subjective impressions about Mrs. Ramsay, providing multiple perspectives for the investigation. In effect, "the measuring of the stocking [. . .] is nothing but an occasion," states Auerbach (541). The emphasis is placed upon "what the occasion releases," that is, "ideas and chains of ideas which cut loose from the present of the exterior occurrence and range freely through the depths of time" (541, 540). Thus, Mrs. Ramsay's measuring her stocking is regarded as a device to open up the text to the disclosing of inner truth, rather than an arbitrary description of an exterior event in daily life.

These discussions by Bowlby and Auerbach reveal one important formula in Woolf's use of material motifs: the time-bound—and, in many cases, space-bound—quality of these

motifs is intended not only to depict the physical world they belong to and which they therefore represent, but also to show universal concepts made explicit by contrast with their historically restricted nature. In other words, by incorporating material phenomena of the past and present, Woolf strives to demonstrate an aspect of modernist aesthetics—to transgress the boundary between the past and the present, stressing a sense of the association between the two generations.

This aspect of her aesthetic is noteworthy, given that the historical period of modernism is generally regarded as characterised by the collision between the past and the present in intellectual activities, personal life, and culture.[9] At first sight, it seems to be associated with the retrogressive conception of time, that is, the Enlightenment understanding of time as "continuous, objective, and intimately tied up with the atemporal subject of knowledge" (Schleifer 44). Yet, again, given that Woolf was quite responsive to social and political issues of her time, it seems to be more appropriate to think that this aesthetic was a result of her ingenious contrivance rather than a product of her isolated view of the world. To undermine

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[9] Schleifer discusses this point, in relation to the Enlightenment conception of time. In the Enlightenment context, time was "an autonomous, homogeneous flow in a single direction," and this conception of time "separates people from the past absolutely, without confrontation or collision" (38). Schleifer sees the confrontation of the past and present as a phenomenon specific to the post-Enlightenment era—the period of the second Industrial Revolution. (He seeks a model of this temporal conflict in D. H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow* (1915)—its conflicting "discourses of realism and twentieth-century Modernism" (140).)

the common structure of the conflict between past and present leads, in a sense, to a gesture of calling into question the significance of some of the outcomes of the second Industrial Revolution. Yet, at the same time, to show the transgressing of the boundary between past and present is to undermine the hegemonic effect of the past on the present, and thus is a refutation of the retrogressive view. Woolf's seemingly essentialist dealing with the motifs of material phenomena is, in fact, a representation of her very radical attitude towards the notions of the past and the present.

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We have shown that Woolf's fictional world is half-Victorian, and in this respect she diverges from many other modernists; and we have assumed that her half-traditional world is, paradoxically, part of her modernist aesthetic, with material motifs with symbolic resonances complicating the relationship of the past and present. In order to throw light upon this relatively neglected aspect of Woolf's aesthetic, this thesis takes up four motifs of material phenomena (material objects, conditions, and activities) in her fictional works, motifs which belong either to the Victorian world or to the contemporary world: the telephone, knitting women, the searchlight, and the empty house of a Victorian family. Each of the four chapters deals with one of these motifs. All of these four motifs are intimately related to seeing and hearing, two major perceptions transformed by technological innovations. The telephone and the searchlight are prosthetic devices to enhance the new physical and mental

experiences of time and space: they serve to hear/see over long distances, thereby bringing distant events and existences closer without diminishing physical distance between here and there; they thus produce interchanging senses of closeness and separation.

Knitting women and the empty house are domestic motifs, associated with the Victorian idea of femininity, which is registered as reticence and detachment. Yet in the Woolfian world, their Victorian quality is controversial. Like the other two motifs—the telephone and the searchlight—they serve to provide the fictional world with dynamism in its description of visual and aural perceptions, and may therefore be regarded as modernist devices in disguise. In our exploration of these four motifs, a wide range of Woolf's fictional works is referred to: not only her longer fiction, but also her shorter fiction is within the scope of this study. Some relatively neglected short stories by Woolf will be considered in relation to her well-known longer novels.

Chapter 1 centres on the motif of the telephone in *Night and Day* (1919), exploring how this modern electrical invention— with its complex power of both drawing close and separating two speakers across space—functions in the novel's main plot. In addition, by showing that two traditional material motifs, namely, literary books and portraits, function in a similar way to the telephone, this chapter shows how intimately related motifs of the past and present are in the progress of the story, and how significant the relation is to Woolf's modernist aesthetic. With contemporary and earlier material

motifs discussed side by side, this opening chapter gives one example of Woolf's establishment of the interactive relationship between these two types of motif, as a representation of her idea of the world being heterogeneous rather than homogeneous and linear.

From the second chapter onwards, we look at modern and traditional motifs separately.

Chapter 2 focuses on knitting women, a motif suggestive of the self-effacing status of women in traditional social systems. A close analysis of the imagery in several of Woolf's novels, however, reveals that the self-sacrificing posture of her women knitters is associated with their expressiveness. Residing in the background yet involved in the main actions of the novels, Woolf's knitting women are, like the motif of the telephone, an intriguing motif associated with the alternation of proximity and distance. By showing how the motif of traditional material activity is re-interpreted as a representation of Woolf's position as a woman modernist, this chapter suggests that the use of the motif is an example of the author's experimentation in making the past and the present interpenetrate.

In Chapter 3, we turn to another example of the motif of electrical technology, the searchlight. In "The Searchlight," a relatively neglected short story by Woolf, the searchlight appears as a tool of the British air force, which conducts military training (apparently) in the inter-war period. Yet this seemingly historical, pro-war motif is also associated with Woolf's scheme for depicting a democratic, pacifist world. The searchlight helps the central

character to draw the past into the present moment, conflating the two generations. Thus the light serves to expand the experience of the present as the here and now to include the perception of time and space at a great—physical and psychological—distance. This function of the motif—drawing the object closer—is alternated with its opposite function—replacing the object afar: the motif is also built upon what I have called the modern rhythm. This argument is amplified by an exploration of the related motif of light in *To the Lighthouse*.

Chapter 4 shifts the focus entirely to *To the Lighthouse*, dwelling upon one of its main motifs, the empty summer home of the Ramsays. It is, like women knitting, an example of a traditional motif linked with the alternation of distance and proximity in Woolf's fiction: once accommodating a Victorian family, the empty house is a relic of a bygone generation; on the other hand, the empty space is a paradoxical representation of the fullness of being, with memories from the past excavated and actively interrelated. In effect, the uninhabited house is also an embryo of the creation of a new life, which is to be presented in the succeeding scene of the novel. It is a model of the author's modernist universe, in which different moments of human history are comprehended and mingled.

It must be admitted, however, that our examination of these four motifs in Woolf's fiction does not enable us to explore fully Woolf's unique poetics of time and space as an aspect of her self-assertion as a modernist. For example, Woolf's interest in

modern technologies influencing visual and acoustic perceptions was not limited to the telephone and the searchlight. Her involvement in technological issues in her time, as revealed by the increasing number of the studies of this subject, is extensive, and therefore requires further exploration. This also applies to our discussion of traditional motifs. Knitting women and the empty house are just two of the numerous examples of the motifs of traditional objects and activities in the Woolfian world, motifs that may be associated with Woolf's modernist project. Yet there is a characteristic common to these four motifs: they have been widely acknowledged in the critical literature, but have often been regarded as signifying an aspect of the author's attitudes *either* towards the contemporary world *or* towards the world of the preceding generation. Despite a certain limitation, our exploration of these four motifs will enable us to highlight a distinctive feature of the Woolfian world (built upon her interpretation of the modern rhythm, the alternation between distance and proximity)—the interpenetration of the past and the present.

CHAPTER 1

TELEPHONE WIRES: TECHNOLOGICAL INVENTIONS, TRADITIONAL MATERIAL OBJECTS, AND COMMUNICATION IN *NIGHT AND DAY*

The telephone is an important technological invention produced and developed over a long period of the mechanical revolution, which affected the entirety of human experience in the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century.[1] With its ability to convey voices without their possessors' visual images, telephone communication evoked an uncanny sense of the alternation between proximity and distance. In her 1927 essay, "Poetry, Fiction and the Future," Virginia Woolf describes modern cities thus: people live in separate "boxes" to "insure some privacy, yet [are] linked to [their] fellows by wires which pass overhead [. . .]" (*E*4: 432). Thus, telephone wires are, by connecting separate people, presented as increasing the complexity of human relationships in the modern world.

Like many other modernist writers, Woolf employed the motif of the telephone in rendering this new experience involving perception as a paradigm of modern life. A good example is the six characters' telepathic communication in *The Waves* (1931). By this we mean not that the six people communicate with one another by telephone, but that the idea of the novel cannot be irrelevant to the mechanism of

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[1] Ernest Mandel divides the process of technological evolution from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century into three stages: "after 1848, after 1893, and after 1940 in North America and 1948 in Western Europe and Japan" (9). (See also Minow-Pinkney "Age of Motor Cars" 159). Invented by Alexander Graham Bell as early as 1876, yet not being efficient enough to be prevalent in Britain until the interwar period, the telephone developed over a period of two earlier stages of the mechanical production. For a detailed description of the history of the telephone, see Robertson.

"wires." The title—*The Waves*—itself is suggestive: as Michael Whitworth points out, it can be associated with the undulations of sound and light—newly acknowledged scientific phenomena in Woolf's time—as well as the waves of the sea.[2] This example points to a significant feature specific to Woolf's adoption of this acoustic machine in fiction: she was, it seems, interested in describing the telephonic system not only in a literal way, but also in a metaphorical way. In *The Waves*, the telepathic communication modelled on telephonic communication serves to excavate the inner lives of the six characters, which are on the surface different yet at bottom connected. In other words, the telephonic mechanism is employed in Woolf's fiction for revealing submerged truth as to human relations as well as depicting a new dimension of actual life added by the invention of telephony. This may suggest the function of the telephone beyond a time-bound object in the Woolfian world.

With regard to the representation of communication in Woolf's fiction, there is another point to be noted. Woolf's fictional world is, as has been pointed out by a number of critics and seen in the introduction of this thesis, half-Victorian, as was the author herself. Tea-table conversation consisting of literary topics and gossip also

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[2] For further explanation of the relationship between this novel and contemporary science, see Whitworth, *Authors in Context* 180-82 and Armstrong 120-21. Armstrong also sees the novel's telepathic communication or "intersubjectivity" as a product of "spiritualism," which appeared with the development of science and technology at around the turn of the century and attracted scientists, politicians, and writers (124).

plays a significant part in the promotion of amicable relationships between her characters.

Night and Day exemplifies this dual characteristic of the Woolfian world. The novel presents an intriguing coexistence of two modes of communication (old and new): while the telephone appears to help develop human relationships, traditional modes of communication are as significant a motif as this modern electric method. The novel centres on the Hilberys, the family of a literary celebrity, in which people enjoy face-to-face communication through a common interest in literature. In their conversations, traditional objects such as literary books are taken up as a means to establish their smooth relationships.

This chapter focuses on how motifs of two modes of communication—old and new—function in *Night and Day*, exploring similarities as well as differences between these two modes. This examination acts, in other words, as an exploration of an aspect of the poetic dimension of Woolf's material motifs—their function beyond their condition as time-bound existence. A combined analysis of traditional and technological material motifs in this chapter will underscore this feature: we will see a distinctive function of both types of motif, their interrelations across time, as a part of the author's scheme to create a heterogeneous fictional space—a space where different historical moments are fused. This chapter, in effect, will provide an overview of our entire discussion in this thesis: it will give a good introduction to the following chapters, each of which

deals with a motif belonging either to the old generation or to the new generation; and each of which explores the way one type of motif merges into the other.

I . THE IMAGERY OF TELECOMMUNICATION IN MRS. DALLOWAY STORIES

Before looking at *Night and Day*, let us briefly turn to those of Woolf's short stories which include the motif of telephony and see how the motif is adopted. This is because the poetics of her shorter fiction, like those of many other writers, epitomises her way of writing her longer fiction.[3]

"The Introduction" is one of a series of short stories written by Woolf in the mid-1920s which are set during Mrs. Dalloway's party.[4] The story centres on Lily Everit, a "shy charming girl," who is about to make her debut in society at the hands of Mrs. Dalloway (185). Preferring to retreat to her own vision, Lily is daunted by the splendour of society, which is quite different from her private world. The fashionable world seems to her to represent patriarchal society established upon "orderly life" or a "regulated way of life" (186). It

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[3] Skrbic also observes that Woolf's short stories convey her objectives as a writer "more concentratedly" than her novels" (xviii).

[4] According to Bishop's *A Virginia Woolf Chronology*, these stories were written after the publication of *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), in order probably to "investigate the party consciousness, the frock consciousness" (*D*3: 12). It may therefore be considered that their party scene is a developed version of that of the novel.

makes her strongly conscious of "being a woman," an existence subject to the male-established system of society. Her self-confidence—built up upon the fact that she has got "First rate" for "her essay upon the character of Dean Swift"—almost vanishes (184). Throughout the party, Lily struggles to oppose "this massive masculine achievement" by trying surreptitiously to regain her self-respect (186). In her imagination, the authority of male-ruling society is embodied in "the criss-cross of telegraph wires," together with "high towers, solemn bells, flats," "churches" and "parliaments" (186). It is significant that Lily recognises "telephone wires," a newly developed material object, as a symbol of power just as overwhelming as other long established material objects which symbolise social, religious, and political powers respectively. With their methodical structure—they are described as criss-cross patterns—telephone wires well represent the fashionable world which Lily imagines as orderly and inescapable.

If we turn to the setting of these stories—Mrs. Dalloway's party—we notice, on the other hand, that they place an emphasis also on another sort of achievement—"female achievement." Although the hostess should not be assumed to be identical to the woman with the same name in the novel *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), the former resembles the latter at least in one respect: she tries, by means of her party, to bring together different people with different ideas and thoughts and to unite them. Her party is depicted from the multiple perspectives of different people in the series of stories, namely, "The New Dress,"

"Happiness," "Ancestors," "The Introduction," "Together and Apart," "The Man Who Loved His Kind," "A Simple Melody" and "A Summing Up." The participants are seen being introduced to one another, feeling sympathy or antipathy towards one another.

The independent female student Lily is challenged by Bob Brinsley, an "insolent," "arrogant" young man "just down from Oxford" ("The Introduction" 187, 185). Mabel Waring, who is self-conscious because of her "hideous new dress," recalls the earlier kind compliment of Miss Milan's, but is hurt to imagine that Charles Burt is thoughtlessly teasing her about her dress ("The New Dress" 170, 173). Called by the envious woman Mrs. Sutton "far the happiest person I know," Stuart Elton is embarrassed, waiting a chance to escape from her ("Happiness" 178). Mrs. Vallance, a country-bred woman, tries to admonish Jack Renshaw, an urban young man, for his "silly, rather conceited remark" ("Ancestors" 181). In a moment of empathy with Mr. Serle, Miss Anning feels as if they "knew each other so perfectly," "so closely united that they had only to float side by side" ("Together and Apart" 193). Prickett Ellis, a man who loves his kind, feels antipathy towards Miss O'Keefe, a woman who loves her kind ("The Man Who Loved His Kind" 197-200). In "A Simple Melody," "a picture of a heath" hanging in the drawing-room of the Ramsays leads Mr. Carslake to a quiet contemplation on walking on the heath, in which he enjoys "a little simple talk "with participants of the party" (203). Thus, in Mrs. Dalloway's party, people are related to one another—though temporarily—across the boundaries between

genders and generations. Her party is described by Sasha Latham, one of her guests, as "the supreme achievement of the human race" ("A Summing Up" 209).

In his paper, "Woolf's Web: Telecommunications and Community" (1999), Whitworth proposes "two models of telecommunication networks," which are coexisting yet incompatible with each other (162): one is "a hierarchical web, radiating from an authoritarian center"; the other is "a decentered, rhizomic structure, cutting across established hierarchies" (162). If we apply these two models to our analysis above, the former model corresponds to the "telegraph wires" as part of "masculine achievement" as imagined by Lily; the latter (horizontal) model can represent Mrs. Ramsay's achievement by means of her party. We can therefore surmise that the series of short stories about Mrs. Dalloway's party in its entirety challenges—though at a latent level—or at least calls into question the patriarchal network, which is described by Lily as something authoritative and immovable.

This offers a good example of how with apparent casualness Woolf takes up a certain cultural motif—in this case telegraph wires—in her fiction, and how implicitly and ingeniously she undermines its generally acknowledged function in patriarchal society through her own way of structuring her fiction as well as the description of her characters' actions in her fiction. In the cultural and social context of her time, this suggests Woolf's subtle positioning of herself in the world of her time: she seemingly aligns

herself with contemporary writers, such as James Joyce and T. S. Eliot, who depict innovative cultural motifs more or less favourably; but in reality she sets herself apart from them.[5] It is noteworthy that her ingenious self-positioning is associated with her metaphorical way of dealing with a given motif: telegraph wires present themselves, in the series of Mrs. Dalloway stories, not only as material objects produced in a given period of technological innovation, but also as a metaphor of invisible human networks built up among the participants of the party.

To explore her experiment with technological motifs further, we will, in the next section, examine descriptions of them in *Night and Day*, focusing on how they are related to the structure of the novel, and by extension, to Woolf's distinctive position in modernist aesthetic practice.

II. THE TELEPHONE IN *NIGHT AND DAY*

When first published in 1919, *Night and Day* elicited praise from readers in general, but there was a critical consensus about its conventionality in form and theme. It is well known that Katherine Mansfield and E. M. Forster regarded it as a step backward in comparison with *The Voyage Out* (1915), her first modernist

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[5] For detailed discussions of other modernist writers' treatment of technological inventions in their works, see, for example, Danius, "Orpheus and the Machine," and Kenner.

experimentation in fiction. Mansfield described Woolf's second fiction as "a novel in the tradition of the English novel," comparing it to "[a] [s]hip [coming] into [h]arbour" (*CH* 82, 79). "[I]t makes us feel old and chill: we had never thought to look upon its like again," she comments bitterly (*CH* 82). Forster also remarked that the novel was "a strictly formal & classical work" and he "like[d] it less than V. O. [*The Voyage Out*]" (*D*1: 310). Their assessments of *Night and Day* have not been called into question by subsequent critics. Only very recently, Sue Roe has observed that it is "a new, very traditional novel" which Woolf needed to write to recover from "a serious breakdown" following her experiment in *The Voyage Out* (15). Noting the features of its structure, Mark Hussey describes *Night and Day* as "the most linear and 'plotted' of Woolf's novels, developing its thirty-four chapters smoothly as the characters move toward resolution" (*A to Z* 183).

These judgements seem incontrovertible, as far as the main plot of the novel, the romance of Katharine Hilbery and Ralph Denham, is concerned. The lovers go through the phases which heroes and heroines of conventional romances are likely to experience—antagonism, quarrel and argument, reconciliation and marriage. This smoothly unfolding plot is, however, a mere retrospective impression: closely examined, their "love story" is not as simple as has often been considered. The novel is set in the modern world in which people, through technological inventions including cars and the telephone, can be connected in a moment. The new,

complex modes of communication make the love plot of the novel far from conventional. To explore this point, let us closely examine how the relationship of the two lovers evolves—the process in which modern technological inventions play significant roles.

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Both Katharine and Ralph are described as having a severe sense of self-contradiction, and this inner conflict prevents them from readily forming an amicable relationship. Katharine is characterised by an apparently practical personality. She helps her mother Mrs. Hilbery, an oddly eccentric person, with her writing of the biography of "Richard Alardyce," "the great poet" and her father (7-8). The first detailed description of Katharine's character appears thus:

> [S]he had no aptitude for literature. She did not like phrases. [. . .] She was [. . .] inclined to be silent; she shrank from expressing herself even in talk, let alone in writing. [. . .] *She had the reputation [. . .] of* being the most practical of people. [. . .] Mrs. Hilbery often observed that it was poetry the wrong side out. [. . .]
>
> Silence being, thus, both natural to her and imposed upon her, *the only other remark that her mother's friends were in the habit of making about it was that* it was neither a stupid silence nor an indifferent silence. [. . .] *It was understood that* she was helping her mother to produce a great book. *She was known to* manage the household. (38-40; emphasis added)

It is noteworthy that there are many expressions—those in italics—showing that the description is offered from the viewpoint of other people. Despite its lengthy explanation of her practical personality, this passage suggests that this version of Katharine's character may be merely hearsay and rumour, and thus subtly

undermines the credibility of its own content. It also hints at the existence of some latent truth about Katharine's personality, a truth which is unknown to other people.

The hidden truth of Katharine is implied also in her self-analysis:

> *She was in the habit of assuming [. . .] that* she was rather unobservant of the finer shades of feeling, and *she noted her present failure as another proof that* she was a practical, abstract-minded person, better fitted to deal with figures than with the feelings of men and women. (289; emphasis added)

The emphasised phrases above show Katharine's logical way of thinking or her rational character, which seemingly substantiates her reputation as "the most practical of people." But these phrases, with their careful and self-conscious tone, also invoke a sense of self-deception: it seems that Katharine is anxious to persuade herself by any given event in her life that this is her true nature.

In fact, there are several moments throughout the novel when this supposed identity is overturned. They are the moments of unawareness, when she discloses the opposite characteristic, that of her mother Mrs. Hilbery—an eccentric personality. For instance, at the very moment when she starts thinking about her preference for mathematics over literature, she ironically lapses into a dream without noticing it. Then the next moment she finds "her own state mirrored in her mother's face" and "shake[s] herself awake with a sense of irritation" (41). Also, she leaves something behind or forgets

something several times in the novel: at one point, she leaves her basket of oysters on a bench in the Strand (140); at another point, in Kew Gardens, she leaves her bag somewhere while strolling with Ralph (352); the third time sees that she "forget[s] to help the pudding" and sits "oblivious of the tapioca" while having lunch with Cassandra (460).

But the most explicit indication of the inconsistency in her personality occurs while she is gazing at stars. In Chapter 16, Katharine spends Christmas with her family at her cousin's home in the town of Lincoln. This chapter comes after the announcement of her engagement to William Rodney, towards whom she feels, in fact, little affection. To escape her family's inquisitiveness about her marriage she goes out into the garden of the house and looks at the stars. The starry sky fascinates her, and her feelings seem to her to verify her own scientific nature: "I want to work out something in figures—something that hasn't got to do with human beings," she says to herself (203). Meanwhile, she attains a sense of relatedness to the entire universe, a sense inexplicable within a scientific context:

> [A]s she looked up the pupils of her eyes so dilated with starlight that the whole of her seemed dissolved in silver and spilt over the ledges of the stars for ever and ever indefinitely through space. (205)

Katharine's feelings here may be associated with a similar scene in the short story "The Searchlight," which will be discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis: while looking at stars through his telescope, a boy

attains a sense of eternity. In fact, Katharine herself dreams of "us[ing] a telescope" in the future (203), and here it is implied that she looks through her imaginary telescope at the starlit sky: "[. . .] she changed the focus of her eyes, and saw nothing but the stars" (204). Through the act of gazing at stars out of her scientific curiosity, she is, unexpectedly, drawn into the realm of dream. This realm, in fact, is associated with Ralph, who assesses visions as higher than scientific truth.

Thus, Katharine is described as oscillating between reality and dream. Once she confesses to Ralph: "'you can't think how I'm divided—how I'm at my ease with you, and how I'm bewildered" (447). She feels a strong affinity with Ralph, but cannot readily reveal it to him. The shift of her personality happens only at night, both in literal and metaphorical senses. To expose her "real" self, she needs "darkness"—literally, the darkness of night, and metaphorically, distance from other people—which screens her from other people.

Ralph Denham, by contrast, is described as a dreaming self. His eldest sister Joan is afraid that he might "suddenly [sacrifice] his entire career for some fantastic imagination" (127). Unlike Katharine, Ralph is much aware of his own nature and even respects it: "in private, [. . .] Ralph let himself swing very rapidly away from his actual circumstances upon strange voyages [. . .]" (129). Like Katharine, however, he is struggling with the social role that practical life imposes upon him: with his father dead, he has many brothers and sisters in his house to support. The

Hilberys—Katharine's family—remind him of this social obligation from which he is eager to escape: near the beginning of the novel, Ralph is invited by Mr. Hilbery to contribute to his review and then is recognised by his family members as a lawyer. Moreover, the glory of the Hilberys' family history, marked by their great literary ancestors, makes his own family seem far inferior to them. These facts lead to Ralph's aversion to the Hilberys: in their first encounter at the tea table in her house, Katharine detects in his "upright and resolute bearing" "something hostile to her surroundings" (6). In his eyes, Katharine, who helps her mother with her work, is nothing but a representation of the social domain from which he is excluded.

But from the outset—from his first encounter with her—Ralph detects, and feels attracted to, the hidden side of Katharine. Seeing her helping her mother with the tea-table conversation, he notices that "she attended only with the surface skin of her mind" (5). At another point he sees Katharine as "a creature of uncalculating passion and instinctive freedom," or detects "a spirit which she reserved or repressed for some reason either of loneliness or [. . .] of love" (355). What enables Ralph to find out Katharine's true nature is his fertile imagination. His vision of Katharine grows when he is apart from her.

So Ralph, like Katharine, requires distance to "communicate" with her—distance which allows him to protect his dream about her from the disillusionment of actual life: "He wished to keep this distance between them—the distance which separates the devotee

from the image in the shrine" (390). Ralph is, thus, also torn between his vision and reality.

These two conflicting lovers get close and then separate, an alternation which is suggested in their face-to-face conversation and in other ways throughout the book. In the village of Disham, where he spends Christmas with Mary Datchet and her family, Ralph imagines Katharine as "being surrounded by the spaces of night and the open air" (200). And it is "[i]nto that same black night" of the adjacent village that Katharine gazes to find stars (201). At another point, in front of Katharine's house, Ralph, after one of his city-wanderings in pursuit of her, sees "lights" "in the three long windows of the drawing room" (418). These lights become, in his imagination, Katharine herself, although "[h]e did not see her in body" (419). Katharine, likewise, sets out searching for Ralph and, at his working place, Lincoln's Inn Fields, she looks for "the light in the three tall windows," the light of "Ralph's three windows" (466). These episodes relating to "light in darkness" suggest that Katharine and Ralph share the same vision, by which they are united, but at the same time that they are united only at night, or in a metaphorical sense, in a different sphere from actual life. [6] Their

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[6] The three lights are compared by Ralph to the "[beams] of a lighthouse" (418). The lights, therefore, evoke the three strokes of the lighthouse beam in *To the Lighthouse*. Since, as we will discuss in the next chapter, the three strokes are related to female creativity which is shown as uniting and separating, we may say that the three lights here represent the two lovers' relationship, oscillating between proximity and distance.

momentary—though not fragile—understanding of each other is compared to flashings of lightning in their conversation:

> "[. . .] we see each other only now and then—"
> "Like lights in a storm—"
> "In the midst of a hurricane," she concluded [. . .]. (450)

Even the structure of the passage—their half-expressed words alternating with one another—seems to represent their seeking for each other in the dark. At bottom united, yet on the surface separate, they never seem to find common ground in actual life for the development of their relationship. They are, in effect, "modern men"—those living in separate "boxes" to "insure some privacy" (*E*4: 432).

However, there are two scenes in which their relationship sees a remarkable advance: the one occurs in Chapter 24, and the other in Chapter 31, and the one thing common to these scenes is that the telephone plays a significant role.

Chapter 24 follows the scene in which Ralph confesses his love to Katharine. There, she is helping her mother with the writing of the biography, but with her mind torn between her new suitor Ralph and her fiancé William. This oscillating state of her mind and consequent absent-mindedness are, at first, not shown in the text, but are disclosed when her mother unwittingly says to her, "'D'you think he ever passed this house?'," speaking of William Shakespeare (322). This question seems to Katharine to refer to Ralph and embarrasses

her. Then Mrs. Hilbery, seeing her daughter perplexed, adds, "My dear, I'm not talking about *your* William [. . .]. I'm talking [. . .] of *my* William—William Shakespeare, of course" (323). This sudden unexpected juxtaposition of two men—one in her own mind and the other mentioned by her mother—distracts Katharine from her work: "Her pen [. . .] remained in the air" (323). She then surreptitiously begins applying herself to mathematics, as if striving for some clear solution to her indecision: "her hand [. . .] began drawing square boxes halved and quartered by straight lines, and then circles which underwent the same process of dissection" (323).

It is in this state of restlessness that Katharine hears the telephone ring and goes to answer it. Subsequently, she receives a second phone call, and then, after a while, a third. The first two phone calls are from Mary and William respectively. Although there is no detailed description of her conversations with them, it is obvious that these calls affect her significantly. She feels that "the sharp call of the telephone-bell echoed in her ear," and gets tense, "as if, at any moment, she might hear another summons of greater interest to her than the whole of the nineteenth century [her work with her mother]" (326).

Although not knowing—or pretending, to herself, not to know—from whom she is so intently expecting another phone call, she is aware of this when answering the telephone for the third time:

> "Whose voice?" she asked herself [. . .]. Out of all the welter of voices which crowd round the far end of the

telephone, out of the enormous range of possibilities, whose voice, what possibility, was this? [. . .] It was solved next moment.

"I've looked out the train. . . . Early on Saturday afternoon would suit me best. . . . I'm Ralph Denham. . . . But I'll write it down. . . ."

With more than the usual sense of being impinged upon the point of a bayonet, Katharine replied:

"I think I could come. I'll look at my engagements. . . . Hold on." (327)

Katharine then promises Ralph that she will meet him on Saturday; she finds that "her restlessness was assuaged" (328). It seems that the third phone call offers her an immediate answer to her question about whether to marry William or Ralph ("It was solved next moment"): that she should break with William and meet Ralph. The epiphanic nature of this moment is evident in Katharine's reaction when the caller gives his name as "Ralph": she is greatly shocked, feeling as if "being impinged upon the point of a bayonet." Her acute sensation recalls the image of flashing "lights in a storm" (in the previous extract)—Ralph's and Katharine's sudden perceptions of each other. (Ralph's intermittent voice heard through the telephone may also suggest this relation, for it evokes sudden flashes of lightning.) The telephone call brings, as it were, the submerged feelings in her mind to the top. It marks the moment of an awareness of her affection for Ralph.[7]

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[7] Clements also designates this telephone call from Ralph as marking a key moment in the process of Katharine's understanding of Ralph. Clements emphasises the aural significance of the telephone, for "[t]he bond between Katharine and Ralph [. . .] is fundamentally aural" (38). The sound of the disembodied voice of Ralph questions Katharine's understanding of his identity developed on the basis of the coincidence of his voice and body; the sonority of his voice

This connection between the third telephone call and Katharine's awakening is made obvious in the scene after the call. She goes out to post her letter to Cassandra, the letter in which she is going to invite her cousin in order, surreptitiously, to introduce her to William. But she hesitates for a while:

> The longer she held the letter in her hand, [. . .] the more persistently certain questions pressed upon her, *as if from a collection of voices in the air*. These invisible people wished to be informed whether she was engaged to William Rodney, or was the engagement broken off? (329; emphasis added)

These voices of "invisible questioners" reappear in the following scene, in which Katharine meets William at the tea table. There she again begins to oscillate between him and Ralph. Now the voices "sounded with a tremendous self-confidence, as if they had behind them the common sense of twenty generations [. . .]" (334). These curiously disembodied voices with an authoritative tone in Katharine's imagination remind us of her previous impression from the voices through the phone, especially Ralph's, which, with the speaker invisible, seems to her to be prophetic. His voice heard by telephone is thus transformed in her mind into the irresistible force to have Katharine make up her mind. These voices can also be understood as the echoes of the ringing telephone, which sounded alarming to her in the previous scene with her mother. Rising in a

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becomes, in her mind, the representation of "the insubstantial, 'so incoherent, so incommunicable'," a thing that Katharine names "romance" (38).

crescendo, the voices seem to coincide with Katharine's increasing irritation.[8]

If Chapter 24 depicts the moment of the awakening of Katharine's love for Ralph and hesitation in marrying William, Chapter 31 sees her final decision with regard to the same question: that she should leave William and confess her love to Ralph. In the drawing room, Katharine is talking with Cassandra, who has just become engaged to William. Cassandra inquisitively questions her about the development of her relationship with Ralph and irritates her, when the telephone rings and Katharine leaves to answer it. The call is from Ralph, which fills her with "a [keen] sense of exhilaration" (458). She is then rapidly drawn to Ralph, as if the telephone call from him once again offered her a revelation. This time her practical personality is completely overturned, replaced by the

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[8] "[A] collection of voices in the air" may also reflect other mechanical inventions of Woolf's time, the gramophone and the radio. Cuddy-Keane speculates that Woolf adopts the innovative aural function of these sound technologies in writing "Kew Gardens," "a sketch about voices" (82). ("Kew Gardens" was written concurrently with *Night and Day*, and published in the same year, 1919.) But if this is the case—if the voices through the telephone are linked to those through the radio or the gramophone—it may seem strange that the private conversation between Katharine and Ralph is transformed in Katharine's imagination into a "public debate" between the world and her. For an explanation, we may turn to Marvin's discussion of early influences of telephony on the world. With the advent of telephony, according to Marvin, "[b]oundaries marking public and private seemed to be in peril as never before" (68). The telephone was "[f]eared [by people at that time] [. . .] for its potential to expose private family secrets" to public scrutiny through the act of tapping the phone. In this light, Katharine's fear of public censure on her indecision about her private matter seems quite natural.

other self, an absent-minded, forgetful personality. This is witnessed by Cassandra and William: while having lunch with Katharine, Cassandra sees her "forget to help the pudding" and "the tapioca" (460); afterwards, at the tea table, Cassandra and William see her leave them to look for Ralph, "holding her bread and butter in her bare hand" (463).

The succeeding scene depicts Katharine wandering around the city. Here, Katharine once again acts as if being "guided" by the telephone. Arriving at the apartment of Mary Datchet—a mutual friend of Ralph and herself—Katharine calls her own house only to find that Ralph has just visited there and left; then Mary makes another phone call, this time, to Ralph's house, to be told that he "won't be back to dinner" (472). These facts revealed by the phone calls make Katharine set out on another desperate search for Ralph around the city until at last she finds him at her own house. The telephone thus draws the lovers to each other with unexpected swiftness. This sense of swiftness is accelerated by Katharine's use of motor cabs during her city-wandering, another technological invention of Woolf's time.

These two scenes demonstrate that the telephone functions almost as an "oracle" for Katharine. The former scene, especially, evokes the famous scene in Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (*A la Recherche du temps perdu*) mentioned in the Introduction. There, Marcel receives a phone call from his grandmother, from whose place—in Paris—he has escaped to stay in another city, Doncières.

She recommends that he should stay there and not return, and thus allows him to become independent of her. This call seems to Marcel to be "a foreglimpse of an eternal separation" ("anticipation [. . .] d'une séparation éternelle")—his grandmother's death in the near future (131). This alarms him, making him hurry back home, to her house. In the case of Marcel, the telephone call gives an immediate answer to his question about whether to stay in the city or to return to his home city.[9]

The "sorcery" of the telephone is, indeed, anticipated in its first appearance in Chapter 24 of *Night and Day*. There we see that the Hilberys' telephone is placed in "the alcove on the stairs" which is "screened for privacy by a curtain of purple velvet" (326). This enclosed space for the telephone is also "a pocket for superfluous possessions" (326), such as "[p]rints of great uncles," "Chinese teapots," and "bookcases containing the complete works of William Cowper and Sir Walter Scott" (327). Set in the same place with these things which are possibly precious yet have not been given their proper places in the Hilberys' house, the telephone is treated as a

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[9] For a detailed analysis of the function of the telephone in the novel, see, for example, Haberman. Ford Madox Ford's novel *A Call* (1910) also depicts a "trick" of the telephone, as we mentioned in the Introduction. Early in the novel, Dudley Leicester visits his former lover, when he receives a call from whom he does not know. Out of fear of being spied on by his wife, he is distressed and even loses his senses. The rest of the novel centres on people's investigations as to the cause of Dudley's "insanity." But what they find in the course of their exploration is, ironically, their own psychic lives—their hidden desires—rather than Dudley's psychology. Thus, a telephone call is described as affecting the whole society of the fictional world.

thing, a judgement of whose value is suspended for the present. It might reflect its possessors' thought that it could be appreciated in some way, yet not as part of their daily amenities: the telephone is, for instance, too unpredictable—because of its sudden ringing—to place in the house's common spaces where people hope to lead their lives with the least disturbance. Also, the space screened from the outside pompously by "a curtain of purple velvet" evokes a sense of enigma inside. To be sure, the curtain is aimed at protecting the privacy of the users of the telephone; but at the same time, it seems to hint, by its very function of concealing things, at the existence of some secret as to the telephone itself. The curtain, in effect, personifies the telephone behind it. Surrounded by miscellaneous possessions accumulated for generations and, in Katharine's imagination, combining these things with voices caught by its receiver, the telephone is superimposed upon an image of a witch putting spells surreptitiously into a mixture in her cauldron.[10]

These impressions of the telephone as producing an oracle may be explained in terms of cultural phenomena of the time around which this novel is set. In the early twentieth century, the development of telecommunications networks in European countries changed the notions of the past, the present, and the future, and also

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[10] The "sorcery" of the telephone may be explained in terms of "Thing Theory," as proposed by Brown. The moment the telephone bell rings and Katharine takes it as an oracle can be regarded as the moment when the telephone changes from a mere "object"—an inorganic substance—to a "thing," an organic entity which correlates with subject.

the relationships among these three different times. For example, as regards the relationship between the present and the future, the telephone seems to have drawn the future nearer to the present. Kern explains the effect from the viewpoints both of the caller and of the receiver: the telephone has enabled the caller to "manipulate the immediate future," while "demanding immediate attention" of the receiver and thus in his or her mind "increase[ing] the imminence and importance of the immediate future" (91).

In addition to its epiphanic function, what is notable about the telephone is its rapidity in amalgamating the opposites: Ralph and Katharine. We can ascribe this to the complicated nature of the telephone itself. It is, on the one hand, an apparatus directly connected with practical life, thus appearing to be the opposite of imaginative life. In the novel, indeed, the telephone sometimes appears as something incompatible with literature. Mr. Clacton is about to discuss literature with Katharine, when "the telephone bell rang, and he had to absent himself with a smile and a bow which signified that, although literature is delightful, it is not work" (89). Mrs. Hilbery is "cut short in her quotation [from Shakespeare]," which makes her cry in indignation, "[H]ow odious the triumphs of science are!" (325). While engaged in literature, she even "[does] not [hear] the bell" (326). Seemingly antagonistic to dreaming, the telephone has an affinity with Katharine, who is, also seemingly, on the side of science. Just as mathematics, her secret passion, offers exact answers, so the telephone, with its ability to awake one from

one's solitary contemplation over human affairs, is associated with a sense of exactitude and clarity. Moreover, the act of picking up the receiver itself might come naturally to Katharine, who acts, in front of other people, as the most practical of people.

However, the telephone is relevant to the opposite realm—dreams and imagination—as well. This is clear in Katharine's sudden disclosing of a hidden side of herself—a dreaming self—after receiving phone calls. By producing only the voice, the telephone stirs the imagination as to the invisible speaker. And at around the time when the novel is set—in the 1910s—the imperfection of the telephone system meant that a great deal of imagination was necessary.[11]

Thus, practical on the surface yet at bottom related to imagination, the telephone functions as a subtle medium to lead Katharine to the realm of her would-be lover. We may also observe that the telephone is significant for Ralph, an imaginative person. Because it demands distance and discloses his lover only partially—through her voice—the telephone allows Ralph to keep enough distance from Katharine to protect his dream of her yet attain something upon which to feed his imagination. (Remember the

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[11] Robertson describes inconveniences of telephony at the beginning of the twentieth century. During the First World War, for example, a telephone network was built for the use of the British armies. Yet it was "primitive, exasperating, and constructed on entirely empirical principles" (117). "If telephoning was exasperating and inefficient in 1914-18," he goes on to say, "so it had been long before; it seemed just one of those devices of the modern world, much whooped up at first, yet now blown upon and tawdry [. . .]" (118).

telephone scene in *To the Lighthouse* discussed in the Introduction. There, the telephone accentuates Mrs. Bankes' admiration of Mrs. Ramsay's appearance: while talking to her by phone, he imagines her as an impeccable beauty like a Greek statue, "blue-eyed, straight-nosed" (50).)

The telephone, by separating yet uniting two speakers, plays a significant role in the formation of the peaceful relationship between the conflicting lovers with complex minds. This subtle function of the telephone—connecting the lovers in the realm of dreams while allowing them to lead their practical lives—can be explained again in the cultural context of the early twentieth century. This is a representation of "the simultaneity of experience"—one can be "in two places at the same time," and therefore, on a metaphorical level, can experience two kinds of life simultaneously—an experience which was first achieved by the telephone and struck the world with awe in Woolf's time (Kern 70, 69).[12] The novel's description of this function of the telephone, together with that of its oracular ability to unite the present and the future, corresponds to the positive reactions of Woolf's contemporaries towards technological innovation—their obsession with new technologies.

If the novel had taken up a more traditional world—a world

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[12] It is well known that the tragedy of the *Titanic* in 1912—several years before the publication of the novel—helped highlight this ability of electric communication. Owing to the wireless—a newly developed communication system at that time—the news of the sinking of the ship spread all over the world while the event was happening.

before the age of technological innovation—the telephone would have perhaps been replaced by several more human mediators, conversations and coincidences; they would have brought about an even more lengthy and slowly-progressing story. As many observe, the major plot of this novel—love and marriage—is conventional. But its way of presenting its plot is not conventional: it is unique in two sudden developments of its narrative, a narrative which at first seems to unfold slowly throughout the book. In other words, Woolf makes the supposed conventional love story complex and innovative by employing modern inventions—the telephone and the motor cab—as devices to structure the novel.[13]

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It might seem to be going too far to argue that Woolf, by adopting technological inventions in this novel, tries allegorically to express her trust in the potential of new technologies. In Woolf's works in general, however, we can find a certain linkage between the potential of the new world and that of fiction. Hermione Lee, for instance, observes that in *Night and Day* there is an obvious analogy between Woolf's "attempt to find the right 'modern' way of mastering and communicating reality" and "Ralph and Katharine's [. . .]

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[13] Woolf's aspiration to generate an innovative poetics by writing this novel is suggested by the following fact. In Chapter 25, Katharine and Ralph meet at Kew Gardens to strive for a solution to their complex relationship. Ralph describes the place as being appropriate for "discuss[ing] things satisfactorily," hinting thus at the potential of the place for giving him new ideas. ("Kew Gardens" is the title of Woolf's well-known experimental short story.)

struggle to translate the truer, secret areas of the mind into communicable terms" in their search for individual freedom within the restrictive nineteenth-century society (*The Novels* 65).

Their close connection is also suggested by Woolf herself: she sometimes employs similar metaphors when describing the new world and an ideal fiction. Let us take up some examples. Mary's workplace, a women's suffrage office, is crowded with the telephone and typewriters. She imagines herself as "the centre ganglion of a very fine network of nerves which fell over England" and which in the future "would begin feeling and rushing together and emitting their splendid blaze of revolutionary fireworks [. . .]" (78). Here, the technological world is likened to a sensitive nerve network of a human body, and is associated with a revolutionary force that has the power to change the existing social system. A similar image of networks is used in *A Room of One's Own*, when Woolf describes an ideal fictional form as: "a spider's web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners" (38). The double usage of network imagery is seen also in *The Waves*. Louis, as an aspiring business man, says, "I am half in love with the typewriter and the telephone" (119). He aims, by spreading his business network, to "weave together," "plait" "the many threads" into "one cable," that is, to combine the world into one community (144). On the other hand, he has a habit of reading poems at night: "I shall assemble a few words and forge round us a hammered ring of beaten steel", he says (120). His act of reading poems is, in other words, in order to reach

for universal emotion, and by its image related to an all-inclusive structure—that is, by extension, the comprehensive structure of a web or network—is associated with his pursuit of totalisation in business.[14]

It seems, therefore, unproblematic to admit that Woolf is very positive about technological innovation. In the same way that some of her contemporaries, such as Marcel Proust, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, James Joyce and Samuel Beckett, use modern inventions at various levels ranging from the structuring of plots to the describing of "textual details," Woolf seems to show admiration for the inscrutable power of technologies by her own adoption of several technological motifs (Hennessy 130).[15]

We should not, however, dismiss the fact that there is also a certain tone of cynicism in her description of technologies. Katharine, for example, describes Mary's office as "a dream," "so aloof and unreal and apart from the natural world" (92). Mary and her colleagues seem to Katharine to be "enchanted people in a bewitched tower," "murmuring their incantations and concocting their drugs, and flinging their frail spider's webs over the torrent of life [. . .]" (92). Thus, Mary's office, a representation of technological innovation, is associated with the world of romantic fictions. Certainly, this suggests the inscrutable character of the technological world or the

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[14] It is often observed that Louis is a fictional version of the poet and bank clerk T. S. Eliot. For example, see Beer, *Common Ground* 87-88.
[15] For a discussion of these four modernists' treatments of mechanical inventions in their works, see Kenner.

potential of technological achievements. It also implies, however, that there is nothing new in the "new" world. It is also noteworthy that the "spider's webs"—another network image of technologies—are here described as "frail."

Mary herself begins to feel some suspicion towards her work, built as it is upon the development of telecommunication networks. Her suspicion is triggered by her struggle over her private problem—that she is rejected by Ralph despite her love for him. This experience of unexpected dislodgement offers her a relative viewpoint upon her work (another passion with Mary), making her notice that her convictions in "the rightness of her own thought" may be nothing but an "illusion" (271). Through her newly gained sceptical eyes, her colleagues Mrs. Seal and Mr. Clacton are described in a farcical manner. Their total absorption in their work firmly integrates them with the mechanical world—Mrs. Seal with the typewriter ("her own private instrument of justice" (279)) and Mr. Clacton with publication (the issuing of "the lemon-coloured leaflet" (270)). They are, in other words, almost part of the machinery. This may suggest an oft-expressed irony of technological innovation: on the one hand, it helps people communicate their thoughts efficiently; but on the other hand, by its very efficiency, it involves them in its automatic system, thus depriving them of the ability to reflect. In Mary's suspicious eyes, the "machinery in which she had taken so much pride" reveals its "ugly cumbersomeness" (271). Towards the end of the novel, Mary quits her job, deciding to work with Mr. Basnett, who has, unlike Mrs.

Seal and Mr. Clacton, an independent way of thinking: he is a young and prudent social reformer, "still speculative, still uncramped" (379).

Another hint of irony towards technological advances occurs in the novel's description of the car in Chapter 5. While William is escorting Katharine at midnight, a taxi follows them, awaiting their summons. In opposition to William, who tells her that she should take the taxi to go home, Katharine insists on walking: "Katharine laughed and walked on so quickly that both [William] Rodney and the taxi-cab had to increase their pace to keep up with her" (65). Here, associated with the conservative William, the taxi-cab is depicted pejoratively. Despite its ability to travel far faster than human beings, and its general image as a representative of a new age, the car is degraded to a means for the promotion of a conservative courtship.

The next section looks at material objects of a different kind—more traditional ones—in the novel. Since their description is intimately related to the depiction of modern technologies, it will help explore the nature of Woolf's ambivalence towards technological inventions and more precisely explain their function in *Night and Day*.

Ⅲ. TRADITIONAL COMMUNICATION NETWORKS IN *NIGHT AND DAY*

In the preceding section, we examined the major story of *Night and Day*—the development of the relationship between Katharine and Ralph—and saw the ingenious function of the telephone in the story's progress. Let us now look at the novel's sub-plot, whose development is intimately related to the functions of traditional material objects. The sub-plot presents the conflict between the past and the present, or, to put it more precisely, the friction between the older and younger generations. The former are Victorians, including Mr. and Mrs. Hilbery, and two aunts of Katharine's (Aunt Celia and Cousin Caroline), while the latter are those modelled on Woolf's contemporaries, namely, Katharine, Ralph, William and Cassandra.[16] The sub-plot intertwines with the major plot: the older generation—all of whom are Katharine's relatives—try to encourage Katharine to marry the poet William, out of their conventional desire to preserve the reputation of their family, which has a great poet as its ancestor. The younger generation challenge them, and in the end become engaged as couples: Katharine to Ralph, and William to Cassandra.

If we only look at its ending, the novel seems to tell, as a number of critics have observed, that the younger generation defeat the older generation, the former replacing the latter. Considering

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[16] For instance, Katharine was modelled on Woolf's sister, Vanessa Bell. See Gordon 166.

that the telephone plays an important part in the success of the younger generation, we may even say that the novel is about the age of technologies displacing the past.[17] (This may be most simply expressed in pointing out that Mr. Hilbery, who tries to separate Katharine from Ralph, "could not control the telephone" (506-07).)

It must be noted, however, that the two generations do not always oppose each other: there are moments of reconciliation or empathy between them in the novel. The most explicit of these occurs towards the end of the novel, where, in Chapter 33, Mr. Hilbery breaks into the scene in indignation while Mrs. Hilbery is celebrating the coming together of the two couples. Here, Mrs. Hilbery, under the disguise of unwittingness which is characteristic of her, says to him, "'Oh, Trevor, please tell me, what was the date of the first performance of *Hamlet*?'" (528). This question serves to reconcile him with the young people. To answer her, Mr. Hilbery first has to turn to William for exact information about the historical facts, and then starts talking about literature. While talking, Mr. Hilbery observes Ralph, finding in him "a resolution, a will, set now with unalterable tenacity"; at last he "respected the young man" (529). Thus, Mrs.

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[17] The conflict between the traditional networks of communities and the electric communication networks supported by the younger generation is a typical theme for "electric romance" (Marvin 71). In her discussion of the influence of electric communication upon courtships, Marvin cites a tale of "frustrated courtship" set in a small American village in 1886 (70). There, a young couple communicate with each other by telegram, which is disclosed to the whole village. This violates the couple's privacy and frustrates their romance. "This tale," observes Marvin, "celebrated the triumph of tradition over youthful experiments with cherished community customs" (71).

Hilbery's insertion of a literary topic acts as an aid for connecting the young people with the older generation.

The book, like the telephone, is a material object put in a particular place in the material world, but which yet again, like the telephone, has another feature as well. As the telephone, through two people's conversation by means of it, involves the spiritual realm of human life, so the book, through human intellectual activity, functions as a mental mediator between one individual and another. (In the case of the book, it connects two kinds of group of people: the author and the reader; and one reader and another.) If here we define the book as something combining the two spheres of life—material and spiritual—we find a remarkable similarity in function between the book and the telephone in *Night and Day*.

In fact, there are a number of scenes in the novel in which books function in similar ways. They are often taken up by the older generation as their tools for communication with young people. In Chapter 12, Aunt Millicent and Aunt Celia visit the Hilberys and there see Ralph for the first time. At first there is a rift between these aunts and him, which discomforts Ralph: he wonders, "What remark of his would ever reach these fabulous and fantastic characters?" (153). Then Aunt Millicent asks Ralph whether he remembers "that exquisite description in De Quincey" (154). This question instantly bridges the gap between them, for it turns out that Ralph reads De Quincey, which makes the difficult aunt exclaim with exaltation that "you are [. . .] a *rara avis* in your generation" (154).

During a party at her house, Katharine is afflicted by finding William leaving her to approach Cassandra. What relieves her from this state of mind—a sense of forlornness—is her father's request to "take down 'Trelawny's Recollections of Shelley'": it draws her into his company for a moment and then gives her an excuse to leave the party (374). Although this case does not involve bridging the generational gap, it can afford an example of the older generation using a book (though unconsciously) to mitigate the uneasiness of the younger.

Chapter 32 sees Katharine disclosing to her father that she will not marry William. Mr. Hilbery, in indignation, suggests that they should read "Sir Walter Scott" together, in order probably to avoid the problem for the moment (505). Although this act does not appease his resentment, it at least serves to prevent Katharine from severing herself from her father: "she found herself being turned by the agency of Sir Walter Scott into a civilized human being" (505). In the following chapter, Mrs. Hilbery visits Ralph at his office. (Mr. Hilbery has demanded that he break with Katharine.) Mrs. Hilbery is scheming to take him back to her house to reunite him with her daughter; but (perhaps) expecting his rejection, she indirectly persuades him by referring to literary gossip, such as her trip to Shakespeare's birthplace and an episode in Lord Byron's life. This "embellish[es] the bareness of her discourse" and enables her in the end to persuade Ralph to follow her (517). On her way back home with Ralph, Mrs. Hilbery picks up William as well, thus bringing

Ralph and William together. In order to avoid the subject of marriage which would worry them both, Mrs. Hilbery takes up Shakespeare. She, later, again turns to Shakespeare to mitigate the "discomfort" of the young people, whose marital problems have not yet been resolved (526). Thus, the older generation, at the critical moments of conflict or discomfort with young people, take up literary topics as a "buffer" between the young and themselves.

The younger generation also use books to form friendships or to communicate with each other. William gives Ralph a copy of "Sir Thomas Browne," the very copy that had once interested him in William's room (73). Although in rivalry with him over Katharine, Ralph accepts the book as a sign of friendship between them: "he thought of [William] Rodney from time to time with interest, disconnecting him from Katharine," and even hopes to visit him again to "smoke a pipe with him" (73). At the Hilberys' party, the discovery that they share a common interest in specific literary topics draws William and Cassandra to each other (367-68).

In one of her discussions with Ralph about their relationship, Katharine takes down a book of Byron and places it on the table between Ralph and herself. Although there is no further explanation of her action than that she does it out of "[s]ome detached instinct," Ralph understands what she means by it (446): "I see you precisely as you are," he responds to her (447). The book of Romantic poetry, thus placed between the two potential lovers, assumes a symbolic meaning that is suggestive of the existence of a certain passion towards each

other, a passion to which neither has yet given any shape. Its symbolic function becomes more obvious when Mrs. Hilbery happens to intrude on them, finding the book between them. She pretends not to deduce the meaning, but Ralph detects that she understands it, and by it, moreover, their relationship (which has not yet been disclosed to her): he "observed that although Mrs. Hilbery held the book so close to her eyes she was not reading a word"—probably because of the shock she has received from the fact just revealed to her (451).

The following chapter sees Cassandra asking Katharine to look for "the 'History of England' by Lord Macaulay" with her in the Hilberys' library (454). This request is, in fact, aimed at starting a conversation with Katharine over her relationship with Ralph. Since the book is recommended by William, it also functions as a bond between him and Cassandra: it "possessed a talismanic property, since William admired it" (456). Thus, throughout the novel, literary books serve to fill the gap between the older and the younger generations, as well as to forge or confirm relationships among the young.[18]

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[18] Also in several scenes of other novels by Woolf, literary books are taken up for the use of communication. At the end of Part I of *To the Lighthouse*, Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay are alone in the same room, reading Walter Scott and an anthology of poems, respectively. Although they read different books and never talk about the contents, the act of reading itself enhances their sense of sharing the space and time. The scene ends with a reconciliation between the two, who were disputing in the previous scenes over whether or not to go to the lighthouse. Also at the end of the dinner party, Mr. Ramsay recites

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The novel includes another unity of material object belonging to the older generation, an object whose function resembles that of the literary book: the portrait. Like the telephone and the book, the portrait is defined as associated with two realms of human life—material and spiritual: it is treated as an inanimate object, yet at the same time communicates its subject matter to its observers, having effects upon their interior lives. The portraits in the Hilberys' house are also suggestive in forming relationships between characters, especially between the younger and older generations. Since the Hilberys' portraits depict only the figures of people in the past, such as Richard Alardyce (Katharine's grandfather) and Lord Byron, they are described as having more affinity with the older generation than with the younger generation. This point becomes most evident when Aunt Millicent and Aunt Celia are compared to figures in portraits: With "their pink, mellow look, their blooming softness, as of apricots hanging upon a red wall in the afternoon sun," they resemble those in "[p]ortraits by Romney," an eighteenth-century painter (153). Katharine's sense of detachment from the portrait of her grandfather also displays the gap between the past it represents and the present where she resides: her grandfather's "magnificent ghostly head on the canvas [. . .] did not seem to [care] what she and this young man [Ralph] said to each

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the poem "Luriana Lurilee" by Charles Elton, which celebrates the occasion and brings about a sense of unity among the participants (172).

other, for they were only small people" (8).

But when awakening to her love for Ralph and beginning to struggle over it, Katharine comes to see the portrait in relation to herself:

> The expression [of her grandfather in the portrait] repeated itself curiously upon Katharine's face as she gazed up into his. [. . .] For perhaps the first time in her life she thought of him as a man, young, unhappy, tempestuous, full of desires and faults; for the first time she realized him for herself, and not from her mother's memory. (337-38)

This marks the moment when the portrait becomes a living portrait of Katharine herself, not the object of the past which is just admired from a detached viewpoint. The sense of identification in her mind is all the more intensified because the portrait is the one of a man whose lifelong purpose is to express universal emotion—for he is a successful lyric poet—and therefore who may represent each individual person. Katharine's newly gained affinity to her grandfather presents itself also in her asking herself: "'I wonder what he was like?'" (455). Hearing this, Cassandra replies that figures in portraits resemble every person. Despite their ironical tone, her words are unwittingly suggestive of one thing: a sense of universality that portraits in general can evoke in human minds—the very sense that makes Katharine see the reflection of herself in her grandfather's portrait.

There is another moment in the novel when the portrait of a poet brings the past alive into the present. This is when Katharine

places a book of Byron between Ralph and herself. It includes the portrait of Byron, which, along with the nature of the book, helps her suggest her passion towards Ralph. She makes the poet, as it were, talk about her, for her, by overlapping himself with her.

William also "uses" a portrait for himself: before intruding in the place where Ralph and Katharine are talking about their own affairs, he "examine[s] intently for several moments the portrait of a lady," as if for his resolution (483). Thus, the portraits of past figures have a certain influence upon the young characters' thoughts and actions at several points in the novel.

It is now evident that material objects of the older generation—literary books and portraits—serve as media that connect not only the two antagonistic generations, old and new, but also young people. Their functions as media seem to be made clearer by the fact that how they are used—in what situation, for what purpose and so forth—is more important than what each of them, as such, tells or shows. Let us take the case of literary books. In other novels by Woolf, literary books are quoted, sometimes at length, in the texts.[19] In *Night and Day*, on the other hand, books are carried

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[19] It is well known that *Mrs. Dalloway* quotes a famous line from Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, "Fear no more the heat o' the sun / Nor the furious winter's rages" (*MD* 12). *To the Lighthouse* includes quotations from the following works: Tennyson's "The Charge of the Light Brigade" (31, 33), the brothers Grimm's "The Fisherman and his Wife" (69, 89, 90, 91, 98), Charles Elton's "Luriana Lurilee" (171-72), William Browne of Tavistock's "The Sirens' Song" (184), Shakespeare's "Sonnet 98" (186-87) and William Cowper's "The Castaway" (227, 256-57). *The Waves* has extracts from P. B. Shelley

around, taken down, or mentioned during conversations, but their contents are seldom shown or discussed. Mr. Hilbery asks his daughter to bring "Trelawny's Recollections of Shelley" for himself, but the book is never mentioned thereafter (374); Cassandra "never opened the 'History of England'" by Lord Macaulay (459). Even portraits whose contents are sometimes described in detail appear to *convey* some emotion to their beholders, according to the states of their minds. Let us take the case of the portrait of Richard Alardyce. At the beginning of the novel (8), it evokes awe in Katharine's mind, but later (337-38), a sense of familiarity. The remarkable change of its description reflects the change of Katharine's psychic life: her mind changes from being bound by her family history and practical life to being freer and more imaginative, transcending the family bond. In another scene, Katharine, by pointing—though unconsciously—to the portrait of Lord Byron, *communicates* her meaning to Ralph without using verbal expressions.

These objects belonging to the older generation seem in effect to spread communication networks between characters, in the same way that telephone wires connect Ralph and Katharine. Their similarity with the telephone system is also evident in the fact that they unite one character and another without diminishing their differences or distance between them. Books are taken up in one character's gentle demand for empathy from another. Portraits realise quasi-meetings

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(41, 195, 200), Ben Jonson (188), Shakespeare (200), and an anonymous lyric of the early sixteenth century (143-45).

between the living and the dead: there, the living feel neither the embarrassment nor the obligations that people are likely to feel in real conversations; the suggestive gaze of the dead allows the living to hold communion with them in their solitary contemplation.

The striking similarity of the traditional objects to the modern inventions suggests one thing. This is a rediscovery of a sense of "newness" in traditional objects, objects which are often acknowledged as outmoded means of communication, within a modernist context. The Hilberys' books are, as such, merely parts of the furniture or decoration of their Victorian house, which is proud of the family's literary ancestor renowned in public history; yet by being used as means of communication not only among the older generation but also among the younger or between the older and the younger, the books are "enlivened," functioning as flexible mediators between people, and are thus incorporated into the present. By the same token, Katharine's recognition of her grandfather's personal life in his portrait marks the moment when she has immediate access to the past, and therefore the moment when her dead grandfather comes to inhabit the temporality of the present. In effect, books and portraits are re-rendered in connection with modern technological inventions, in such a way as to emphasise their function of connecting people across the boundaries of generations, across the division of time and space. With their common feature foregrounded, traditional objects and technological inventions are treated almost as equal in the novel.

Since the "communication networks" of traditional material

objects connect not only young people, as telephony does, but also different generations, their "networks" are described as vaster than telecommunication networks. To be sure, the telephone in Mary's office is intended to connect the whole world; but since the office's aim is limited to achieving women's suffrage, the function of its telephone is also limited in its aim: the network connects only those who are concerned with the political campaign.

It seems that the argument above—the resemblance of the traditional material objects to the telephone in function in the novel—confirms our suspicion in Section II of this chapter, that Woolf may have entertained a critical view as to the potential of new technologies. We can here detect a clear tone of mockery towards technologies. The similarity of the traditional and the technological is, in fact, embedded also in the imagery of networks, which, in the preceding section, we associated with the world of new technologies and their potential. The image is, on the other hand, related to a traditional motif of wicked women deluding men. In Chapter 9, Aunt Celia broaches to Mrs. Hilbery "the case of Cyril [a young nephew of theirs]" having children with "the woman who was not his wife" (120). Out of a suspicion that the woman seduced Cyril, the aunt attaches to the woman's act of entangling him in her plot "a vision of threads weaving and interweaving a close, white mesh round their victim [Cyril]" (124)—a vision associated with a spider spinning thread. The spider imagery is used also to depict the skilfulness of the older generation in running their households. To escape from Mrs. Hilbery,

a skilful hostess, is "like tearing through a maze of diamond-glittering spider's web" (15). In the same light, it is also noteworthy that a carriage, not a car, plays a significant role in the consummation of the two couples towards the end of the novel: Mrs. Hilbery's carriage brings Ralph and William back to her house, where their lovers, Katharine and Cassandra, are waiting. It seems as if the carriage replaced the car which plays significant roles in the previous scenes—in the process of the formation of these couples.

However, before drawing any conclusion, it is indispensable to review our discussion as a whole—both of technological inventions and of the material objects of the past—so that we can specify Woolf's stance more precisely. Before moving on to the review, it will be helpful to survey earlier accounts of Woolf's reaction to modern technological inventions.

Ⅳ. WOOLF AND TECHNOLOGIES

Until about ten years ago, Woolf had seldom been discussed in relation to technology and science. This is because there had been a general consensus among critics: there is a certain limitation implicit in her distrust of contemporary technologies and science. This assessment is probably not irrelevant to her contemporaries' accusation that Woolf and the Bloomsbury Group keep a silence—at least in terms of action—towards the political and social issues of the

contemporary world.[20] It is well known that her literary opponent Wyndham Lewis accused Bloomsbury of not appreciating "anything above the *salon* scale," "peeping more into the past than into the present" (138, 139).

As we mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, it was Gillian Beer's 1996 essay that questioned the general trend. Beer observes that during her search for a new style of fiction in her mid-career, Woolf was deeply influenced by "the new physics" of the 1920s and 1930s, which was represented by Albert Einstein, Arthur Eddington and James Jeans. "The physicists did not simply introduce ideas to her; rather, their insights and their language coalesced with hers," she observes (*Common Ground* 113). To support her point, Beer takes up *The Waves*, which is often regarded as "the product of a secluded disembodied sensibility," proving that Woolf's seemingly "solipsistic prose-poem musings" stem, in reality, from her active participation in issues of physics in her time (*Common Ground* 74, 120).

Beer's argument has been followed by subsequent works of

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[20] This might seem strange, if one considers the fact that several of her fictional and non-fictional works including *The Years* (1937), *Three Guineas* (1938) and *Between the Acts* (1941) take up war as a significant subject. However, it was not until recently that these works began to be read as the products of Woolf's active engagement with contemporary anti-war movements. It is also pointed out that there is a limitation in her treatment of social and political issues because of her privileged position as an upper-middle-class woman and educational background. It is often observed that *Night and Day* does not mention the First World War. (See Katherine Mansfield's well-known criticism in her 1919 letter to John Middleton Murry that the novel has "a lie in the soul" (82).)

criticism, the most prominent of which is Pamela Caughie's collection of critical essays, *Virginia Woolf in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (2000). This book expands Beer's point, by exploring Woolf's positive relation to specific technological inventions, namely, the radio, the gramophone, the cinema, the telescope, and the motorcar. It also seeks to contextualise these relations with reference to her contemporaries' reactions to the emergence of new technologies.[21]

This book, however, has its limitations. One of them is its scope. It covers all of Woolf's works written in the 1920s and 1930s, ranging from *Jacob's Room* (1922) to *Three Guineas* (1938), and two works before and after these two decades, namely "Kew Gardens" (1919) and *Between the Acts* (1941). Its focus on this period is based on the fact that technological inventions became prevalent in European people's lives in the 1920s and 1930s, as exemplified by the start of the BBC broadcasting service in 1922. Although the focus is right, it also results in the dismissal of one fictional work, *Night and Day*

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[21] Scott detects a similarity between the gramophone used in the pageant in *Between the Acts* and its director Miss La Trobe, an amateur experimental playwright. Scott observes that through the similarity, Woolf tries to show the "revolutionary potential" of mechanical reproduction (105). Cuddy-Keane points out the influence of sound technologies—the radio, the gramophone—on Woolf's structuring of fictional works: their "live and interactive paradigm of creator/composition/audience" is effected in multiple, decentralised perspectives in her writings. The microscopic world of technologies—the camera, for instance— which enables one to perceive objects with "immediate reality" corresponds to Woolf's understanding of reality as "the thing itself before it has been made anything" (Minow-Pinkney, "Age of Motor Cars" 175).

(1919). (To be sure, parts of the book refer to the novel, yet do not discuss the novel in any detail.) The exclusion of the novel seems odd, for, as we have seen, it includes the telephone—a significant modern invention—as one of its major motifs. The inclusion of the novel is all the more necessary because it was, as mentioned earlier, written concurrently with "Kew Gardens" (1919), a work taken up in a chapter of *Virginia Woolf in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*.[22]

Another limitation is not specific to the volume, but common to the entire criticism on Woolf's relation to technologies, both before and after Beer. That is critics' gestures of taking sides: it seems they are anxious to decide whether Woolf is positive or negative towards technologies, sticking to a black-and-white argument. Certainly, some of their arguments are detailed and intriguing and therefore have much to contribute to the contextual understanding of Woolf; but they are more or less based on the simple premise that Woolf is positive or negative towards technologies. It is true that contributors to *Virginia Woolf in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* more or less acknowledge Woolf's doubt about the potential of technologies, thus drawing attention to her negative reaction to their phenomena; but it seems they take it up only for the purpose of overturning it afterwards, emphasising the argument of their side. We also notice that their explanation of their opponents' argument is apt to be oversimplified. It is observed, for instance, that Woolf was dubious

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[22] See Cuddy-Keane 82-85. Cuddy-Keane discusses the short story in relation to sound technologies.

about the possibilities of technologies only because she was afraid that their convenience might serve for imperialism and war, as exemplified in Hitler's use of radio broadcasting.

Compared with these arguments, Whitworth's recent accounts of Woolf's response to technologies—"Woolf's Web: Telecommunications and Community" (1999) and "Telecommunications as Reality and as Metaphor" (2005)[23]—are more comprehensive. He stresses Woolf's ambivalence towards modern inventions, and also draws on *Night and Day* for evidence for his argument. It does not mean, however, that his argument is altogether unproblematic.

Whitworth places an emphasis on Woolf's stance as a writer in the "new age": "Woolf grew up in the era of telecommunications," he writes ("Woolf's Web" 162). He points out that technological inventions, including telecommunications, have brought about a sense of incongruity in daily life, as described in Katharine imagining that the sound "issuing from the telephone" is "coloured by the surroundings which received it" (327). "The complex simultaneity created by the telephone anticipates and informs the simultaneity of modernist works," he observes ("Woolf's Web" 166). So Whitworth defines Woolf as one of those modernists who, however politically ambivalent they are towards technologies, in effect turn to their power of innovation as a useful model for modernist experimentation.

It is indisputable that "incongruity" is one of the key words in

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[23] *Authors in Context* 188-91.

Woolf's aesthetic, and the word is related to her living environment. But too much emphasis on her connection with the modern era dismisses one important aspect of Woolf: that she is modernist, but also has affinities to the Victorian age. As discussed in the introduction of this thesis, it is well known that Woolf is ambivalent towards her Victorian predecessors. As a member of the new generation, she has an aversion to Victorian ideology, as exemplified in her famous argument in *A Room of One's Own* about the obscure status of women in the patriarchal society established by previous generations. On the other hand, she has a longing for the lost Victorian world which had its own allure. She draws on Victorian women in depicting heroines in her novels, such as *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*; and, as we will discuss in the next chapter, she even sees in these Victorian women models of herself as a woman writer.

We may therefore surmise that Woolf is not exactly on the side of the new age standing in opposition to the old age. She takes, as it were, a position in between. This means that for a precise explanation of her stance, it is indispensable that we discuss her stance in relation to the past as well as to her contemporary world.

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Let us now review the whole analysis of the novel in this chapter. We see two plots in the novel: the development of the relationship between Katharine and Ralph, and the conflict between the older and the younger generations. One of the keys to the

consummation of the former is the telephone. One of the keys to the solution of the latter conflict is material objects belonging to the older generation, such as literary books. These two plots are, then, closely intertwined with each other. What at first prevents Katharine and Ralph from forming their relationship is their self-contradiction—their inner conflicts between two ideas of life. Katharine oscillates between a practical self, which resides in the pro-Victorian world, helping her mother with the writing of a biography of a Victorian poet; and her deeper self, "a creature of uncalculating passion and instinctive freedom" (355). Ralph is also torn between a realistic self burdened with social obligations and a dreaming self free from any conventional ideology. The former self of either character is the one that conforms to the conventional boundaries between generations and social classes, whereas the latter self is the one engendered with the advent of new technologies and consequent individual freedom. Since their proposed marital relationship conflicts with the ideology of the old generation, they become engaged only when they make the latter self overcome the former self, and resolve to defiantly challenge the older generation. So the two plots run parallel to each other and reach their endings at the same time: the moment Katharine and Ralph overcome their inner conflicts and become engaged is also described as the moment the younger generation defeats the older generation. The intertwining of these two plots indicates the association between technological inventions and material objects belonging to the older

generation in the progress of the novel. Combined together, these two groups of objects, old and new, make the whole story proceed to its consummation—the younger generation's replacement of the older generation.

Then what does this association between traditional and modern objects mean to Woolf in her attempt to depict the new world? What does this say about her stance towards modern technologies and the new world they bring about? To make this point clear, it is helpful to turn to her essay, "How It Strikes a Contemporary" (1923). There Woolf discusses the difficulty of evaluating fictional works by one's contemporaries. She ascribes the difficulty in criticism to the difficulty of modern writers themselves: compared with their predecessors, they have such complex minds that they cannot make "that complete statement which we call a masterpiece" (359). Modern writers' works are, therefore, fragmentary and difficult to assess. But Woolf does not conclude her essay with a pessimistic prospect. She remarks that since truth which writers try to describe "is always the same, from Chaucer even to Mr Conrad," modern writers' attempts will generate masterpieces in the future, however fragmentary they are now (359). So she concludes: "The difference is on the surface; the continuity in the depths" (359).

Her statement in this essay is suggestive for our present discussion, for it clearly expresses her thought about the past and the present, or, to put it more precisely, the relationship between what

the past generates and what the present invents.[24] Woolf is strongly conscious of the rift between the past and her contemporary world, a rift that becomes all the more evident in the emergence of technological advances. Compared with the past, the contemporary world looks complex, a complexity that is exemplified in the minds of people. (As in the case of Katharine and Ralph.) She admits that the past was simpler and therefore more "complete" than the present. Yet she is not pessimistic about this fact, and is not against the idea that the present should replace the past, as shown in the novel's ending in which the younger generation defeat the older; she acknowledges the potential of the new age for bringing about new paradigms of life and admits that it has merits of its own. (Recall that she uses motifs of modern inventions in creating a unique plot of her own.)

Still, her optimism stems not only, as Whitworth observes, from her expectation that the new age brings about changes, a sense of innovation in the world; it stems also from her sense of aloofness from the change itself. (There is, therefore, a tone of gentle mockery in her suggesting a similarity in function between material objects of the older generation and the apparatus of modern technologies.) She believes that something fundamental will not change in human

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[24] My application of a literary topic to a social topic might sound casual, but is appropriate in Woolf studies. It is known that Woolf tends to relate social issues to her literary concerns, and vice versa. Fisher, for instance, comments on *Night and Day* that there is a relationship between the novel's "discarding [. . .] of the conventions" of women's behaviours in society and the novel's rejection "of the most basic narrative convention" (95).

life—for example, human relationships and communication—however remarkably the situation will change. In other words, what she believes in is a certain sense of continuity between the past and the present, despite their differences on the surface. In "How It Strikes a Contemporary," for example, Woolf writes: "The telephone, which interrupts the most serious conversations, has a romance of its own" (356). Here she points to something new the telephone brings about (sudden interruptions in human relationships), but also stresses the thing the telephone shares with traditional objects (romance). Although she describes the romance as a modern version, her emphasis seems to be placed upon the unchanging rule of romance.

Her sense of continuity between the past and the present, and, by extension, the present and the future, is described also in her diary entry for 23 November 1926 when she conceives the idea of *The Waves*: "time shall be utterly obliterated; future shall somehow blossom out of the past. [. . .] My theory being that the actual event practically does not exist—nor time either" (*D*3: 118). In *Night and Day*, Mrs. Hilbery says, "After all, what *is* the present? Half of it's the past, [. . .] I should say [. . .]" (7).

Thus, Woolf's stance towards the technological age is complex and elusive. As a modernist writer who seeks for experimental forms of fiction, she anticipates, as Whitworth observes, the changes that the new age brings about to the nature of human experience or perception. But as a pursuer of "truth" or "reality" as she understood it, a thing fundamental to her aesthetic throughout her career, she is

detached from the new phenomena: she is sceptical about stressing their novelty, for too much absorption into them leads to losing sight of something unchanged or fundamental. So she uses technologies as effective devices for structuring her fiction, but at the same time denies their complete newness by attaching the same function to material objects belonging to the preceding generation. She is not, as critics before Beer state, indifferent to technologies and science, but also not, as those after Beer claim, allured by the novelties that the modern version of "sorcery" displays (Haberman 198). Her elusive stance towards the new world corresponds to her elaborate structuring of her texts: she oscillates between one expression, phenomenon, imagination and another in her assiduous effort to seek for words to describe "reality" in human life.

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We have hitherto stressed the semi-essentialist position of Woolf (though not in the strict sense) in her composition of *Night and Day*. Yet given that the issue of technological developments is intertwined with the socio-political issues of the world, it is important to situate her attempt in the cultural and social context of her time if we are to understand its exact meaning. The development of new technologies brought about the establishment of public time, by which different regions with different temporal systems came to share the same system of time. What Woolf calls "reality" is, in fact, the temporal notion produced by William James and Henri Bergson as a backlash against the invention of this new notion of time. This

backlash has an explanation in historical events of the time associated with the technological advances.

In his discussion of the early twentieth-century view—particularly the interwar-period view—of the future in European countries, Kern designates this generation as having both an "active" and a "passive" relation to the future (107). They evinced, on the one hand, "hopeful action and aggressive, prospective thinking," accelerated by new technologies and acclaimed in "science fiction, Futurist art and revolutionary politics" (107, 104). But they did not do so without criticism: "there was also passivity and caution" towards such a trend (107). This complex, unstable view of the future reflects the unfinished character of modernity, that is, to put it in Christopher Prendergast's words, "a structure of hope, fear and fantasy invested in an emergent formation and a possible future" (Armstrong 7). The interwar generation was experiencing, on the one hand, the unprecedented progress of technologies and, accordingly, a sudden expansion of their universe. This generation, on the other hand, could not but admit a by-product which the technologies had just brought about: the increasing desire for totalisation and consequent conflicts and devastation. The Bergsonian idea of interior time as opposed to the notion of external (universal) time evolved out of this ambivalence about technological advances and their generation of totalitarian thought epitomised in that notion.

The novel's subtle positioning of modern inventions in relation to traditional objects seems to coincide with the complicated vision of

the future in the European world of Woolf's time. By demonstrating the similarity in function between traditional objects and modern inventions, and thus emphasising the association between the past and the present, the novel turns away from a simplistic view of human history: that it progresses along linear, authoritarian public time. This corresponds to a gesture against the cult of technological innovation, the conceit and egocentrism of Western culture, which justifies imperialism and war. In other words, by drawing attention to what the technological age rediscovered—the reality of private time—rather than what it newly introduced—the universal time—the novel, in effect, emphasises the democratic influence of new technologies on human perception: the development of a sense of transcending the boundaries of classes, generations, and societies, across time and space.[25] (This reminds us of the short stories discussed in Section I of this chapter, stories in which Mrs. Ramsay succeeds in developing democratic networks of the guests in her party.)

The argument above suggests the possibility of a new

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[25] From this point of view, the title of the novel—*Night and Day*—seems suggestive. It may imply not only, as generally observed, the distinction between night and day, or, on a metaphorical level, between opposing spheres exemplified in the conflicting lovers, but also a modern sense of the blurring of their distinction. In his exploration of the effects of the beginning of electric supply systems in cities at around the turn of the century, Kern cites one observation from Ellen Glasgow's novel *Phases of an Inferior Planet* (1898): "a Broadway street scene at dusk is illuminated by a flood of 'radiant electricity' which gave the effect of an 'immortal transformation' of night into day" (29).

interpretation of *Night and Day*. The novel is modern, in a more profound sense than has been acknowledged: it is true that it takes up the theme of the replacement of the older generation by the younger, but its focus seems to lie elsewhere. It centres on radical changes in the human perception of time and space in their entireties, rather than on individual social changes, such as women's independence in society. The novel is also ingeniously topical, despite the general assessment of it as traditional, or the accusation that it shuns comment on the First World War which had ended just a year before its publication. It covers cultural, social, and political issues of the time, subtly communicating them as subterranean messages under the disguise of an outmoded fictional form and theme.

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This chapter's analysis in its entirety reveals an intriguing coalescence of Woolf's engagement with social issues in her time and her aesthetic practice. In her democratic—anti-authoritarian—fictional space, we see two kinds of material motifs—traditional and technological—given roles beyond their original status as real existence. They are no longer just parts of the factual descriptions in her fictional world, but are also devices with which to create a heterogeneous time and space, actively interrelated beyond their apparent differences.

In order to further look at this interactive relationship between these two kinds of material motif in Woolf's modernist experimentation, we will take up one of these two in each of the

following chapters. This will enable us to examine closely how each motif works beyond its materiality.

CHAPTER 2

WOMEN KNITTING:

DOMESTIC ACTIVITY, WRITING, AND DISTANCE

IN WOOLF'S FICTION

This chapter takes up the motif of a traditional activity, "knitting," by which we mean all the activities involving fibre arts—knitting, needlework, quilting, and so forth. Knitting has long been associated with tradition, domesticity, and womanhood. Embroidery, for instance, was a professional art in northern European countries until the Renaissance,[1] and became an "amateur craft"—domestic art—in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Embroidery also has a long history as a popular subject for European paintings. In Holland, it was "frequently the subject of genre painting" in the seventeenth century (Collins 87), as exemplified in Jan Vermeer's *The Lacemaker* (1669-70). Its popularity did not decrease in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, along with other domestic subjects such as reading and music. More recently, Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919) took up this traditional subject in several of his works involving domestic scenes.

Yet, importantly, Renoir did not just follow the tradition: he also gave a twist to the expression of the well-drawn subject. John Collins observes: "Most remarkable about Renoir's treatment of embroidery from the 1870s is the way he is able to energize this traditionally subdued indoor subject with a brilliant flourish of Impressionist light and color" (102). In other words, Renoir enlivened the old-fashioned subject in a modernist context. Indeed, according to Collins, it was about the time when he was searching for innovative methods and

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[1] *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* says that "Northern European embroidery was, until the Renaissance, mostly ecclesiastical." See the entry for "embroidery."

ways of relating them to past traditions (represented by Vermeer) that Renoir produced various pictures of embroiderers. The conjunction of the traditional theme with new expressions is seen also in works of other Impressionists, such as Claude Monet (1840-1926).[2] In Impressionist paintings, the embroidery theme is a sphere where the traditional and the modern merge in the process of the creation of a new aesthetic.

Knitting is a key motif in Woolf's works as well. In her feminist polemic *A Room of One's Own* (1929), Woolf draws attention to its traditional aspect as work for women, displaying her displeasure at the fact. She regards knitting as one of domestic chores which have long disturbed the independence of women. Citing Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Woolf makes the woman protagonist state for her: "it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures [men] to say that they [women] ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags" (*AROO* 63). Her point is underlined by her relating it to another traditional activity, writing. Woolf raises the fact that writing, unlike knitting, has long been considered as work for men, deploring the long-neglected position of women writers in comparison with the prosperity of male writers.

Indeed, knitting and writing are traditionally regarded as opposing symbols. The former is related to femininity, and, in

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[2] For example, *La Femme au métier* (*Madame Monet Embroidering*) (1875); *Camille Monet and a Child in the Artist's Garden in Argenteuil* (1875).

relation to women's self-effacing status in society and confinement in the house, has also represented detachment and distance from the most important human activities. Writing, on the other hand, has been associated with masculinity, as a mode of highly demonstrative and self-centred action.[3] (As suggested by this expression, writing is a paradoxical activity, having opposite tendencies: outward and inward.) Any aspiring women writers, according to Gilbert and Gubar, have taken the risk of being condemned by gender conservatives for their neglect of domestic roles and trespassing on the male domain.[4] It is well known that Samuel Johnson disparages women's intellectual activities (including writing), an attitude exemplified by his utterance: "[A] woman's preaching is like a dog's walking on his hind legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all" (Boswell 287).

Yet this traditional dichotomy between the two actions is blurred in Woolf's aesthetic. Jane Marcus, among other feminist critics, regards Woolf as "foremother" of a female literary tradition,

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[3] For detailed explanations of the general symbolism of these two actions, see Hedges 340-48; King 77-78. Yet I should note that King's point is not to discuss this widely acknowledged antagonism between knitting and writing, but to draw attention to the existence of their more complicated relationship in the pre-Victorian period. Despite the feminist argument that the pen traditionally evokes female anxieties of authorship, women in the eighteenth century, according to King, had a desire for the pen all the same. Through an exploration of the story of the exchange of needle for pen in two eighteenth-century women writers' novels, King observes that these writers seek their pleasure in writing and even "possibilities of specifically female authorship" in their stories of "a woman coming to writing" (79).

[4] See Gilbert and Gubar 45-92.

in which women's daily work and life are inseparable from their art (89).[5] This is most evident in Woolf's appreciation of rhythm both in domestic activity and in writing. Just as Clarissa Dalloway finds a sense of peacefulness in the rhythm of sewing (*MD* 44-45), so Woolf states that "it is 'getting the rhythm' in writing that matters" (Laurence, *Silence* 171). And this is considered as a self-declared phenomenon. "No one knew better than Woolf did [. . .] about the connections between writing and working with fabric," observes Eileen Barrett, pointing to Woolf's identity as "an amateur bookbinder and cofounder of the Hogarth Press" and also Woolf's work with her sister, the painter Vanessa Bell (55).[6]

As the embroidery theme was reintroduced in Impressionist paintings, so the act of knitting seems to be redefined in the Woolfian aesthetic. This chapter will explore this possible transformation of

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[5] "In Woolf," observes also Romines, "[Eudora] Welty discovered a woman writer who joined traditions of domestic ritual with modernist experiments in the rendering of consciousness" (213). This viewpoint appeared with the flowering of feminist criticism in the 1970s and the 1980s. In American literature, this originated in the rediscovery of women's traditional textile work in the early 1970s as women's self-expression and creativity rather than trivial work. (See Hedges.) Showalter's "Piecing and Writing" (1986) extends this argument, stating that women's writing in America is rooted in the traditional female art of sewing quilts. This feminist argument has since been applied to readings of American women writers. In "Sew to Speak" (1998), Chouard notes the significance of the motif of quilting in Welty's fiction, exploring "how it operates in the fabric of her texts, as theme and form" (8).

[6] Barrett uses the words "working with fabric" in the broadest sense: by this expression she even means working at canvas—another kind of activity associated with "fabric." She therefore notes Woolf's relationship with the painter Vanessa.

knitting, from a conventional to a modern mode of activity, in the context of Woolf's aesthetic in practice. We will look at several scenes involving knitting (and, by extension, all domestic works traditionally allocated to women) in Woolf's fiction, focusing on this activity as a feature of the Woolfian world.[7] Furthermore, by comparing knitting with writing in her fiction, we will consider how the acknowledged traditional activity for women is related to Woolf's own activity as a woman writer.

I. "NURSE LUGTON'S CURTAIN"

Let us first look at a short story by Woolf which seems to suggest the conjunction of knitting with writing in a very condensed (though highly metaphorical) way.

"Nurse Lugton's Curtain" (1924?), a short story less than two pages long, begins with Nurse Lugton falling asleep while sewing a curtain.[8] While she is sleeping, the patterns on her curtain—animals and people—become alive, moving about freely on the curtain. The curtain itself is no longer a woven substance, but has turned into the

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[7] It might be argued that we need to make distinctions between sewing, knitting, and embroidering, and so forth. Yet, as far as these three activities are concerned, Barrett draws attention to the fact that Woolf was familiar with all of these activities, and suggests that these activities were equally favourite diversions for her (55). We will therefore deal with them equally in the following argument: the word knitting will sometimes denote all of these activities.

[8] For the year of the publication of the story, see Dick's notes for *CSF* (302-03).

blue sky under which those animals and people live. Thus the story centres on the depiction of the fantastic world where the lifeless are given life: the major action of the story consists only of the movements on the curtain. The puzzle that proposes itself to us is, then, how important Nurse Lugton is in the story: sleeping, thus residing in the background of the story, the female character seems to have little to do with the main action from which she is totally detached.

To consider this question, let us examine the characterisation of Nurse Lugton in the story. While sleeping, she is depicted, for instance, as follows: "Over them [the animals on the curtain] burnt Nurse Lugton's golden thimble like a sun; and as Nurse Lugton snored, the animals heard the wind roaring through the forest" (160). It is noteworthy that Nurse Lugton is described as analogous to nature, with her thimble compared to the "sun" and her breathing compared to "the wind roaring." This passage reminds us of some of the earlier interludes in *The Waves*, where the rising sun is compared to "a woman" or "a girl":

> [T]he sky cleared [. . .] as if the arm of a woman couched beneath the horizon had raised a lamp and flat bars of white, green and yellow spread across the sky like the blades of a fan. [. . .] Slowly the arm that held the lamp raised it higher and then higher until a broad flame became visible [. . .]. (5)[9]

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[9] The sun as "a girl" appears also in the third and fifth interlude sections (52, 105).

Nurse Lugton is described also from the point of view of the creatures on her curtain. She appears to them to be overwhelming: "They [people] could see her, from their windows, towering over them" (161). And particularly for the animals, her existence seems threatening, so that it is only when she falls asleep that they can move freely, "released" (161). Their furtive glance at Nurse Lugton again reminds us of a scene in *The Waves*: in Elvedon, an (apparently) imaginary world of Bernard's, Bernard and Susan steal a look at a woman who is seated at a table "between the two long windows" writing (12). They are, just like Nurse Lugton's fictional animals, afraid that they might be detected by the person they are looking at.

In her essay on *The Waves*, Diane F. Gillespie observes that these women in the book—"the women with the lamp of the interludes" and "the lady writing at Elvedon"—are "possible vestige[s]" of the woman around whom Woolf originally structured *The Waves* (231). This woman is mentioned for the first time in Woolf's diary entry for 30 October 1926, where she writes about her idea for the book: "I begin to think [. . .] of a solitary woman musing [. . .] a book of ideas about life," which is "a dramatisation of my mood at Rodmell" (*D*3: 114). Less than one month later, on 23 November, she again writes in her diary that she will present in the proposed book "some semi mystic very profound life of a woman" (*D*3: 118). Considering that *The Waves* is often regarded as a

semi-autobiographical piece of writing,[10] and also that Woolf herself recognises the woman as a dramatisation of her own state of mind, we can almost say that the woman is the author herself.

Now we can see the connection between Nurse Lugton and the woman in *The Waves*; and between the woman and the author. This enables us to set up a hypothesis: Nurse Lugton as a woman sewing—in the sense that although sleeping, she appears as a woman who has just been sewing—is in some way related to a woman writing or the author herself. Indeed, this seems quite possible, for the short story involves the patterns on Nurse Lugton's curtain, which makes her textile comparable to the text of Woolf's. The possible link between Nurse Lugton and the author further suggests the possibility of the self-reflective function of the figure of the knitting woman: that the sewing Nurse Lugton might represent Woolf's stance as a writer.

It would, however, be rash to jump to conclusions about this matter. To explore the possible linkage between women knitting and Woolf writing, we need to turn to several knitting scenes in Woolf's other fictions, closely examining each of them. This will form the topic of the next section.

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[10] Goldman 75. McNichol observes that "*The Waves* [. . .] attempts to convey [. . .] the meaning behind the experience of transcendence in [the] moments" connected with her own childhood memory at St Ives (117). Woolf herself writes: "Autobiography it might be called," although "it must not be my childhood" (*D*3: 229, 236).

II. WOMEN KNITTERS

The Voyage Out includes several knitting scenes, though the fact has been oddly neglected in the critical literature: Mrs. Ambrose doing "embroidery" (89); native women "plaiting straw or [. . .] kneading something in bowls" (348); "a group of ladies with pieces of needlework" (451). In Rachel Vinrace's death scene, Nurse McInnis is seen taking care of her (403), and as a domestic duty in a wider sense, even this activity is not irrelevant to knitting. But for a reason soon to become apparent, we begin with an episode which appears half way through the book. There Terence Hewet urges Rachel to explain the "curious silent unrepresented li[ves]" of women who have traditionally stayed inside their houses, "in the background" of society (258). In reply, Rachel describes a typical Victorian household, looking back on her own childhood when she lived with her two aunts in Richmond:

> They [her two aunts] were very much afraid of her father. He was a great dim force in the house, by means of which they held on to the great world which is represented every morning in the *Times*. But the real life of the house was something quite different from this. It went on independently of Mr. Vinrace, and tended to hide itself from him. [. . .] She always submitted to her father, just as they did, but it was her aunts who influenced her really; her aunts who built up the fine, closely woven substance of their life at home. 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. (259)

It is noteworthy that in the description of their life the "weaving" metaphor is used: they "built up the fine, closely woven substance of daily life at home." Evoking the image of spiders weaving webs to capture their prey, this hints at the aunts' deliberate control of their family.[11] Since Rachel stresses how influential her aunts were for herself as a child, it is likely that this enigmatic metaphor bears a significant relation to the heroine's life.

Most striking about the substance of the novel is that its heroine dies prematurely near its end. With the cause left obscure, the meaning of her death has been a subject of much speculation among critics and scholars. There are two contradictory arguments about it. Some see there a thwarted Bildungsroman: the author, against the reader's expectation, brings death to the young heroine, who would normally grow into the world and reach maturity at the end of the book.[12] Others observe, as opposed to this, that Rachel's death is an indispensable part of her mental journey: it is a rite of passage from the way of living with concern about daily affairs and a sense of one's mortality, to the more philosophical way of living with the awareness of the continuous succession of life on earth. In this respect, Rachel's early death is "not a denial of her initiation but a confirmation of it" (Fleishman, *Critical Reading* 5).

It may be true that Woolf tries to express some permanent repetition of life and death in *The Voyage Out*, as shown in her letter

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11 Remember a similar spider-web image is used in *Night and Day*, as discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis. See page 67 to page 68.

12 For example, see Dick, "Tunnelling Process" 179.

to Lytton Strachey. In the letter, she explains that what she aims at in this novel is

> to give the feeling of a vast tumult of life, as various and disorderly as possible, which should be cut short for a moment by the death, and go on again—and the whole was to have a sort of pattern, and be somehow controlled. (*L2*: 82)

It turns out from the passage that Woolf attempts to describe the cycle of life and death not through the individual life of one character—Rachel's life—but through the whole structure of the novel built around a cluster of people's lives. It would therefore be more appropriate to think that Rachel's untimely death in itself is negative.

In terms of the argument that *The Voyage Out* is a story of initiation, Rachel's death means her failure in establishing her new self by emancipating herself from the perspective which she is used to. If we note that Rachel refers to "her two aunts in Richmond" not only in her conversation with Hewet in the extract above but also on several other occasions, we can surmise that her failure may have something to do with the aunts who "influenced her really" in the early stage of her life. That is, their influence upon her has so thoroughly permeated her life that she cannot escape it. One possible influence is, as Avrom Fleishman, among other critics, has suggested, the Victorian ideology that regards marriage and motherhood as

women's goal.[13] This argument produces the image of a struggling heroine who oscillates between the ideology represented by her predecessors, and her own desire to evade it.

In this respect, Rachel's aunts *are* as influential as they were for the heroine as a child. On one level, things turn out just as her aunts wished, for they might have rewarded those who follow their convention with the right of the succession of their female authority, but might have punished those who are against them by denying them any right to establish themselves. Rachel's aunts' subtlety in controlling others and the persistence of their power remind us of the metaphorical description of them as weavers: they were "buil[ding] up the *fine, closely woven substance* of their life at home" (emphasis added). They are associated with the Fates in Greek mythology—the three goddesses described as domestic women spinning threads, deciding the length of each thread, cutting the thread respectively; since their threads are those of human life spans, these domestic goddesses have formidable power to decide human lives.[14]

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[13] Although Fleishman stresses a positive aspect of Rachel's death by observing that she, through her "voyage out of life toward death," breaks with tradition—"England, marriage, and life"—this argument seems to suggest, conversely, that tradition is not negligible for Rachel to the end (*Critical Reading* 14, 13).

[14] These aunts recall two women knitters in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. For a discussion of them in this respect, see Feder 283; Hyland 10. This possible linkage between Woolf's and Conrad's knitting women may be supported by several arguments about the similarity between the two writers' works. Naremore, commenting on the scene of the Europeans' journey upriver (which appears later in *The Voyage Out*), observes that "here there is not only Conrad's insistence on mood, but even images that seem to owe vaguely to his

This scheming feminine influence is also found in other parts of the novel. One example is in Chapter 6, just after the scene in which Richard Dalloway kisses Rachel, leaving her dismayed. Her "obvious languor and listlessness" (88) soon allows her aunt Mrs. Ambrose to learn that "something [has] happened" to Rachel, and to "[devise] a kind of trap" (88) to make her disclose the event. Mrs. Ambrose arranges a private meeting with Rachel and waits for a chance to elicit Rachel's secret while talking about ordinary things. Her ingenuity is revealed by her detailed observations of Rachel and the quick judgements and decisions she makes as a result of them. Seeing Rachel bewildered by Richard's behaviour, Mrs. Ambrose imagines that she is totally ignorant of "the relations of men with women" (90), and decides to "[belittle] the whole affair" (90). Learning that Rachel tries to understand the meaning of what has happened, Mrs. Ambrose decides to "help her" and begins to form a plan (90). Finding that Rachel sees the event with more composure, then, Mrs. Ambrose tells her that it is important to "take things as they are" (91). What should be noted is that all the time she is "stitch[ing] at her embroidery" (94). This implies an association between her creative thinking and embroidering, underlined by the fact that she stops embroidering when she ceases to think. At the end of their meeting, Mrs. Ambrose decides to confide in Rachel what she has been thinking—her plan to

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story [*Heart of Darkness*]" (45). Analysing the "shared theme of [the] journey into the heart of darkness, a journey which is both literal and metaphorical" (144), Pitt also states that "the influence of Conrad on Virginia Woolf and the debt she owes to him are considerable" (141).

take her niece to her villa and to educate her. She "then put down her needle" (95).

Another example of women's secret manipulation can be found in the expedition up the South American river to a native village, a scene which comes just after Rachel and Hewet agree to get married. There they see native women "moving their hands, either plaiting straw or [. . .] kneading something in bowls" (348). What is characteristic about these women is their fixed "stare" upon the strangers, "the motionless inexpressive gaze of those removed from each other far far beyond the plunge of speech" (348). Their stare follows the visitors, who explore their surroundings, until they become "absorbed" into "the life of the village" (348). That these native women with mysterious stares bear a certain meaning for the visitors—especially for the lovers Rachel and Hewet—as well as being cautious of strangers is obvious from the following points. Firstly, silent as they are, they have an effect on Rachel and Hewet: "the sight of women" evokes a sense of eternity and makes both of them feel "insignificant" (349). At this stage, their response seems a common reaction of those from civilised parts of the world towards the everlasting flow of time in nature. The second point, however, complicates their response further. With regard to the women, Mrs. Ambrose feels "presentiments of disaster" (349), a sensation which makes her keep her eyes "anxiously fixed upon the lovers, as if by doing so she could protect them from their fate" (350). The native women seem to affect them not only at this moment but also in

relation to their lives to come—their fate.

Mark A. Wollaeger, connecting Rachel's expedition upriver with her engagement, also notes the staring women. "[U]nusually charged and unnerving," the women's stare, according to Wollaeger, points to an inevitable consequence of Rachel's marriage, foretelling her subordination to "the pressures of domestication and normalization against which she has struggled since she left England for South America" (61, 62-63). The women symbolise a challenge against Rachel's independence, a force to draw her back into a conventional societal system. This suggests another link between knitting women and the Fates. As if to underscore this, Mrs. Ambrose, linked to the Fates through her act of embroidering, challenges, with her own stare, the "threat" of the native women's eerie stares: here we may assume a metaphorical conflict between one fate and another, the favourable and adverse fates influencing the lives of Hewet and Rachel.

Let us now turn to a point near the end of the novel, when Rachel is on her death bed. Nurse McInnis appears. Although not knitting, she is seen nursing Rachel from time to time. As mentioned earlier, nursing may be categorised among domestic activities in the broadest sense. Nurse McInnis is at first depicted as solemn and reserved, wearing spectacles and devoted to "the chapel" (403). In Rachel's hallucination, however, the nurse is seen as "an elderly woman" sitting "at a great distance," "playing cards" (403). Appearing to the dying heroine to be "inexplicably sinister" (403),

this sight recalls a woman who tells one's fortune with tarot cards.[15] What is to be noted, moreover, is that "coming nearer" to Rachel, the sinister woman turns back into a caring nurse. Looking enigmatic when seen at a distance, Nurse McInnis resembles the Fates, who surreptitiously operate human beings' lives from behind the scene.

Thus, through their involvement with the heroine's life, knitting women in the novel are related to the classical Fates. A common characteristic is that their selfless posture as domestic women is closely connected with their ability to control things. Their distance from mainstream human activity is, rather paradoxically, indispensable if they are to carry out their schemes. To explore this point further, let us examine knitting scenes in other novels.

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In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa Dalloway is seen mending her dress on the morning of the day she is giving a party. Her act of sewing is, in fact, closely related to her mental activity. This is most simply expressed in her achieving a sense of composure in the regular movement of her needle. In order to explore this connection, let us consider what the act of mending her dress means to Clarissa, through a close examination of the scene.

Most impressive about the scene of Clarissa sewing is the description of her dress. The colour of her dress—green—is subtly expressed, the subtleness which seems to attach an important

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15 Wussow also regards the nurse playing cards as associated with a sense of impending doom: it is "a symbol of brutality and death" (108).

connotation to the garment. The text reads that only "by artificial light"—at parties at night—"[the colour of] the green shone" (42): under the sunlight, on the other hand, it "lost its colour" (42). Made by Sally Parker, who is praised by Clarissa as "a real artist" (44), the dress suits any kind of party: "You could wear [it] at Hatfield; at Buckingham Palace" (44). Her green dress is, in other words, made especially for parties. When Clarissa describes it as her "favourite" for parties (44), it almost becomes the emblem of parties themselves.

The nature of the colour green also points to Clarissa's social position. Green, along with the colour blue, is one of the colours which hold special meanings for Woolf. This is exemplified by the fact that she writes about both in a short story called "Blue & Green." As to blue in Woolf's fiction, Allen McLaurin and Patricia Ondek Laurence comment in similar phrases that it represents "distance" and "space" (McLaurin 194) and "coolness, distance, sky, and silence" (Laurence, *Silence* 105) respectively. In other words, blue represents a sphere which is detached from the real world. Green is, on the other hand, the colour between yellow and blue, or a mixture of the two colours. It assumes not so strong a physical sense of detachment as blue, but is not so yielding and agreeable as yellow.[16]

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[16] This interpretation of the colour yellow is based on the fact that yellow is related to domesticity in the Woolfian world. In "Sketch of the Past," an autobiographical piece of writing, Woolf looks back on the summer home—Talland House—in her childhood where the "yellow blind" acts as the emblem of her happy infancy (*MOB* 78). In *The Waves*, Susan, who is characterised by her professionalised motherhood, has affinity to yellow from the very beginning of the novel. She says: "'I see a slab of pale yellow [. . .] spreading away

This somewhat neutral nature of green is an attribute of Clarissa herself. With her social status as a hostess in upper-class society, Clarissa has often been seen as "belong[ing] to the side of the monumental time" of the world (Ricoeur 110). On the other hand, she has affinity to interior time as well. She is often regarded as the "double" of Septimus Warren Smith, who represents the inner time as the opposite of clock time[17]; and she was once the lover of Peter Walsh, who is contemptuous of upper-class manners of thinking and behaviours. Clarissa is, in short, a character who resides in the two contradictory spheres of the world. Just as the colour green involves two contradictory colours yet belongs to neither of them, so Clarissa stands neutral in the conflict between the two positions, though not without affinity to either of them.

Clarissa's mending of her green dress, then, can bear some figurative meaning as well. The dress was, she speculates, "torn" at another party (42). The tear is, on a metaphorical level, the disconnection of one thing, or the disparity between two things which was caused accidentally. By sewing up the "tear," she metaphorically attempts to give synthesis to the incoherent thing, or to arrange a compromise between the two incompatible things. At one level—in her personal life—her act may mean her self-recovery, for we learn

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until it meets a purple stripe'" (6). My interpretation is, therefore, slightly different from (though not opposed to) McLaurin's, who states: "Yellow is a positive avoidance of logical meaning [. . .]" and "[y]ellow means simply yellow, it represents the quality of colour which cannot be translated into other terms" (194).

[17] See, for instance, Rosenman 90; Ricoeur 111.

that she has just recovered from an illness and her party is her first social venture after her illness. At another level, her act of mending her green dress—a symbol of compromise—can be interpreted as her attempt to bridge two worlds in each of which she resides: the external world organised by clock time and the interior world organised in each individual mind. To sew her green dress—and thus to make the garment look perfect—means, for Clarissa, an indispensable preparation for her successful achievement in her party, in which she tries to unite different people from different spheres of the world.

The latter point becomes clearer when we direct our attention to an event which occurs while she is sewing—an unexpected visit from her old lover, Peter Walsh. Peter is a character whose background is not given in any detail in the book. All we know about him from some fragmentary pieces of information is that he once proposed to Clarissa only to be rejected; was expelled from Oxford; went to India; married "the girl on the boat going out to India" (51); and is now in love with a married woman in India. His identity—his profession, address and family—never appears in the text, and therefore he impresses us as a visitor from nowhere. Along with his totally vague and elusive character, his pocket-knife—his trademark—emphasises the sense of the separation of his existence from others: the knife, which he is playing with during their meeting, arouses "irrepressible irritation" in Clarissa (52). Peter is, as it were, a character who is intimately related to the colour blue in the above sense—detachment

from actual life. This is most literally shown by the fact that on entering Clarissa's drawing-room, he sits down on the sofa, which will later turn out to be blue. His detachment from the real world is also proved by the fact that Clarissa's "scissors" (46), which she uses while sewing, seem to Peter as emotionally detached as Peter's knife seems to Clarissa: "But she is too cold [. . .] sewing, with her scissors," thinks Peter (49). Yet, in fact, Clarissa's scissors are not a symbol of her coldness. To be sure, her scissors seem analogous to Peter's pocket-knife in that they are used to cut something; but they are also inseparable from the act of sewing which connects something. Her scissors are, like her green dress, emblems of her position in between.

A representative of the realm of blue, Peter, at one point, encourages, and at another point interrupts, Clarissa (though unwittingly) in her metaphorical attempt to connect the opposite realms of life. Let us look at Clarissa's consciousness while she is mending her green dress, with Peter by her side. The existence of her old lover makes her recall their affair in the past. All the while, she oscillates between her sense of the present (actual life) and that of the past (her inner life). At one point, she remembers "how impossible it was ever to make up [her] mind [. . .] not to marry him" (47); a moment later, however, she says to Peter, "'But it's so extraordinary that you should have come this morning!'" (47), thus conscious of here and now; but soon after this, she continues, "'Do you remember [. . .] how the blinds used to flap at Bourton?'," turning

again to the past (47). Her oscillation is also shown figuratively in the following passage: "She looked at Peter Walsh; her look, passing through all that time and that emotion, reached him doubtfully; settled on him tearfully; and rose and fluttered away [. . .]" (48). While sewing, she thus brings the memory to the present or compares the present with the past as if searching for a conjunction between the two worlds. Yet as she immerses herself in the memory of her old lover, her attempt is disrupted: the descriptions of her sewing become more and more scarce in the text as she is gradually drawn into the domain of Peter's world, a world apart from actual life; and although her act of sewing is shown, it appears in interrupted moments. This gradual change of the state of Clarissa's mind begins when she feels as if she has lost her identity in the real world—her status as a hostess in upper-class society: she finds herself like "a Queen whose guards have fallen asleep and left her unprotected [. . .]" (49). She is next seen "sitting side by side on the blue sofa" with Peter Walsh, which means her absorption into her past memory shared with Peter. Then on hearing that Peter is in love with a woman in India, Clarissa's needle is seen "held to the end of green silk, trembling a little" (51). (Thus her attempt to make the contradictory spheres compromise with each other is utterly disrupted.) Finally, she cries to Peter in her mind, "Take me with you," "as if he were starting directly upon some great voyage [. . .]" (53). It is at the point of her total engagement in the interior world—her complete unconsciousness of actual life—that "[t]he sound of Big Ben striking the half-hour struck

out between them with extraordinary vigour [. . .]" (53-54). This marks the moment of the intrusion of actual life into their fantasy, at which Peter, the embodiment of Clarissa's past and memory, leaves her. At this moment, Clarissa cries after Peter, "My party! Remember my party to-night!" (54). Inviting Peter to her party—at a metaphorical level bringing her memory into the present—she regains the sense of her original position between the interior and external worlds. She thus resumes her attempt at connecting the two worlds.

It is now obvious that "mending" is a key to the understanding of Clarissa's creativity. A certain gap—a tear in her dress or, metaphorically, a gap between the two worlds—is itself her motivation for organising things. This point is shown also in a condensed manner when Clarissa looks herself in a mirror:

> She pursed her lips when she looked in the glass. It was to give her face point. That was her self—pointed; dartlike; definite. That was her self when some effort, some call on her to be her self, drew the parts together, she alone knew how different, how incompatible and composed so for the world only into one centre, one diamond, one woman who sat in her drawing-room and made a meeting-point, a radiancy no doubt in some dull lives, a refuge for the lonely to come to, perhaps [. . .]. (42)

Here we notice that Clarissa makes a clear distinction between "her self" known to others and "herself" unknown to others. She creates her self out of herself which consists of "different" and "incompatible" parts. In other words, Clarissa's "herself," an incoherent being which contains "gaps," is an integral part of her creation of "her self," a

more composed being, and is almost the premise of the creation. This also suggests a feature of Clarissa's creation which is presented as the alternation of two conditions, "herself" and "her self"—the separated and the united. This alternation corresponds to the movement of her needle when compared to waves which "collect, overbalance, and fall; collect and fall", thus incessantly repeating two contradictory actions (44).

This feature of Clarissa's creation is underlined by the contrasting creative act of Lady Bruton. Lady Bruton is a direct descendant of "the General" (116), depicted as such a manly woman as to make Richard Dalloway think "she should have been a general of dragoons herself" (116). She is highly concerned with politics, as evident in the rumour that she has been involved in "some notorious intrigue of the eighties" (117). Like Clarissa, she gives a party, but, unlike her, with one clear political intention in her mind: to ask two politicians—Hugh Whitbread and Richard Dalloway—to write a letter to *The Times* for herself about a political issue. And again, like Clarissa, Lady Bruton's act of giving a party is associated with the act of knitting, but in a different way. After her party with Hugh and Richard, Lady Bruton feels as if her guests "were attached to her by a thin thread" or "a single spider's thread" (124). The thread is a metaphor of the human relationship she "created" through her party. It gets thinner as her guests move further from her place until it is cut. For Lady Bruton, the separation of people during and after the party is followed by no recuperation. This makes a contrast with the

case of Clarissa, for whom the act of giving a party is built upon the expectation that her guests get separated and united, like the alternating rhythm of knitting. Explicit in its metaphorical representation as a single thread, the creativity of Lady Bruton is characterised as simple, methodical and orderly, like male creativity. (As to this, it must be noted that "a single spider's thread" is also used as a metaphor for Richard's train of thought.[18]) From her perspective, a "gap" between one person and another is something unrecoverable, not, as for Clarissa, the germ of the creation of a new relationship. For Lady Bruton, Clarissa's creation seems nothing but irrational and worthless: she describes it derogatorily as "cutting them up and sticking them together again" (115). Lady Bruton is unfamiliar with—and therefore unable to see—the pattern of female creativity, presented as the alternation of separating and uniting.

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Let us take up another example of a knitting woman, perhaps the best-known one in Woolf's fiction: Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*. She is generally seen as a typical Victorian woman, characterised by self-sufficiency and self-sacrificing devotion to others. It is reported, for example, that Mrs. Ramsay visits the poor out of charity. She is also the only person in the Ramsays' household who thinks about the whole family and their friends: her thought ranges from the expense of their "greenhouse roof" (65) to her

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[18] This image of linearity also recalls the comparison of Mr. Ramsay's thinking habit to alphabetical order. See *TL* 56-59.

children's future. Yet her character seems to be most clearly epitomised by the scene where she is knitting a pair of socks. This is not only because she is knitting for a sick child living in the lighthouse out of pity, but also because the scene includes several moments which disclose the more complex meaning of her act of knitting.

One of the moments occurs when Mr. Ramsay intrudes on his wife sitting with one of their children, James, and asks her for sympathy by telling her that he is "a failure" as a philosopher (62). In response to this demand, Mrs. Ramsay does her best to console her husband. It is important to note that while her endeavour is verbal, it is accompanied by a nonverbal act: she is described as "flashing her needles" (62, 63). This act occurs three times: at first, not knowing how to respond, Mrs. Ramsay flashes her needles; then thinking of an effective answer, she moves them again; and finally, as if to assure her husband that what she says is true, she repeats the same act. These flashes of her needles lead to the image of "all her strength flaring up to be drunk and quenched by the beak of the brass, the arid scimitar of the male" (63). Created by James, who feels antipathy for his father, this image may suggest the way in which his mother's energy is gradually exhausted by his father's remorseless demand for sympathy. In this sense, "the flash" of Mrs. Ramsay's needles stands for her self-sacrificing feeling for others.

The "flash," on the other hand, may be understood as a quite different image as well. Mrs. Ramsay's needles can be considered as a

symbol of her ability to organise things in the house. At her dinner party, she compares (in her mind) her act of arranging things to the alternation of two opposite behaviours, "netting and separating one thing from another" (165-66), which is similar to the movement of a needle as one knits, making and unmaking the knots of wool. In this respect, the flashing of her needles seems to be a glimpse of her pride in being a competent housewife, her confidence that she can give a sense of peacefulness to her family and guests. It is also noteworthy that the phrase "flashes/flashing her needles" consists of three words, and appears three times, in each of which she attempts to appease her husband. Both the three-word phrase and its triple appearance accord with the rhythm of the lighthouse beams, the rhythm which consists of three strokes. In effect, the image of Mrs. Ramsay's flashing of her needles approaches that of the lighthouse; her "flash" becomes an image of an active power to lead others rather than a passive contribution to others. These two contradictory aspects of her action are also shown in her mixed feelings after succeeding in consoling her husband: she feels, on the one hand, "exhaustion" and on the other hand "the rapture of successful creation" (64).

There are, in fact, several other scenes in the book which support the double meaning of her act. At one point, her offer to do some kindness to Mr. Carmichael, one of her guests, is rejected by him. Mrs. Ramsay then suspects that "all this desire of hers to give, to help, was vanity" or that it is "for her own self-satisfaction" that "she wished so instinctively to help, to give," that people may praise

and admire her (68). There is also a scene in which she reads a fairy story to James, just after the knitting scene above. The story is Grimm's "The Fisherman and His Wife," which can be summarised as follows.

> Once upon a time, there lived a poor fisherman and his wife. One day, the fisherman caught but then released a flounder. It was, in fact, a prince in disguise. Since then the fisherman went back to his house with some reward from the flounder. At first he was given small things such as a little hut, but his wife urged him to ask the flounder for more. The wife became a king, an emperor, and even hoped to be a god. But finally, they were brought back to their original status, a poor man and his wife.

Thus the story relates the wife's demand that her husband satisfy her own wishes.[19] At first glance, the story seems irrelevant, but when we note that it appears just after Mrs. Ramsay is seen, even if at a latent level, controlling her husband as she wishes—for she successfully gives enough consolation to send him back to his own contemplation—her image might naturally lead to that of the fisherman's wife in the succeeding story.[20]

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[19] Tatar also comments on Woolf's citation of the story in the novel. See Tatar 87.

[20] Harper also points out the similarity between Mrs. Ramsay and the fisherman's wife, on the basis of the fact that Mrs. Ramsay "seems omniscient" and "utterly dominant" throughout Part I (141). Fairy tales are sometimes presented as a sphere where "knitting" women exercise their power over other characters' destiny. Scheuing observes: "Spinners appear as powerful, and sometimes helpful, sometimes dangerous witches in fairy tales" (202).

This link between these two women may be made clearer by an analysis of Mrs. Ramsay's consciousness while she is reading to James. While relating the story, she thinks of it as "the bass gently accompanying a tune, which now and then ran up unexpectedly into the melody" (91). If "the bass" means her consciousness of the content of the fairy story, "a tune" may signify her stream of consciousness, that is, her mind pondering over ordinary things and everyday events. Then the fact that "the bass" sometimes becomes the melody itself suggests that the fairy story, which usually progresses in a way irrelevant to her thoughts, is sometimes in accord with what she is just thinking of. This may be concretely explained as follows. At one point, what occupies Mrs. Ramsay's thought—therefore "a tune"—is the prospect of Paul and Minta's engagement, which Mrs. Ramsay believes will lead to their happiness and to which she has been encouraging them. Then a sentence of the fairy tale breaks in: "'Well, what does she [the wife] want then?' said the Flounder [to the fisherman]" (90). (Thus a line of the fairy story, "the bass," breaks into her thought, "a tune.") This intrusion of the sentence into her consciousness—her sudden clear perception of the sentence—may suggest that it represents her real feelings about Paul and Minta's engagement, her question to herself, "What do I want then?" The prospect of Paul and Minta's engagement is not irrelevant to her personal desire, it seems. Although Mrs. Ramsay believes she wishes it for their happiness, it is also for the fulfilment of her self-centred desire to organise the lives of others. Thus the fairy story serves to

hint at Mrs. Ramsay's latent desire.[21]

We have seen how closely Mrs. Ramsay's act of knitting—suggestive of her self-sacrifice—is at the same time connected with her active desire to control things and people around her. This is also revealed in her association with the painter, Lily Briscoe. Just as Mrs. Ramsay is scheming to unify her family members and guests, so Lily tries to give a sense of unity to her painting. And she, similarly, is a skilful user of *distance* in this attempt.

In Part Ⅲ of the novel, Lily's act of painting runs parallel to two important actions: the journey of Mr. Ramsay and his two children to the lighthouse; and her recollection of the past, especially as it involves the other characters. In her imagination, these actions are both connected with the solution of her problem of "masses"—how to relate them—in her picture.

In Section 4, Lily faces the sea—the main subject of her picture. She feels as if she is oscillating between her place and the distance, with the Ramsays in the boat. With this awareness, she brings together her picture and the Ramsays' journey throughout the following sections. In Section 4, on making the first stroke on her picture, Lily imagines the departure of the Ramsays. In Section 6, just when she imagines an air of isolation among the Ramsays on the boat, Lily is faced with a "space" which it is difficult to treat in her

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[21] Hartman also points out the association between Mrs. Ramsay's act of knitting and her thinking process: "Her hands knit—so does her mind" (43).

picture (264). In Section 12, while supposing that the Ramsays are on the point of arriving at the lighthouse, she has almost finished her painting although she is still dissatisfied with some "disproportion" in it (296). In Section 14, on imagining that Mr. Ramsay "has landed" (319) and has been reconciled with his family, Lily completes her picture and achieves cohesion in it.

All the while, she remembers scenes from the past: she "went on tunnelling her way into her picture, into the past" (267). While painting, Lily remembers her acquaintances, namely, the characters who appear in Part Ⅰ. Importantly, every character is reintroduced and given a new definition in this process. Let us take the case of Charles Tansley. In Part Ⅰ, Tansley appears as an antagonist of Lily as a woman artist: he says, "Women can't write, women can't paint" (134). Towards the beginning of Part Ⅲ, struggling with the problem in her picture, Lily bitterly remembers Tansley's words. But in Section 12, near the end of the part, in which she is proceeding to the completion of her picture, she finds that her irritation with Tansley was unfair to him, for it stemmed from her need to justify herself: "Her own idea of him was grotesque. [. . .] He did for her instead of a whipping-boy" (303). Lily thus recollects all the characters with composure, through which, on a metaphorical level, she brings them together in her peaceful mind.

What is to be noted as to Lily's search for a sense of unity through her imagination is that she achieves this by taking a certain distance from the objects she meditates upon. From the Ramsays on

the boat, she takes a spatial distance; from the other characters, she takes a temporal distance. The importance of distance in her attempt is briefly expressed by Lily herself: "Distance had an extraordinary power" (289).[22] This recalls Mrs. Ramsay's secret attempt to unite her family and guests, while knitting and thus distancing herself from every action in her household. Both of them, Lily and Mrs. Ramsay, carry out their schemes in solitude, in a reticent manner. They resemble each other, not only in that, as generally observed, both of them are organisers, but also in their ways of carrying out their schemes.

The aesthetic of distance is evident in the novel's structure as well. The connection between Mrs. Ramsay and Lily provides the novel with a tripartite pattern: unity (Part Ⅰ), disunity (Part Ⅱ) and unity (Part Ⅲ). These two unities are similar, yet slightly different in nature. The first unity is brought about by the effort of Mrs. Ramsay. The second unity is established through, as it were, an imitation of her attempt, yet different in that it would not be achieved without an interval of ten years (Part Ⅱ). Psychological distance from the scenes of Part Ⅰ, a distance generated by Part Ⅱ, partly helps Lily to complete her picture, her attempt to create unity. In this respect, the disunity between the two parts is presented as the necessary gap for the completion of unity in the end. So here again a "gap" "works": it is an integral part of the creation of unity.

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[22] A further dimension of Lily's recognition of the significant of distance in her artistic exploration will be discussed in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

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In *The Waves*, too, we can find a similar aesthetic pattern. Susan occupies herself with domestic works such as cooking, nursing, sewing, gardening. She says, "I am the seasons, [. . .] January, May, November; the mud, the mist, the dawn" (71), which suggests that she is almost the embodiment of the natural world. Her peaceful relationship with nature is evident in her composed attitude towards natural phenomena revolving around life and death. Among the six characters who receive more or less violent shocks from Percival's premature death, Susan reacts least. "'I think sometimes of Percival who loved me. He rode and fell in India'," she says, "But for the most part I walk content with my sons. I cut the dead petals from hollyhocks" (137). It is notable that her sense of the loss of Percival is mitigated by the existence of new life, her own children. Her brisk—somewhat merciless—act of cutting dead flowers accords with her acceptance of the rule of nature. Just as the end of one flower promises the generation of another flower, so the death of Percival means the birth of another person: death is deplorable yet necessary. This optimism also applies to her idea about her own death: "'His [my son's] eyes will see [the world] when mine are shut'" (122). Her view of life and death may be echoed in her notion of another pair of contradictory words, "love" and "hate." In her childhood, Susan sees these feelings, as, in general, incompatible: "I love [. . .] and I hate. I desire one thing only" (11). As an adult, however, she complicates the relationship between these words. Feeling a sense of unity among the

six characters in their dinner party, for example, she says: "It is hate, it is love [. . .]. That is the furious coal-black stream that makes us dizzy if we look down into it" (98). Or, in her penultimate monologue she says, "'I grasp, I hold fast [. . .]. I hold firmly to this hand, anyone's with love, with hatred; it does not matter which'" (162). Thus, she no longer makes a distinction between the two emotions, love and hate. For Susan, just as death is part of the incessant reorganisation of the world, so occasional antagonism is unavoidable if one is to achieve the unification of human beings in the end. In the combination of Susan's optimistic view of human mortality and her ability to see a generally negative notion in a positive way, we may see the pattern of female creativity: the alternation of two states, lacking and fulfilled.

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This paradoxical aesthetic of creativity—that "gaps," "distance," and "disunity" are integral parts of creation, not a meaningless void—is also an aspect of the aesthetic of Woolf herself. Laurence, for instance, observes that "[t]he spaces and silences between words, chapters, and acts are as significant as the sounds" in Woolf's fictional works (*Silence* 15). An example is found in *The Waves*. There Percival appears as a silent character in that his voice is absent in the text. He is generally regarded as a missing centre of the novel: to borrow Sara Ruddick's words, a "silent presence and vacuum-like absence which draws to itself the other characters' fantasies of their brother/leader/opposite" (203). The power of his

silence is most explicitly shown in the six characters' parties in the fourth and eighth soliloquy sections, where his existence brings about a sense of unity among them. From the author's point of view, it follows that Percival's silence is a device to give unity to the text. Similarly, the process of female creation which consists of the alternation of two opposite actions or states, such as "separating" and "uniting," lacking and fulfilled, recalls our discussion in the Introduction: that an aspect of Woolf's poetics is characterised by binary rhythmic structures. Her narrative swiftly moves from the surface of characters' minds to the depth, from one time or space to another, and from an ordinary event to a philosophy of life.

Distance is the key also to the explanation of the characterisation of Woolf's women knitters. Their reserved roles as domestic women are closely—if paradoxically—linked to their more demonstrative roles as female creators. In *The Voyage Out*, the heroine Rachel is surrounded by several female knitters, who, with their involvements with Rachel's life, are connected with the Fates. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa's act of mending her dress is intimately related to her act of organising a party. Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*, a devoted housewife, is, in fact, the skilful organiser of the Ramsays' household, which is explicitly shown in the collapse of the entire structure after her death. She is also associated with the painter Lily Briscoe. Susan in *The Waves* is characterised by motherhood, withdrawing from the modern city in which the other five characters lead their lives. Most completely identified with the

natural world, however, she is also the character who is most in tune with natural rhythm in the novel's background which begins with sunrise and ends with sunset. (This is the very thing that the male novelist Bernard pursues throughout his life and discovers only near the end of his life.[23]) As female creators (potentially), all these women are elusive, alternating between reticence and demonstrativeness. As with their acts of creation, their characters are oscillating.

Since the paradoxical aesthetic of distance is evident not only in the activities of the knitters (in which distance or separation is part of creation), but also in the characterisation of these women (in which reticence is linked to demonstrativeness), it is possible to identify the stance of the women knitters with that of Woolf as a writer. That is, her knitting women's reserved/demonstrative posture in these novels may be understood as representing the author's own stance. This point will be explored in the following section.

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[23] Although he becomes a fictional version of Woolf herself at the end of *The Waves*—and therefore his quality is a woman writer—Bernard originally appears as a male writer. His habit of writing down phrases "for future reference" in his notebook (26) suggests his excessive belief in the power of rhetorical language. Bernard is, in the early parts of the book, a caricature of male intellectual activities.

Ⅲ. WOMEN KNITTERS IN RELATION TO WOMEN WRITERS

Let us begin this section by looking first at the descriptions of women writers in Woolf's fiction. By then comparing them with women knitters, we will be able to explain more precisely the occurrence of knitting as a representation of Woolf's way of writing, and give some focus to the consequent argument.

Woolf's women writers are similar to her women knitters in some respects. They are presented as carrying out a paradoxical activity, by which they are identical with traditional writers—that is, male writers—as discussed in the opening of this chapter. They are, on the one hand, described as self-effacing, taking a certain distance from the main actions in the books. Elvedon in *The Waves*, a place where a woman is seen writing, is described as a walled place, separated from the exterior world: "No one has been there. [. . .] There is a ring of wall round this wood," says Bernard (12). The place suggests an isolated sphere of one's own, a sphere in which one is engaged in writing independently. Miss Allan in *The Voyage Out* is occupied in writing a "*Primer of English Literature*—Beowulf to Swinburne" (118) during a large part of the novel. We learn, however, only one thing about the progress of her writing, namely, that she is reading *The Prelude* in order to write "a paragraph on Wordsworth" (118). On the other hand, these women writers are working in solitude for the purpose of devoting themselves to, or connecting themselves with, others: "a book is always written for somebody to

read"; "writing is a method of communication" (*E*4: 212, 213). Miss Allan writes her book for young learners of English; she finally decides to "[omit] Swinburne" from it so that her book "might catch one's eye on a railway bookstall" and attract many readers (387). Thus, women writers' posture is both reserved and demonstrative, like that of women knitters.

There is, however, one clear difference between the descriptions of women knitters and women writers: the frequency of their appearance in the text. Women writers are far less frequently described than women knitters in Woolf's fiction. The woman in Elvedon and Miss Allan are two of the few examples of women writers in Woolf's fiction; moreover, they appear only for a short time. The former is merely glimpsed by Bernard and Susan; the latter is a minor character in *The Voyage Out*, although in Chapter 19 she and Rachel have a scene together. To be sure, Mrs. Dalloway in *The Voyage Out*, is seen writing a letter; her letter is quoted at length in the text.[24] From a traditional point of view, however, writing letters is closer to knitting in that the act is one of the social duties of domestic women. Women knitters, on the contrary, appear a number of times in *The Voyage Out* and reappear throughout Woolf's fictional works. (This is apparent from the examples discussed in the previous section.) In addition, they sometimes occupy a large part of the book. Mrs. Ramsay, for instance, is seen knitting from the morning to the evening, the span of time allocated to the whole section. *Mrs.*

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[24] See *VO* 51-52.

Dalloway devotes one scene ranging from p. 44 to p. 54 to the description of Clarissa's act of sewing.

The comparison above discloses a subtle relationship between knitting and writing in Woolf's fiction. Although seemingly identified with each other, they are discrete. We have already shown that knitting is a metaphor for Woolf's writing, and that knitting women in her fiction may represent the author herself. It is therefore likely that this complex relationship between knitting and writing in her fiction suggests Woolf's idiosyncratic idea of writing or her stance as a writer.

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The fact that knitters are depicted more frequently than writers in Woolf's fiction means that they are more intimately related to other characters in the fiction. A further dimension of the scenes of knitting in her fiction, therefore, involves an interplay of seeing and being seen. Woolf's women knitters appear as the subjects who see and meditate on things and people; at the same time they are the objects of other characters' observations. To explore these points, let us briefly consider the meaning of the act of seeing.

To see something is, in a sense, to have an advantage over the thing. (To put it the other way round, to be seen by others is to be possessed by others.) An argument regarding the power of the act of seeing is offered by Amanda Anderson. In "Gender, Modernity, and Detachment," Anderson explores many forms of detachment and distance in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* as representations of

femininity in the Victorian period. Two female characters in Brontë's novel are taken up as representatives of two kinds of detachment: Mme. Beck and Mrs. Bretton. The former presents herself as a "Jesuit" with "extrinsic pedagogy" (54), whereas the latter represents "controlled and professionalized motherhood" (55). Their forms of detachment show, according to Anderson, their own ways of negotiating with the Victorian ideology of women's roles. On the other hand, the narrator Lucy Snowe establishes herself, independent of these conventional ways of living. Towards these women, Lucy entertains ambivalence: she is partly attracted by their ways of living, but at the same time feels antipathy towards them. She therefore seeks to secure more "cultivated detachment" (53) than they, by hoping to "remain overlooked and to exploit and cultivate her observer status" (52). Lucy's act of surveying other characters' lives thus gives her a vantage point over them. This is a good example of how closely the act of seeing is related to the autonomy of one's existence.

Women knitters in Woolf's fiction are also depicted as insightful observers or, at least, attentive viewers. In Part I of *To the Lighthouse*, Mrs. Ramsay offers one of the significant perspectives on other characters. As the organiser of her dinner party, she pays attention to every participant, so that she can arrange her guests' relationships and create a sense of unity among them. Another example can be found in one of her comments on Lily. Persistently urged by Mrs. Ramsay to marry, Lily criticises her for being totally

conventional, not admitting her independence as an artist. Mrs. Ramsay, on the contrary, appreciates Lily's own way of living. She secretly—and rightly—predicts: Lily "would never marry; one could not take her painting very seriously; but she was an independent little creature" (31). In *The Voyage Out*, as seen in the previous section, Mrs. Ambrose understands Rachel's mind to such an extent that she can act as her niece's spiritual guide. The women in the native village fix their stares upon strangers, affecting them significantly. Nurse McInnis behaves as a careful nurse, reacting to each groan Rachel gives in her death bed. Susan in *The Waves* is characterised by her "crystal, pear-shaped eyes" (150), under which she raises her children with maternal care and protection. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa's perspective is a primary concern of its narrative scheme: her consciousness occupies a large part of the text, and its flexible movement, as was seen in the preceding section, contributes much to the flowing structure of the text.[25]

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These knitters are, on the other hand, frequently observed or reflected upon by other characters. Perceptive as it is, Mrs. Ramsay's perspective does not allow her any development like that of Lily, who

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[25] Gelfant writes: "The form of the novel [*Mrs. Dalloway*] attempts to transmute the everyday reality of life into a metaphorical equivalent of the sea. [. . .] [Woolf] tried to create an impression of life as being as flowing, as timeless, as continuous, as the sea" (243). McNichol also writes about the rhythmic pattern of the novel: "[t]he main characters of *Mrs. Dalloway* are [. . .] caught up in the current, or the 'ebb and flow' of life, and it is through its steady rhythmic presence that their separate lives are gauged, connected [. . .]" (63).

"[has] had [her] vision" at the end of the book (320): she dies half way through the book, in Part II. After her death, Mrs. Ramsay is a character who is merely reflected upon, remembered, or explained by other characters including Lily. In this respect, it seems that Mrs. Ramsay is intended as the object of other characters' observations. In fact, it has even been argued that the book is "a project to catch the essence of Mrs. Ramsay" (Spivak 30). But the best example of women knitters as those who are observed is perhaps Rachel's aunts in *The Voyage Out.* They appear only in Rachel's memory and in other characters' stories about the past. Whenever mentioned in the book, therefore, they are the objects of other people's observations or interpretations. With their words never cited and their perspectives never introduced in the text, these aunts can be regarded as the epitome of characters that exist only to be seen by other characters. The native women in the village gaze at the strangers, but their look is returned as well. They are, as part of wild nature, depicted as something awesome to be meditated upon, as in Hewet and Rachel's observation about them. Nurse McInnis is described mostly from the perspective of Rachel on her bed, oscillating between an eerie old woman and a protective nurse. Clarissa's perspective is mostly counterpoised by other characters'. While sewing, for instance, Clarissa observes her unexpected visitor, Peter, but Peter himself is also a critical observer of Clarissa. Under his gaze, Clarissa sewing takes on the typical image of a hostess in upper-class society. On one level, therefore, he is introduced here to insert a viewpoint on

Clarissa. Identified with the natural world, the common background of the six characters, Susan is reflected upon from time to time by the other five characters, including Bernard.

When it is stressed that the position of these knitting women is that of being observed, they begin to seem rather passive. One may detect a sense of regression in Woolf's description of them: acquiescing to the demand of domestic drudgery allocated to them, they seem to represent typical Victorian women. These women are, in fact, often said to be modelled on real Victorian women, especially Woolf's mother, Julia Stephen.[26] Considering that these knitting women reflect the author herself, one might argue that they merely represent Woolf's longing for the values of the preceding generation. Indeed, this is the kind of interpretation which is likely to be offered by critics who emphasise Woolf's affinity with the Victorian world rather than her opposition to it as a modernist.

However, if we shift our focus from the fact that these female knitters are seen by others to the issue of how they are described by their viewers, we notice another important thing. To examine this point, let us turn to "Nurse Lugton's Curtain," the short story discussed in Section Ⅰ. Falling asleep while sewing, Nurse Lugton is described from the viewpoint of the animals and people on her curtain:

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[26] In her notes for *To the Lighthouse* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), Lee comments: knitting is "one of the attitudes Woolf remembers her mother in, 'knitting on the hall step while we play cricket' (*Moments of Being*, p. 84)" (233).

> [A] great ogress had them in her toils, the people knew; and the great ogress was called Lugton. They could see her, from their windows, towering over them. She had a face like the side of a mountain with great precipices and avalanches, and chasms for her eyes and hair and nose and teeth. ("Nurse Lugton's Curtain" 161)

Thus the inattentive Nurse Lugton is depicted plainly by her creatures, and the story's subtle use of perspective reminds us of Swiftian satire. This grotesque description of a human face is, in fact, similar to the one from the point of view of Gulliver in "A Voyage to Brobdingnag" in *Gulliver's Travels*:

> Their [the Maids of Honour's] Skins appeared so coarse and uneven, so variously coloured when I saw them near, with a Mole here and there as broad as a Trencher, and Hairs hanging from it thicker than Packthreads [. . .]. (111)

Given that Nurse Lugton as a knitting woman is a version of the author herself, it may be said that she is intended as the author's self-caricature, suggesting her detachment from her own act of writing. On the other hand, just as Swift's Brobdingnag reveals the insignificance and triviality of Gulliver as well as the grossness of human being, so the unguarded Nurse Lugton discloses her viewers' nature as well as her own nature. That is, her creatures' unflattering description of their creator presents their freedom to think and act, never totally controlled by their creator. From the creator Nurse Lugton's point of view, she, on the one hand, possesses what she makes, but on the other hand leaves it to its own devices. As the author's self-portrait, Nurse Lugton's posture reminds us of Woolf's

ingenious use of imagery and her way of structuring her fiction.

In *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf leaves the image of the lighthouse undefined, allowing the reader to attach a number of meanings to it.[27] It is also widely known that she regards the role of the audience as indispensable for the creation of literary texts.[28] The freedom of Nurse Lugton's creatures suggests, in effect, the author's wish as to how her fiction should be read. Just as "Nurse Lugton slept; Nurse Lugton saw nothing at all" (161) of the movements of her creatures, so the author is quite unguarded as to how her text is interpreted, handing over her text to her readers. But, at the same time, as Nurse Lugton has invited diverse creatures into "her territories" (her curtain), allowing their involvement in her work (161), so the author trusts her text to bear a number of possible interpretations and meanings according to her readers' intellectual capacity and the range of their experience. The knitting Nurse Lugton represents, in this sense, the author's expectation that her text will be read in a variety of ways.

The argument above also applies to Woolf's other fictional works which include knitting motifs. In *The Voyage Out*, knitting women induce a sense of mystery in their viewers' minds. The aunts

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[27] See her letter to Roger Fry (*L*3: 385), which we quoted in the introduction of this thesis. (See page 15 of this thesis.)
[28] See Lee, "Woolf's Essays" 91; Woolf, "How Should One Read a Book?" *CR* 2: 269-70. Snaith observes that for Woolf, "[t]he reader is an active participant, creating and interpreting the text rather than passively ingesting it, anticipating a Barthesian emancipation of the reader by several decades" (13).

in Richmond are described by Rachel as the representation of something she "wanted so vehemently to smash to atoms" (259). If we suppose that the "something" is the old system from which she tries to release herself, we could say that they represent the Victorian ideology in which the heroine has been entangled. However, since Rachel does not (or cannot) explain their existence further, their precise meaning is never shown. Mrs. Ambrose leads the heroine on her mental journey, which makes her role in the book at first seem explicit. Through Rachel's eyes, however, her existence is described as something mysterious. An example may be seen in Rachel's enigmatic experience on her way to the native village:

> A hand dropped abrupt as iron on Rachel's shoulder; it might have been a bolt from heaven. She fell beneath it, and the grass whipped across her eyes and filled her mouth and ears. Through the waving stems she saw a figure, large and shapeless against the sky. Helen [Mrs. Ambrose] was upon her. [. . .]
>
> Both [Terence and Mrs. Ambrose] were flushed, both laughing, and the lips were moving; they came together and kissed in the air above her. (347)

One may assume that Mrs. Ambrose carries out her scheme to educate Rachel about "the relations of men with women" (90). But since this event is depicted only from Rachel's perspective, Mrs. Ambrose's intention is left open. In a death bed hallucination Rachel sees Mrs. Ambrose and Nurse McInnis as old women "playing cards" (404). This image of them alternates with the original images of them, a supportive aunt and a caring nurse, respectively. These oscillating images of them reflect, in a sense, Rachel's mystified feeling about

their existence.[29] In the native village, women knitting affect the visitors "curiously though all differently" (349): the sight of them "makes [Hewet and Rachel] seem insignificant" (349), while it makes Mrs. Ambrose feel a sense of foreboding. Thus, woman knitters are described as being explored or reflected upon in multiple ways.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa knitting arouses criticism in other characters' minds. For Doris Kilman, the history teacher of Clarissa's daughter, Clarissa is nothing but the symbol of extravagance: "Instead of lying on a sofa [. . .] she [Clarissa] should have been in a factory; behind a counter," thinks Kilman bitterly (137). Lady Bruton also inwardly criticises Clarissa, but from a different viewpoint. A shrewd tactician in politics, she regards Clarissa's social ability as limited.[30] Attracted to the heroine as he is, Peter is also a severe observer of Clarissa. His attack is aimed at the snobbery of the heroine, who has married a politician and enjoys mingling with celebrities in upper-class society. These characters, on the other hand, are seen contributing to Clarissa's scheme "to combine, to create" as well (135). This is literally shown by the fact that all except Kilman attend her party, her attempt to unite different people with different views of life. Clarissa knitting thus offers another persona of the author who regards the audience's reactions as essential in the creation of her works.

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[29] As to Mrs. Ambrose, Leaska also notes her enigmatic character, regarding her as "a personality characterized by a heavily veiled and highly controlled aggressiveness" (14).
[30] See *MD* 115.

Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse* is also perceived and meditated upon a number of times by other characters. Her figure as domestic woman gives Lily a lasting subject for her painting, the subject which she first handles in Part Ⅰ and again takes up in Part Ⅲ: how to express "the spirit in her, the essential thing" of Mrs. Ramsay (79). William Bankes is attracted to the beauty of Mrs. Ramsay, especially its elusive nature. In her character, he detects something "quivering" and "living" (50) which cannot be expressed in the single word "beauty." Like "the unfinished walls" of a building (50), this mystery of Mrs. Ramsay seems to Mr. Bankes to remain unresolved. In Part Ⅲ, James Ramsay remembers his dead mother during his journey to the lighthouse with his father and sister. For James, women "look[ing] down" "at their knitting" (260) are a symbol of protective motherhood, as shown in his imagining of his childhood with his mother as the Garden of Eden: "Everything tended to set itself in a garden where there was none of this gloom [that he now experiences in the journey]" (285). But later, as he approaches the lighthouse and finds it looks different from the one he has always seen in the distance, he questions his idealised image of his mother: he notices that "nothing was simply one thing" (286). Thus, the image of Mrs. Ramsay is created and re-created in other characters' minds.

We have already seen that Susan in *The Waves* is identified with the natural world. Committing herself to the incessant rhythm of nature, she is simple and stable. In this she makes a contrast with the other five characters with more complex minds. In a dinner party

with them, Susan says, "I sit among you abrading your softness with my hardness, quenching the silver-grey flickering moth-wing quiver of words with the green spurt of my clear eyes" (153). "To be loved by Susan would be," imagines Louis, "to be impaled by a bird's sharp beak, to be nailed to a barnyard door" (86). In their soliloquies, the other characters who mostly live in the modern city sometimes refer to scenes in the natural world where Susan resides. Alienated from other people in the city, Louis encourages himself, remembering the phrase he used in his childhood: "the chained beast stamps and stamps on the shore" (49). Jinny compares her sensual pleasure to the rhythmic movement of "a plant in the river, flowing this way, flowing that way" (74). Secluded in a room in College, Neville imagines the open scenery of nature in contrast with the closed space of the room: "The leaves now are thick in country lanes, sheep cough in the damp fields; but here in your room we are dry. We talk privately" (62). For Rhoda, a dreaming self, the natural world is an integral part of her imaginary world: "The swallow dips her wings [in dark pools]; the moon rides through blue seas alone" (76). In his summing-up of his life, his hesitant and digressive narration, Bernard sometimes turns to a sense of "natural happiness" in his life and gains composure for a while: "Life is pleasant; life is good. After Monday comes Tuesday, and Wednesday follows" (192). More importantly, it is with his identification with the rhythm of the natural world that Bernard obtains a sense of peacefulness at the end of his meditation on life: "in me [. . .] the wave rises. It swells; it

arches its back. I am aware once more of a new desire [. . .]" (211). Thus, through various reflections upon the natural world, the five characters draw themselves to Susan's world from time to time during their lives.

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The two-way communication between knitting women and other characters—the former see the latter but are seen by the latter as well—may represent the author's belief that writers influence their readers but are also influenced by them. This idea of collaboration between writers and readers is emphatically stated in her essay, "The Patron and the Crocus" (1925): "they are twins indeed, one dying if the other dies, one flourishing if the other flourishes," so that "the fate of literature depends upon their happy alliance" (*E*4: 215). Woolf's democratic view of the relationship between writers and readers un-authorises her status as a writer and opens up her texts to a variety of possible interpretations. In this respect, her women's reserved appearance as knitters seems to be the author's deliberate posture in offering her texts (and in a sense herself) to her readers to "read." Her characters' acts of knitting for others—presenting (or giving) their knitting to others or doing something for others—run parallel to the author's act of presenting herself to the reader. In other words, Woolf's knitting women's passivity, which is characterised by their detachment from the major action, is, paradoxically, the author's device to make her act of writing and her texts recognisable.

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It must be noted, however, that the reticence of these women knitters does provide a sense of detachment as well. This emerges most clearly from the fact mentioned earlier that most of them are modelled on Victorians, those living in a period slightly distant from the time of the novel. Moreover, in spite of the frequency with which they are observed by other characters, they sometimes impress their viewers as somewhat inaccessible. There is always a certain distance sustained between the knitting women and their viewers. Mrs. Ambrose in *The Voyage Out* is older than Rachel by "nearly twenty years," which makes her appear to Rachel to be "too humorous and cool" (94). Towards the women in the native village, English visitors feel a sense of remoteness because of their inability to communicate with them. The women's stare is described as "the motionless inexpressive gaze of those removed from each other far far beyond the plunge of speech" (348). Nurse McInnis's spectacles and devotion to "the chapel" (403) may also hint at a sense of detachment in her existence: the former separates her from her viewers with the plates of glass, implying something inscrutable from the outside; the latter suggests her absorption in her reflective life, separated from the ordinary world. As for the aunts in Richmond, Rachel tries to describe them "as at this distance they appeared to her" (259). They are thus described as temporally and spatially distant from her. After explaining how her aunts "influenced her really" with their "less splendid but more natural" force than her father's as a Victorian

patriarch, and how "their world" arouses antipathy in her mind, Rachel goes on to say:

> And 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. And 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. (259)

What is apparent in this passage is that the distance which is first described by Rachel as physical turns out to be mental as well. Although having lived with her aunts, Rachel "[does not] quite know what they do." This sense of distance from her aunts leads to her rather complex feelings about them: they were, on the one hand, so familiar—"so unconscious, so modest"—as part of a daily life that Rachel once imagined she could "smash to atoms" (259); they remain, on the other hand, quite inaccessible to her, conveying a sense of beauty which is characteristic of something distant from the viewer. With these complicated images, her aunts appear to her to be something "real" and permanent: "there they are at Richmond at this very moment," imagines Rachel.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa as housewife appears to her old lover Peter to be something he can never reach for. To be sure, their private meeting sees a moment when Peter feels her closely and discloses his feelings in front of her: "to his utter surprise, suddenly thrown by those uncontrollable forces, thrown through the air, he burst into tears [. . .]" (52). But this happens only when Clarissa

stops mending her dress and thus stops behaving as domestic woman. Kilman, who despises Clarissa inwardly for her extravagance, has a strong desire "to overcome her; to unmask her" (138). But in actual life, Clarissa strikes her as overwhelming, making her feel "insulted" and "overcome" (141, 142). A devout Christian, Kilman tries to explain her sense of failure in a Christian context: she ascribes it to her "fleshly desires," for, beside the well-dressed Clarissa, she minds how she looks and feels inferior (141); yet she cannot but detect some faults in her own explanation. This is apparent from the fact that Kilman soon becomes anxious to "concentrate her mind upon something else," as if to try to forget her own awkward excuse for her failure (142). Clarissa thus represents some spirit which is inscrutable and uncontrollable for Kilman, whose own spirit is rigid.

A sense of distance from her viewers is also a salient characteristic of Mrs. Ramsay knitting in *To the Lighthouse*. She is, along with James, regarded by William Bankes as "Mother and child [. . .]—objects of universal veneration" (85) in a Christian context, thus provided with a clear demarcation from the real world. For Mr. Ramsay, too, his wife with their son appears the kind of person from whom to establish a distance rather than a person to approach:

> He stopped to light his pipe, looked once at his wife and son in the window, and as one raises one's eyes from a page in an express train and sees a farm, a tree, a cluster of cottages as an illustration, a confirmation of something on the printed page to which one returns, fortified, and satisfied, so without his distinguishing either his son or his wife, the sight of them fortified him and satisfied him and consecrated his effort to arrive at a perfectly clear

> understanding of the problem which now engaged the energies of his splendid mind. (56)

Mrs. Ramsay thus appears to her husband to be so familiar that he has no need to discern what her nature is, as when one takes a glance at passing scenery outside a train window. This familiar image of his wife is indispensable if Mr. Ramsay is to proceed with his philosophical problems, but the image functions only when he is observing her at a certain distance. In other words, it is only when Mrs. Ramsay appears as an amalgamation of familiarity and detachment that she provides a certain revelation for Mr. Ramsay. When he comes towards his wife with a demand for sympathy, he is seen by his wife and son as an "intrusion" into Mrs. Ramsay's sphere.

At the dinner party in the eighth soliloquy section of *The Waves*, Neville, at first, is proud of his success in his career. But the dignity of Susan, who embodies something everlasting in the natural world, makes his success seem transient and vain. He confesses inwardly:

> [Y]our eyes, Susan, full of turnips and cornfields, disturb me. These papers [my credentials] in my private pocket [. . .] make a faint sound like that of a man clapping in an empty field to scare away rooks. (150)

Susan is also loved by Percival, the "hero" of the six people. At the farewell party for him, Percival "takes his seat by Susan," when a sense of unity is brought about among the six people (88). Paired by Percival, who is also characterised by his simplicity and stability, she is at this moment set apart from the other five characters: "the

occasion is crowned," says Bernard (88); "while I admire Susan and Percival, I hate the others [who are all worldly]," says Louis (91).

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Thus women knitters in Woolf's fiction present themselves as, on the one hand, something so natural, familiar and common that one is tempted to turn to them, imagining them as easily approachable. On the other hand, they keep a certain distance from their viewers and hence turn out to be somewhat unreachable. With this rather contradictory nature, they suggest another aspect of the author's stance. This contradictoriness, in fact, reminds us of what Woolf describes as "reality" a number of times in both her fictional and non-fictional works:

> What is meant by 'reality'? It would seem to be something very erratic, very undependable—now to be found in a dusty road, now in a scrap of newspaper in the street, now in a daffodil in the sun. It lights up a group in a room and stamps some casual saying. It overwhelms one walking home beneath the stars and makes the silent world more real than the world of speech—and then there it is again in an omnibus in the uproar of Piccadilly. Sometimes, too, it seems to dwell in shapes too far away for us to discern what their nature is. But whatever it touches, it fixes and makes permanent. That is what remains over when the skin of the day has been cast into the hedge; that is what is left of past time and of our loves and hates. Now the writer, as I think, has the chance to live more than other people in the presence of this reality. It is his business to find it and collect it and communicate it to the rest of us. (*AROO* 99)

Just as this "reality" is described as something scattered in everyday scenes or part of daily life such as "a dusty road," "a scrap of newspaper in the street," "a daffodil in the sun," women knitters

appear frequently as parts of common backgrounds in Woolf's fiction. But as "reality" is, on the other hand, something inaccessible to us, so they are detached from others. In terms of the characterisation of those women, their contradictoriness can be regarded as the result of the author's effort to make them "realistic" in her sense. As the author's self-portraits, on the other hand, they become representatives of Woolf's creed as a writer: it is necessary for writers to seek ways of describing "reality" in a modernist, as opposed to a realist, sense.

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With their domestic appearances, knitting women in Woolf's fiction seem to be self-effacing, yet in reality are demonstrative, being associated with highly expressive activities such as controlling other people's lives and arranging their relationships. Their reserved/demonstrative posture is a reflection of Woolf's own stance as a woman writer.

This idiosyncratic representation of women knitters as the author's self-portrait is elucidated by their comparison with women writers. Significantly, Woolf's knitting women are more representative of her role as a writer than her writing women themselves. The former are more frequently depicted in relation to other characters than the latter. The reserved attitude of her knitters, on the one hand, invites numerous speculations and observations on the part of their viewers. This reflects the author's willingness to open up her texts to multiple readings, on the grounds that writers

and readers are collaborators in the creation of fiction. These knitters, on the other hand, appear to their viewers to be somewhat aloof and unreachable. With this sense of detachment in their domestic appearances, they are an indication of Woolf's ideal of a writer who assiduously seeks to depict "reality" as a conglomerate of contradictory elements. Thus the different aspects of Woolf's aesthetic of writing converge in the imagery of knitting women.

Woolf's subtlety in using this imagery can be shown in another way as well. She mostly draws on Victorian women, including her own mother, in creating her women knitters. This, at first sight, seems to reveal the author's nostalgia for the Victorian world. Noting, however, that Woolf uses Victorian figures as a way of asserting herself as a woman modernist writer—as a writer who engages the reader in structuring her texts and seeks for ways to depict "reality"—we may rather find there the ingenious contrivance of the author, who successfully detaches herself from the ideology of the preceding generation.

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The above discussion reveals that Woolf's knitting women—women weaving, embroidering, sewing, knitting, spinning, and doing other domestic works—function as an arena where different moments of time—the past and the present—are associated. This means more than that these women characters are a metaphor for Virginia Woolf as a writer. They are also significant in the structure of her novels, operating as subject and form.

As with their action and characterisation, Woolf's women knitters can be seen to oscillate between two states. They are at once domestic women and New Women. These two incompatible images of women brought together and presented in the same bodies signify the continuity, rather than the separation, of the two. This recalls a widely acknowledged phrase by Woolf, "a woman writing thinks back through her mothers" (*AROO* 88). As subject, Woolf's women knitters are representations of her feminist attempt to rediscover the lost legacy of female tradition and to recreate it in a modern context. As form, these women knitters are one of the motifs which complicate the relationship between the past and the present in the Woolfian world: they epitomise Woolf's project of rendering in her fictional world what she saw as the heterogeneous character of modern life.

CHAPTER 3

THE RANDOM LIGHT:

WOOLF'S DISTANCING DEVICES IN "THE SEARCHLIGHT"

Employed in the two world wars for the purpose of detecting, attacking, and defending against, enemy aircraft at night, the searchlight is a technological invention intimately related to European history of the early twentieth century.[1] With its prosthetic function—revealing objects invisible to the naked eye and/or lying in the far distance—the searchlight, like the telephone, enables us to communicate over distances and to grasp (and even to control) affairs in far-off places, and is associated with the desire for totalisation and imperialism. Putting objects themselves at a distance (to avoid direct contact with them) and drawing only the information of their conditions close at hand, the searchlight's mechanism is built upon the authoritarian desire to remain detached from, while at the same time approaching, one's targets. It seems that Woolf's adoption of the motif of searchlights in her fiction reflects the author's susceptibility to her living environment, affording an example of her faithful record of facts in daily life.

But it is also noteworthy that Woolf used various motifs of light in her fiction, such as the lighthouse beam in *To the Lighthouse*, "the light in the three tall windows" (466) in *Night and Day*, "the street lamps" (186) in *Orlando*, and that the searchlight is only one of a

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[1] The use of searchlights for military purposes itself dates back to the late nineteenth century, when the navies prepared for attacks from torpedo boats. The inventor of searchlights for illuminating the night sky was J. F. C. Fuller (1878-1966), a warfare theorist, who served as a general in the British Army from 1899 to 1933. For explanations of searchlights as a military weapon, see the entries for "searchlight" in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica* and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Searchlight.

number of motifs of light in the Woolfian world. A feature common to these motifs is that they assume symbolic resonances as well as constituting parts of the settings of the fictional worlds. Among these motifs, the lighthouse beam is conspicuous for the diversity of the interpretations of its meaning, as is evidenced by a large number of the studies of the motif in the critical literature.[2] The fact that the searchlight is similar to the lighthouse beam in structure—for both consist of multiple rays of light circulating across the dark space of night—points to the complex nature of the searchlight as a device within Woolf's aesthetic practice.

This chapter explores the function of the motif of the searchlight in "The Searchlight" (1944), a relatively neglected short story by Woolf, in comparison with its related motifs in *To the Lighthouse*. This will enable us to throw fresh light upon a feature of this time-bound material object in the short story; we will see that there are connections between this motif and the other motifs already discussed in the previous chapters—its function beyond its condition

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[2] Marder and Randles regard the lighthouse beam as a female quality, as opposed to a male attribute associated in the novel with the tower of the lighthouse. With its "diffuse radiation," "pulsating light into the darkness," according to Randles, the beam is associated with Mrs. Ramsay's intuition and instinct, "a unifying spirit of love" (194). Stewart traces the changing meaning of the lighthouse beam with the novel's progression: from "an ultimate source of creative energy" with which Mrs. Ramsay feels empathy (379), to "a ghost of departed consciousness" after her death (384), and to the creative power regained through Lily's act of painting, as the double of the female creator Mrs. Ramsay. For other discussions on the light, see, for instance, Thakur, Overcarsh, and Benette, or Sahu's concise critical history of the motif in *To the Lighthouse*.

as a real entity. Moreover, with its major focus placed upon one short story, this exploration will enable us to show Woolf's aesthetic practise in a condensed way, a practice which was discussed at greater length in the previous chapters. This will testify to the broadness of the range within which Woolf carried out her aesthetic project—from within one short story, within one novel, to within several fictional works in their entireties.

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Despite the increasing number of comments on the story with the growing popularity of the studies of Woolf's short fiction in recent years,[3] "The Searchlight" still receives little attention in Woolf criticism. In Dean R. Baldwin's book-length study of Woolf's shorter fiction, there is less than one page of comment on the story, most of which involves a summary of the plot. Herbert Marder devotes part of his paper to a discussion of the story in terms of feminism, but only sketchily: it is adduced only to demonstrate Woolf's obsession with the idea of "the androgynous mind" throughout her career as a feminist writer.[4] In her thesis on Woolf's three short fictions, namely,

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[3] Recent book-length studies of Woolf's shorter fiction include *Trespassing Boundaries* (2004) edited by Benzel and Hoberman, and *Wild Outbursts of Freedom* (2004) by Skrbic.

[4] Marder argues that "the androgynous mind" is Woolf's ideal state of mind as a writer, citing a passage from *A Room of One's Own*, a book which is generally recognised as Woolf's feminist polemic: "it is fatal for any one who writes to think of their sex. It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly or man-womanly" (*AROO* 94). Noting Woolf's deliberate use of the motif of light and darkness in her several literary works including "The Searchlight," Marder remarks that they represent the combination of both sexes

"The Lady in the Looking-Glass: A Reflection," "The Fascination of the Pool," and "Three Pictures," Susan Dick only lightly mentions in her notes on "The Searchlight" that its structure is similar to that of the other three stories in that "it presents one person's attempt to 'read' the scene he or she observes" ("Three Short Fictions" 45). Jean Guiguet dismisses it as "the least successful of all the stories" by Woolf because of its vagueness in meaning and its "long drawn out narrative" (341).

J. W. Graham's detailed analysis of "The Searchlight," one of the few article-length studies of the story, classifies its thirteen drafts, which Woolf wrote from 1929 to 1941, the year of her death, into three groups according basically to their supposed dates of composition, and explores the story's evolution.[5] His elaborate study discloses the complex structure of the final version of the story, a structure developed during the long period of its composition. The story, which was initially told by the omniscient narrator, evolved into a multi-layered structure: the narrator reports the story of Mrs. Ivimey, who will relate the story of her great-grandfather to her guests. Accordingly, the story's title itself changed: from "What the

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and thus well express the idea of "the androgynous mind."

[5] There are three other articles which deal with "The Searchlight" only: Henry's "From Hubble's Telescope to 'The Searchlight'" (2003); de Gay's "An Unfinished Story" (2000); and Raiskin's brief description of differences among several versions of the story in the *Virginia Woolf Miscellany* (1986). Only recently, at the 16th Annual International Conference on Virginia Woolf (2006), Laura Marcus discussed Woolf's adoption of "optical technologies"—telescopic, photographic, and cinematographic devices—in framing the story.

Telescope Discovered" (1929), to "Incongruous Memories" ("Inaccurate Memories") (1930), to "Scenes from the Past," to "The Searchlight." The earlier versions were integrated into the later versions of the story, though with much alteration. The connection between the earlier and later versions suggests the link between the themes and motifs in these different versions of the story: the telescope—memories—the past—the searchlight. Indeed, as we will argue later in this chapter, these elements are interrelated with one another, and entangled with the complicated structure of the story.[6] For the first step to an exploration of the searchlight and its related motifs, let us further examine how the latest version of the short story was created, with reference to Graham's argument.

I . THE FRAMING STORY

"The Searchlight" is set in a London club in (apparently) the interwar period. Mr. and Mrs. Ivimey and their friends are sitting on the balcony after dinner, waiting for a play to begin. To pass the time, Mrs. Ivimey offers to tell a story of her great-grandfather, which was

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[6] Henry also draws attention to Woolf's extensive revisions of the story as evidenced by Graham's elaborate study. Yet her focus lies entirely on the relationship between Woolf's fascination with the telescope and her adoption of its mechanism in structuring the story: Henry dwells upon "how those revisions suggest Woolf's increased interest in centering her story in the apparatus of the telescope" (52). The possible link between the telescope and the searchlight is mentioned only briefly in her book. (See Henry 64-65.)

originally told by himself.

In his detailed examination of the drafts of the short story, Graham remarks that Woolf's intention is to defend the power of fiction. In her earlier drafts, Woolf rebukes those who believe that when writing about a person's life, writers should not distort fact, on the ground that factual accuracies are indispensable for telling the truth of a life. In opposition to this, she insists that the "factual inaccuracies" of fiction are "a superior form of truth" (384). To justify her argument, she takes up the autobiography of Sir Henry Taylor, an official of the Colonial Office, concentrating on an incident in his boyhood which she believes tells the truth of his life more eloquently than any official record of his career. This story forms, in later versions, the main story of "The Searchlight," as told by Mrs. Ivimey.[7]

According to Graham, Woolf preserves her "preoccupation with 'fact' and 'fiction'" (387) until the last draft, conveying her idea less directly and more subtly. He closely traces how effectively the author revises her short story to make it better express her idea of fiction.[8]

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[7] For the description of the incident, see "Early Manhood at Witton-le-Wear—Influence of my Stepmother, of Miss Fenwick, and of Southey" in *Autobiography of Henry Taylor* (37-58, particularly 43-46).

[8] As opposed to Graham, de Gay observes that Woolf deploys her question of "official, patriarchal constructions of history and biography" better in the "Freshwater drafts of 'The Searchlight'," which Graham considers as written earlier than the published story (213). This argument contributes much to the exploration of a series of "The Searchlight" drafts, and is worth investigating. Yet we will take up the published version, for our discussion centres on the searchlight motif, which is fully developed only in the later versions including the published text.

Before discussing his argument further, we need to consider Woolf's aesthetic in writing fiction. Although it presumably changed with the development of her career as a writer, the most fundamental aesthetic statement can be found in "Poetry, Fiction and the Future" (1927), an essay quoted earlier in this thesis. This was written around the time when she conceived the idea of *The Waves*, the novel she would call "my first work in my own style" (*D*4: 53). She writes that she is striving for the novel which

> will take on some of the attributes of poetry. It will give the relations of man to Nature, to fate; his imagination; his dreams. But it will also give the sneer, the contrast, the question, the closeness and complexity of life. It will take the mould of that queer conglomeration of incongruous things—the modern mind. (*E*4: 436)

This reveals that Woolf aimed at depicting fictional life as a dynamic whole. Her aesthetic is, therefore, characterised by its preference for the combination of incompatible elements rather than consistency; slippage and gap rather than eloquence and beauty. As to the short story under consideration, Graham notes that while in its earlier drafts Woolf employs explanatory narrative methods such as an omniscient narrator to delineate the story of Sir Henry, in later drafts she creates a frame-story and uses one of its characters to convey the story. This marks the shift in the structure of "The Searchlight" from the simple to the complex. We may infer that the author made this shift for the purpose of suiting the structure of her story to her own aesthetic, thereby aiming at a work which truly

engages the reader in its fictional life; that through this method she tried to make her fiction tell the truth of life.

Graham makes a similar point when he remarks that the frame-story is the key to the successful creation of the short story. With the development of a frame-story and the characterisation of a narrator as "a framing-device" (385), he writes, the author's idea of fiction embedded in the main story becomes more persuasive, for it is now delivered in a more "artistic form" (387): "the frame-story makes it possible for the life-confirming reality of the past [an incident in Sir Henry's boyhood] to be dramatized through montage with the fictional present of the framing narrative [set in the interwar period]," observes Graham (390). Graham's argument, however, has several doubtful points. They concern his explanation of the characterisation of Mrs. Ivimey, the narrator of the main story, which forms the focus of his discussion of that narrative.

Firstly, Graham notes that Mrs. Ivimey is a contemporary of Woolf's readers, and points out that this is an important factor in making the main story cogent. A sense of closeness towards their contemporary makes it possible for readers to engage with Mrs. Ivimey's story as her listeners. However, it is easy to infer that as time passes, a gap will occur between the narrator and the reader; accordingly, the narrator will possibly become a persona with whom the reader no longer feels empathy. Given that Woolf strove through the creation of this short story for "a superior form of truth," it would be an ironic result for her if her fiction is to lose its power to appeal to

the reader with the passage of time.

Secondly, Graham remarks that the fact that Mrs. Ivimey is the blood descendant of the male protagonist must make her story about him sound realistic to the reader. This is shown by the fact that she is biologically related to him and has actually heard him tell the story; but this does not necessarily mean that it is convincing for the reader. Rather, the form in which the protagonist's descendant relates her ancestor's childhood is likely to reduce the possible implications of the story. It may fall into a pure family history, a kind of auto/biographical piece of writing which lacks enough generality to appeal to the reader.

Thus, Graham's observations about Mrs. Ivimey, on the basis of whose function he argues that the frame-story subtly works in the short fiction, are of disputable value. They are not sufficient to explain the successful expression of Woolf's theme in her fiction. It is more likely that the key factor lies somewhere else in the frame-story. We may note that with the development of the framing narrative and the narrator of the main story, another element is added to the text: the frame narrator. Strangely enough, Graham does not pay enough attention to her existence (if we suppose that the narrator is a woman), much less her function in the short story.[9] To be fair to him,

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[9] Graham regards the frame narrator as a diminished version of the omniscient narrator in the earlier drafts of the story, the narrator who conveys the whole story: he briefly observes that "[t]he narrator's role is [. . .] reduced to that of recounting the frame-story and transmitting Mrs. Ivimey's narrative in a neutral tone" (388).

however, we should note the fact that the frame narrator of "The Searchlight" is a third-person narrator—seemingly an omniscient narrator—so that she is likely to draw little attention to herself.

Closely examined, the third-person frame narrator is of an idiosyncratic nature. In terms of her function, the narrator is closer to a first-person narrator than the omniscient narrator of a classic frame narrative. She shows, just like the first-person frame narrator of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, less insight into the main story than does the main narrator (Mrs. Ivimey): she is, at least seemingly, ignorant about the progression of the main story.[10] Considering that Conrad's frame narrator is the author's "distancing device" (Lothe 168), a device with which to "control and shape fictional material" in indirect ways (Lothe 166) in order to enhance the narrative effect of his story, we may surmise that the frame narrator of "The Searchlight" is also a distancing device for the author. With this premise in mind, we will explore the text of the short story, focusing on the interrelation between the main story and

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[10] In his exhaustive analysis of the scene of Mrs. Ramsay knitting in *To the Lighthouse*, Auerbach draws attention to a narrator who appears to comment on Mrs. Ramsay, making a similar point. "Perhaps [she] is the author," speculates Auerbach, "[b]ut she does not seem to bear in mind that she is the author and hence ought to know how matters stand with her characters. The person speaking here [. . .] acts the part of one who has only an impression of Mrs. Ramsay, who looks at her face and renders the impression received, but is doubtful of its proper interpretation" (531-32). Schleifer regards this kind of narrator as a representation of "non-transcendental disembodiment" (126), a notion developed with the advent of the second Industrial Revolution. (The telephone, for instance, transmits disembodied voices, yet does so in a non-transcendental sense.)

its frame.

II. THE SEARCHLIGHT OF THE AIR FORCE

After hesitating for a while over where to begin, Mrs. Ivimey embarks on telling her story. The opening part is related in a rather desultory manner, yet, for a reason soon to become explicit, is worth quoting at length.

> He [my great-grandfather] must have been a beautiful boy. But queer . . . That was only natural—seeing how they lived. The name was Comber. They'd come down in the world. They'd been gentlefolk; they'd owned land up in Yorkshire. But when he was a boy only the tower was left. The house was nothing but a little farmhouse, standing in the middle of the fields. We broke in about ten years ago. We had to leave the car and walk across the fields. There isn't any road to the house. It stands all alone, the grass grows right up to the gate . . . there were chickens pecking about, running in and out of the rooms. All gone to rack and ruin. I remember a stone fell from the tower suddenly.' She paused. 'There they lived,' she went on, 'the old man, the woman and the boy. She wasn't his wife, or the boy's mother. She was just a farm hand, a girl the old man had taken to live with him when his wife died. [. . .] But I remember a coat of arms over the door; and books, old books, gone mouldy. He taught himself all he knew from books. He read and read, he told me, old books, books with maps hanging out from the pages. He dragged them up to the top of the tower—the rope's still there and the broken steps. There's a chair still in the window with the bottom fallen out; and the window swinging open, and the panes broken, and a view for miles and miles across the moors.'
>
> She paused as if she were up in the tower looking from the window that swung open. (269-70)

It is noteworthy that Mrs. Ivimey does not always speak from one point of view. The passage consists of three viewpoints: a view based

on her awareness of her audience, a view she took "about ten years ago," and her great-grandfather's point of view in his childhood. When she says, "He must have been a beautiful boy," it is clear that she takes the first viewpoint, which is sustained until the sentence: "But when he was a boy only the tower was left." But the following sentence, "The house was nothing but a little farmhouse [. . .]," is less obvious in viewpoint: the sentence does not use the third person "he," which signified a clear distinction between Mrs. Ivimey as a storyteller and the subject of her story. Mrs. Ivimey's viewpoint here could be her great-grandfather's as a boy as well as hers as a self-conscious storyteller. The sentence gives a brief sketch of the place in which he lived, so that the reader imagines that Mrs. Ivimey keeps this perspective to describe the scene down to the last detail. Against this expectation, she introduces another viewpoint, saying, "We broke in about ten years ago." The viewpoint is the one she took ten years before when visiting the house her great-grandfather lived in as a child. Then soon again another viewpoint appears: she begins, "There isn't any road to the house. It stands [. . .], the grass grows [. . .]." Strange to say, these sentences take not the past tense like the other sentences, but the present tense. At first the reader may be confused about the point of view she is adopting, or whether or not she expresses the present situation of the house. Thus the passage is elusive in time and perspective.

Graham observes that such elusiveness stems from Mrs. Ivimey's amateurism in storytelling, and explains it as representing

Woolf's aesthetic idea that "the work of art is begot by casual occasions on insufficient powers" (392). This argument is, however, questionable. If Woolf had intended to show the inarticulateness of Mrs. Ivimey's narrative, the author would have written her whole narrative in the same style. The reality is that Mrs. Ivimey's narrative becomes, later, more consistent in time and perspective, sticking to only one time, the day when her great-grandfather had a mystical experience, and taking only his viewpoint. It is, therefore, likely that another reason makes this part of her narrative inconsistent. (Holly Henry also notes the blurred distinctions among the three events, yet designates this feature briefly as a narrative strategy to enhance the dramatic experience of the reader.[11])

In order to elucidate this enigma, let us look at the setting of the frame-story—one summer night—which composes the surroundings of the narrator Mrs. Ivimey. Just before Mrs. Ivimey begins her story—that is, at the beginning of "The Searchlight"—the frame narrator witnesses the searchlight of "the air force" in the dark sky and depicts its movement:

> After pausing to prod some suspected spot, the light wheeled, like the wings of a windmill, or again like the antennae of some prodigious insect and revealed here a cadaverous stone front; here a chestnut tree [. . .]. (269)

Thus, the searchlight alternates between moving and pausing. While moving, the light makes traces of a wheel across the sky; while

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[11] See Henry 53.

pausing, it focuses on a certain spot or object.

Let us return to Mrs. Ivimey's narrative quoted above. Closely analysing it, we notice that although at the beginning there are clear distinctions among three times—the present, ten years ago and the time when her great-grandfather was a boy (Mrs. Ivimey guesses it was 1820)—they merge after the sentence: "There isn't any road to the house." We can regard this sentence both as Mrs. Ivimey's comment as a narrator from the present viewpoint and as her description from the eyes of her great-grandfather. It is also true of the sentence, "there were chickens pecking about, running in and out of the rooms." We at first wonder whether Mrs. Ivimey is talking about the scene she saw ten years ago, or the one her great-grandfather saw as a boy. Such vagueness in the presentation of time temporarily vanishes when she stops for a moment ("She paused.") and then resumes her story: she says, "There they lived, [. . .] the old man, the woman and the boy," suggesting the specific time when her great-grandfather was a boy. Yet drawing to another pause, her narrative again becomes ambiguous in the distinction of the three times:

> He dragged them [old books] up to the top of the tower—the rope's *still* there and the broken steps. There's a chair *still* in the window with the bottom fallen out; and *the window* swinging open, and *the panes* broken, and *a view* for miles and miles across the moors. (270; emphasis added)

It is uncertain when the scene after the dash is set. After the

semicolon, we see three nouns—"the window," "the panes," and "a view"—listed, each accompanied by no main verb. These, together with the reiteration of the word "still," seem to suggest the perfect halt of the passage of time, and to merge the three times completely. The convergence of the three times occurs also in the scenes immediately after this extract. Mrs. Ivimey pauses "as if she were up in the tower looking from the window that swung open." She is now the narrator in the present, the one who visited the tower ten years previously, and her great-grandfather as a boy, who climbed up the tower. This scene is followed by the report that "the clatter of plates grew louder" in the dining room behind her guests (270). Apparently, it only describes the scene here and now, the clearing of the table in the room where the Ivimeys and their guests have been dining. But it can also imply the other two times in the tower of her great-grandfather's: the increasing noise of the clatter of plates evokes the image of wind blowing towards "the top of the tower" when the window was "swung open," either by Mrs. Ivimey ten years ago, or by her great-grandfather in about 1820. Thus Mrs. Ivimey's mind's eye wavers between the three timescales, blurring their distinctions.

From the analysis above, it must be noted that Mrs. Ivimey's narrative makes similar traces to those of the searchlight in the world of the frame-story: her narrative moves between the three timescales circularly and sometimes focuses on a scene in a certain time for a while. This equivalence can be explained as follows. The movement of the searchlight, which is introduced at the beginning of

the short story, probably continues during Mrs. Ivimey's storytelling, although it is never mentioned by her. The unstable movement of the searchlight, then, disrupts her train of thought and makes her narrative random and inconsistent. This may be shown when we note that Mrs. Ivimey is completely unconscious of how she is telling her story, despite her initial attempt to relate her story in a responsible way. (Remember she begins her story to entertain her guests.) It appears as though she is talking without any thought. Her state of mind reminds us of that of Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*, when the latter dislodges herself from active conversations with her guests at her dinner party, and looks at other people talking:

> Now she need not listen. It could not last she knew, but at the moment her eyes were so clear that they seemed to go round the table unveiling each of these people, and their thoughts and their feelings, without effort like a light stealing under water so that its ripples and the reeds in it and the minnows balancing themselves, and the sudden silent trout are all lit up hanging, trembling. (165)

Patricia Ondek Laurence describes this passage as "a world of unconscious thought" of Mrs. Ramsay (*Silence* 115). We can see that Mrs. Ramsay's mind's eye moves randomly as if irrelevant to her own thoughts and feelings: "her eyes" move among the inner lives of her guests "without effort," "unveiling"—i.e. revealing—each of them. Accordingly, the names of her guests, their individual characters, dissipate: she does not, it seems, recognise each person, such as "Mr. Bankes" and "Mr. Tansley," but perceives her guests as a cluster—she calls them "these people." In this process, her mind's eye is compared

to "a light stealing under water," which is reminiscent of the image of a searchlight. Thus, Woolf describes her character's unconscious state of mind as the accordance of the movement of her mind's eyes with that of a searchlight or light of the kind which makes random traces. As far as "The Searchlight" is concerned, we can say that the searchlight in the world of the frame story is, along with the frame narrator who depicts its movement, a device with which to subtly control the progression of Mrs. Ivimey's story.[12]

Let us briefly examine the author's possible intention in this operation. Mrs. Ivimey's unconscious storytelling suggests her losing a sense of her role as a narrator. She fails to maintain critical judgements on her own act of narrating. In effect, Mrs. Ivimey's narrative almost takes the form of soliloquy. This recalls the narrative structure of *The Waves*, a structure which is built up of the protagonists' soliloquies. In his study of lyricism in *The Waves*, James Phelan notes a stylistic feature of the book. He writes that each soliloquist makes "jump[s]" in his/her consciousness (37): s/he seldom sustains one feeling or thought, but moves at random from one feeling to another throughout any series of his/her soliloquies.

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[12] Fleishman also notes the association of "a searchlight's action" with "the content of the narrative" as an example of Woolf's "careful recomposition of the framing elements," yet does not explain it in any detail ("Forms" 66, 67). Mrs. Ivimey's mind's eye moving in accordance with the searchlight could be explained as an example of modernist fixation with eyes: just as in *Ulysses* "Bloom's gaze [. . .] acts on its own, as though detached from a conscious nucleus" (Danius, *Senses of Modernism* 160), so Mrs. Ivimey's mind's eye attains autonomy, as if released from its owner's will.

The reason the author adopts such "jumps" is, according to Phelan, that Woolf attempts to prevent her readers' judgements on the soliloquist and his/her soliloquy from being "functional within the progression of the narrative" (37). "Through this jump," writes Phelan, "Woolf signals that we have now moved into a new lyric movement" (37). To put it the other way round, lyricism in Woolf's novels lies in their asking us to see the world of the speaker "through the speaker's eyes without making a judgement on that vision" (36).

This theory may also apply to the present part of "The Searchlight." We can say that the jumps in Mrs. Ivimey's consciousness are the consequence of the author's art of preventing her readers from judging what the narrator relates, thereby engaging them in her narration. Through Mrs. Ivimey's consciousness that freely explores the past, the reader is directly brought into the mind of the male protagonist of her story, and is allowed to perceive its fictional life as a dynamic whole.

Ⅲ. THE TELESCOPIC LIGHT

However, the light does not always appear to Mrs. Ivimey's mind's eye to be random. During her storytelling, it undergoes metamorphoses in her mind. This section focuses on the first transformation of the light, exploring its function in the text. The moment is marked by her sudden utterance: "But we couldn't [. . .]

find the telescope" (270). The telescope she mentions turns out to be a major motif in an incident in her great-grandfather's life, the incident she is going to relate. Moreover, as shown in its ability to affect one's sense of sight, "the telescope" functions to alter the perspective from which Mrs. Ivimey tells her story. To explore this point, let us turn to the middle part of *To the Lighthouse*, which also sees the introduction of a telescope. In the Ramsays' half-ruined holiday home, which was once filled with human activities, the cleaning lady Mrs. McNab sees the apparition of Mrs. Ramsay, her dead mistress:

> She could see her [Mrs. Ramsay] now, stooping over her flowers; (and faint and flickering, like a yellow beam or the circle at the end of a telescope, a lady in a grey cloak, stooping over her flowers, went wandering over the bedroom wall, up the dressing-table, across the wash-stand, as Mrs. McNab hobbled and ambled, dusting, straightening). (211)

Here Mrs. Ramsay's figure is described as if she were viewed through a telescope. Although the range of the telescope itself is moving, what it shows is always the same, the figure of Mrs. Ramsay. In other words, what is randomly changing or moving here is the object, not the perspective of the telescope. This "fitted itself to Mrs. McNab's eyes" (216), that is, the "telescope" is, ultimately, Mrs. McNab's mind's eye, so that its unvarying sight suggests her stable perspective on Mrs. Ramsay's figure. In general, we can say that what the range of a telescope represents is one's firm perspective on

an object.[13]

In "The Searchlight," "the telescope," which Mrs. Ivimey abruptly mentions, proves, by her own implication, to be the one that her great-grandfather used to see stars by as a boy. Then a comment by the frame narrator follows: "the searchlight seemed brighter, sweeping across the sky, pausing here and there to stare at the stars" (270). It is now clear for the reader that the "stare" of the searchlight at the stars becomes, in Mrs. Ivimey's imagination, her great-grandfather's eyes, which were peering through his telescope at the stars. At the same time, Mrs. Ivimey's mind's eye, which has become in a sense, as seen earlier, the searchlight itself, accords with his eyes, that is, the range of the telescope. So here we see that the searchlight is metamorphosed into the telescope in Mrs. Ivimey's mind.

If the searchlight represents, as we observed in the preceding section, multiple perspectives, the telescope may be, just like the one in *To the Lighthouse*, a single perspective. In fact, after this shift from the searchlight to the telescope, Mrs. Ivimey's mind's eye takes on only one perspective, her great-grandfather's, just as a telescope is brought into focus. In terms of Mrs. Ivimey's state of mind, the shift suggests her total concentration on storytelling, which is evident in

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[13] Henry cites the same scene from *To the Lighthouse* to give an example of Woolf's adoption of telescopic devices in her fiction. Yet she does not discuss the scene in terms of the problem of perspectives. (See Henry 59.) Laura Marcus points out Woolf's adoption of cinematography in this scene. (See Marcus, *Virginia Woolf* 102.)

her way of responding to the voice of someone else in actual life, a voice which is likely to disturb her story. While talking, she hears someone say, "'Right you are. Friday'" (271), probably answering to his/her partner's question or remark. In response to this, Mrs. Ivimey repeats the same words absent-mindedly—"she murmured"—and adopts them in the context of her story: she says, "'Ah, but there was nobody to say that to him [my great-grandfather as a boy]'" (271).

Let us now explore how the searchlight, changed into a telescope in Mrs. Ivimey's imagination, functions in her narrative. The event described after the metamorphosis is that one day, through his telescope, her great-grandfather as a boy witnessed a man kiss a woman, and got out of his house, interested in the outer world. Graham observes that the boy's awakening is due to his act of looking. "Because a telescope requires spatial remoteness if it is to fulfill its purpose," writes Graham, "it can serve as an analogue of art" (386), which implies that artists see an object from a somewhat detached point of view. His formulation reminds us of the painter Lily Briscoe's discovery on art in *To the Lighthouse* that "Distance had an extraordinary power" (*TL* 289), or that "so much depends [. . .] upon distance" (*TL* 293).[14] This means that it is only when one is remote from an object that one can see it as "vivid" (*TL* 294) and grasp its essence. In this respect, the boy's act of looking through his telescope means his attaining a detached view of life which he has so far seen only subjectively, and the maturity of his perception of life. At first

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[14] See page 114 above.

sight, Graham's argument seems incontrovertible. A question, however, arises: since the boy makes it a habit to look through his telescope, it follows that he has already been using it for some time when his sudden awakening occurs. It is, therefore, more likely that this stems not only from the very act of his peering through his telescope, but also from something else. It should be remembered that on the day of his awakening the boy sweeps his telescope from the sky to the ground. (In fact, this is the only difference between this day and the previous ones.) It is more plausible to think that the very change of the telescopic view is relevant to his awakening.

It is unlikely that the change only suggests the shift of the boy's physical perspective: it also implies a change in his inner vision. During his stargazing period, that is, before the shift occurs, he is indulging in the sense of eternity. That is clear from his feeling, which is described by Mrs. Ivimey, who is identifying with him, that "[t]he stars seemed very permanent, very unchanging" (271). Also during the daytime, it seems to him as if "the day would never end" (271). This sense of eternity suggests the boy's absolute satisfaction with his existence, that is, his sense of the wholeness of his being. It can be explained as follows. His undisturbed, lonely communion with stars—"he asked himself, [. . .] 'What are they? Why are they? And who am I?' as one does, sitting alone, with no one to talk to [. . .]"—allows him to attain a sense of relatedness to the world around, and ultimately, a sense of the unity of all animate and inanimate things on earth (270). In such an empathetic state, the

light emanated by the inanimate things one is looking at—in this case "stars"—becomes the reflection of one's eye-beam upon oneself. The light, in this respect, conveys a sense of immortality, of transcending each individual mortal life, and thus produces feelings of utmost peacefulness in one's being.[15]

The boy's communion with light reminds us of Mrs. Ramsay's feelings towards the lighthouse beam during her solitary meditation in "The Window" of *To the Lighthouse*:

> She looked up over her knitting and met the third stroke and it seemed to her like her own eyes meeting her own eyes, searching as she alone could search into her mind and her heart, purifying out of existence that lie, any lie. (101)

For Mrs. Ramsay, a wife, a mother and a hostess, it is only when she is "by herself" (99) that she can be herself: to put it the other way round, while relating with others, she is more or less pinned down to daily concerns and human issues. Her sense of the "purifying" effect of the lighthouse beam suggests her urge for "ataraxia" in the Epicurean sense, the state in which her senses are released from any convention or delusion in her actual life. Through the light, she

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[15] Henry regards the boy's communion with the universe as an example of Woolf's experimentation with "a re-scaling of humans in the universe" (56), an attempt inspired by popular science which was fostered by James Jeans' publications on astronomy in the 1920s and 1930s. Yet as seen in Chapter 1 of this thesis, there is a very similar scene—the scene of Katharine's stargazing—in *Night and Day*, which was published as early as 1919. Henry points out even in this scene the influence of science, but Woolf may not have been influenced only by popular culture and prevailing beliefs in creating her scenes.

simply becomes herself, thereby regaining a sense of the wholeness of her being.

The change in the boy's inner vision occurs when he directs his telescope at the ground and sees a young man and woman locked in an embrace. Graham regards them as an anonymous couple and as both irrelevant to the boy. However, later in the story the scene turns out to be a kind of premonition of the encountering of his future wife, so that the man can be considered as the boy himself in the future. What his mysterious experience suggests is, as it were, his initiation into adulthood: his awakening into sexual desire; his resignation to the intimation of his mortality. The important point here is that with the change of his inner perspective, the boy's self is divided into two, between his spatial location, with his telescope, and the temporal distance, with his future wife. (This division in his self may be a literal expression of the complication of the boy's inner life.) More significantly, the consciousness of the narrator, Mrs. Ivimey, who has shared a viewpoint with the boy, is also divided into two: she is half her great-grandfather as a viewer and half the two persons he is looking at, chiefly his future wife. This is clearly expressed in the oscillation of her consciousness between here, her great-grandfather as a viewer, and there, her great-grandmother as the person seen by him: on the one hand Mrs. Ivimey "opened her arms and closed them as if she were kissing someone," and on the other hand "she thrust something from her—the telescope presumably" (272).

The moment the boy meets his future wife is, therefore,

described by the frame narrator as the moment Mrs. Ivimey brings her divided selves together here, in the face of her audience. This is dramatised—for the reader of "The Searchlight" as well as for her audience—when the two persons meet, by Mrs. Ivimey's figure—"herself"—being revealed by the searchlight: "A shaft of light fell upon Mrs Ivimey as if someone had focussed the lens of a telescope upon her" (272). This expression may be based on the idea that since Mrs. Ivimey is the two people's descendant, she can represent their unification. Her regaining of the sense of unity in herself is also described as a momentary loss of words. She is in the process of talking about her great-grandmother's surprise at seeing a man—her future husband ("She stopped, as if she saw him" (272)), when the searchlight spots her. Then she says, "Oh, the girl . . . She was my—, " and hesitates for a moment "as if she were about to say 'myself'" (272). Mrs. Ivimey's loss of words represents the fullness of her presence in her body, an abundance of self-consciousness which does not require any speech.[16]

On a metaphorical level, Mrs. Ivimey's regaining of herself suggests that her relating of her great-grandfather's past is in parallel with her searching for herself. In other words, her reflection on her object—her great-grandfather's inner life—leads to her self-reflection. This is, in fact, signalled near the beginning of "The

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[16] Mrs. Ivimey's perception of the boy's sexuality through her mind's eye may again be explained in terms of the modernist fixation with sight. The boy's bodily sensation is converted into a visual impression, thus enabling the reader to *see* the abstraction of sexuality.

Searchlight." There, a mirror of a guest reflects the searchlight, which triggers Mrs. Ivimey's storytelling: "for a second a bright disc shone—perhaps it was a mirror in a lady's hand-bag" (269). In general, the shining presents two simultaneous phenomena: one is that light hits the mirror; and the other is that the light is reflected by the mirror. Given that the searchlight is, in a sense, Mrs. Ivimey's mind's eye, the mirror which reflects the light at the beginning of her story serves as a prediction that her search for a significant moment in her great-grandfather's life is somehow connected with her act of reaching for herself.

Such a mirroring effect can be seen also in the passage from *To the Lighthouse*, which was quoted near the beginning of this section. There we notice that Mrs. Ramsay is described as "a lady," not as "the lady," and further, is compared to light. This is a generalisation of the specific figure of Mrs. Ramsay. Her depersonalised figure, which is "stooping" or goes "wandering," is, then, replaced by the figure of Mrs. McNab, whose back is bent with age and who "hobbled and ambled." Since the former is similar to the latter in posture and movement, the former image is almost overlapped by the latter as the passage proceeds. In other words, it may be said that the vision of Mrs. Ramsay caught by Mrs. McNab at the end of her imaginary telescope presents, in turn, the figure of Mrs. McNab herself. This conflation of self and other is identical with the phenomenon by which a mirror

reflects the viewer and makes her see herself.[17]

This mirroring effect leads to the idea that human lives are related at a subterranean level, an idea which is made evident through "moments of being." In fact, this probably has to do with the narrative technique that Woolf calls "my tunnelling process" (*D*2: 272). Although the technique is a common preoccupation in early modernism and is thus not specific to Woolf, it can be explained in the light of Woolf's aesthetic as follows. In her fiction, Woolf aims to "dig out beautiful caves behind [her] characters" (*D*2: 263), caves which will "connect" with one another. What she means by "caves" is her characters' inner lives, the realm of their consciousness at a pre-rational level, so that the connected caves suggest the state in which their inner lives are linked by some common thoughts or feelings. The idea of this technique is based on Woolf's idea of life, which is typically presented in "Sketch of the Past." There she writes that it is "a constant idea of mine; that behind the cotton wool is

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[17] This argument may elicit opposition. It might be contended that such a connection between these two women is controversial, for there are obvious differences between them. Minow-Pinkney, for example, sees Mrs. McNab as "a chthonic being in touch with telluric powers," a being who provides a contrast with Mrs. Ramsay, who represents "an effete bourgeois culture" (101). However, we can find several attributes common to them both. As Mrs. Ramsay acts as an organiser in the Ramsays' household, which is exemplified by her role in her dinner party in Part Ⅰ, so Mrs. McNab struggles to reorganize the half-ruined house of the Ramsays in Part Ⅱ. They also share a sense of awkwardness in front of a mirror, a sense which probably reflects Woolf's personal experience in her childhood. Laurence also points out their "gender similarities" as well as "class differences" through her analysis of the mental and physical rhythms of the two characters ("'Some Rope to Throw to the Reader'" 70).

hidden a pattern; that we—I mean all human beings—are connected with this" (85). If "the cotton wool" stands for "daily life" or the "appearances" of persons and things, "a pattern" is "some order," "some real thing" (85) that is latent in each being. So in Woolf's fiction, the explorer of the depth of others' inner lives can be thought of as revealing the "pattern" common to us, that is, ultimately, the searcher of the essence of one's own being or oneself as well as the essence of others' lives.

IV. THE SPOTLIGHT

The searchlight illuminating the character of Mrs. Ivimey is, on the other hand, likely to evoke a certain image in the reader's mind: a spotlight thrown upon an actor. Concerning this, it should be remembered that Mrs. Ivimey's storytelling serves as an entertainment for her guests before "the play" (269). At first sight, her storytelling seems irrelevant to stage performances. However, after the scene where Mrs. Ivimey, like an actress on a stage, identifies herself with her ancestors in her absorption in storytelling, it seems appropriate to regard her, at this moment, as a player under a spotlight.[18]

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[18] The light suddenly cast on a spectator recalls a famous scene in *Between the Acts* (1941). At the end of Miss La Trobe's pageant, mirrors are held by her actors towards her audience, reflecting their faces. This arouses the audience's embarrassment, as if they were

"The spotlight" thrown upon Mrs. Ivimey reminds the reader of the viewpoint of someone who, outside the whole entertainment of "The Searchlight," organises it with composure. He must be such a person as can consider the narrator Mrs. Ivimey as one of his characters, just as the director of a play regards its narrator as one of his players. That is, the spotlight can be seen as the viewpoint of Woolf, who has organised the whole story by using light as the device to operate Mrs. Ivimey's narration. We can surmise that by throwing "a spotlight" upon Mrs. Ivimey in the story she herself has been telling, Woolf displaces Mrs. Ivimey from her role as narrator of the main story and returns her to her original role, a character in "The Searchlight." In other words, the author's "spotlight" urges Mrs. Ivimey to "act" as she is, instead of relating the actions of the protagonists in the main story. In the text, this is effected in the sudden dislodgement of Mrs. Ivimey from storytelling:

> She turned to look for her cloak. It was on a chair behind her.
>
> 'But tell us—what about the other man, the man who came round the corner?' they asked.
>
> 'That man? That man,' Mrs Ivimey murmured, stooping to fumble with her cloak, (the searchlight had left the balcony), 'he, I suppose, vanished.'
>
> 'The light,' she added, gathering her things about her, 'only falls here and there.' (272)

One must notice that with Mrs. Ivimey having been awakened from

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suddenly pushed onto the stage. See *BA* 214-20. Briggs also draws attention to the relationship between "The Searchlight" and *Between the Acts* by pointing to the spotlight-like effect of the searchlight in the short story. See Briggs, *Reading* 184-86.

total engagement in storytelling, the conclusion of her story is suspended. Towards her guests' inquiry about "the other man" who was caught by the boy through his telescope, she responds only vaguely and irresponsibly, "he, I suppose, vanished." At first sight it looks as if the author has dislodged Mrs. Ivimey from storytelling in order to suspend the conclusion and enhance the sense of the main story's mystery. Yet given the easiness of deducing what has become of "the other man"—since he is the boy's future vision, he vanishes the moment the boy achieves it—the question remains as to the author's deliberate operation at the end of the story.

A close look at Mrs. Ivimey's vague answer reveals two possible ways of interpreting it. One is, as we presumed above, that the vision of "the other man" vanishes from the boy's mind. The other is, more simply, that Mrs. Ivimey does not feel like telling her story any more. Since the latter interpretation presents Mrs. Ivimey's detached attitude, that is, her feeling that her story is just a story, not particularly significant, it evades the former interpretation which stresses mystery. The important thing here is that Mrs. Ivimey's ambiguous conclusion to her story produces a self-undermining structure: her vague words serve to prevent her story from accomplishing its own supposed project of rendering mystery. In terms of the author's art, it follows that the author, for some reason, at the end calls into question what has been told.

The author's operation here has an explanation in her poetics of oscillation, the poetics that we discerned in the preceding chapter,

with regard to the complicated character of women knitters in Woolf's fiction—the alternation between familiarity and inaccessibility. And just as those women knitters' oscillation is a representation of reality as Woolf understood it, so the ambiguous nature of the phrase by Mrs. Ivimey can be explained in relation to Woolf's idea of reality and her striving to render it. Let us look again at her idea of reality, in order to more precisely explain its relationship with her writing practice.

Woolf's lifelong pursuit of her own style in fiction is based on her notion that there is "a silence in life, a perpetual deposit of experience for which action provides no proper outlet and our own words no fit expression" (*E*3: 497), and that her ambition as a novelist should be to explore the silence and to describe it. In Woolf's idea, presenting the "silence" of life in fiction leads to describing life with a sense of reality as she understood it. *Reality* is, according to her diary entry for 10 September 1928,

> a thing I see before me; something abstract; but residing in the downs or sky; beside which nothing matters; in which I shall rest & continue to exist. [. . .] 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. (*D*3: 196)

Thus, what Woolf calls reality is described as a thing which can certainly be felt or perceived through her senses, but which defies any definition by words. At a practical level, to grasp *reality* in life forms a paradoxical problem, as made explicit in Woolf's struggle in the extract above. What is indescribable is, once expressed,

transformed into something different; however, it can never be presented unless it is described. One of the possible solutions to this paradoxical problem is to express it in such a way as to deny itself on asserting itself. As a narrative strategy, what Woolf adopts in her fiction is a kind of "deconstructive aporia": "an impossible dialectic which aims to be 'integrated' at the moment of maximum dispersal" (Minow-Pinkney, *Problem of the Subject* 159). To put it more concretely, she employs various levels of oscillation—in grammar, structure, meaning, and characterisation—in her fiction, which makes her narrative too elusive to grasp easily. In this way she structures her narrative to express what she understands as reality.[19]

Let us now return to Mrs. Ivimey's vague comment: "he, I suppose, vanished." If she had offered a clear conclusion—for example, she had said, "he [the other man] vanished, for he was, to our surprise, my great-grandfather's vision of his own figure in the future"—how would it affect the text? It would, on the one hand, verify the reader's speculation. On the other hand, by making obvious the mystery of the story, it would emphasise the fairy-tale attribute

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[19] This attempt in structuring her narrative is epitomised in the form and subject matter of *The Waves*. Bernard is characterised by his "vague and cloudy nature" (194), a nature which thwarts his engagement with masculine intellectual activities, presented as constructive and purposeful. His soliloquies are, to put it in Minow-Pinkney's words, a form of "[c]ontinual alternation between an integrated assertion of identity and its dissolution" (*Problem of the Subject* 158). Such an endless oscillation in the form of his speech can be considered to be a representation of the author's own ideal of the form for her fiction.

of the incident in the protagonist's life rather than the author's point that fiction is "a superior form of truth." It is, therefore, not inappropriate to think that the author, at the end of her story, uses a subtle narrative strategy to add a sense of verisimilitude to her fiction.

Mrs. Ivimey's answer is of an elusive nature, so that it evokes a sense of uncertainty in readers' minds. They are prone to believe that they rightly speculate what Mrs. Ivimey means by her words. But at the same time, they cannot but feel that their conjecture is somehow wrong. In other words, Mrs. Ivimey's response is of such a nature as to deny itself on asserting itself. Thus what Mrs. Ivimey exactly means lies beyond the reader's understanding, by which her story assumes a sense of reality that presents itself only when the story remains in the realm of the indescribable. It is the very elusiveness of Mrs. Ivimey's concluding words that produces a sense of reality through the enigmatic incident in the protagonist's life.

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"Light" functioning as a device to produce a "deconstructive aporia" can be found also in *To the Lighthouse*. Let us recall the scene taken up in the preceding chapter, the scene in which Mrs. Ramsay takes pains to appease her difficult husband while "flashing her needles" (62, 63). The light of her needles, as we discussed, attaches a sense of elusiveness to the character of Mrs. Ramsay: the light, compared by James to her energy being consumed for other people, represents her self-sacrifice; yet on the other hand, associated with

the lighthouse—a source of light—the flash of her needles symbolises Mrs. Ramsay as an inexhaustible source of power and activity. Given that the scene is set just before Mrs. Ramsay starts reading "The Fisherman and His Wife," a story of a timid man and his arrogant wife, the flashing-needle scene suggests the latent aspect of Mrs. Ramsay the devoted wife, namely, her egotism, which is to be displayed in the succeeding fairy tale. In effect, the flicker of Mrs. Ramsay's needles blurs the distinction between actual life and fictional life in *To the Lighthouse*.

The suggested link between these two lives is borne out by a later scene in which Mrs. Ramsay finishes her story-telling. There, again, light appears as a key factor traversing these two lives:

> "And that's the end," she said, and she saw in his [James's] eyes, as the interest of the story died away in them, something else take its place; something wondering, pale, like the reflection of a light, which at once made him gaze and marvel. Turning, she looked across the bay, and there, sure enough, coming regularly across the waves first two quick strokes and then one long steady stroke, was the light of the Lighthouse. It had been lit.
>
> In a moment he would ask her, "Are we going to the Lighthouse?" And she would have to say, "No: not to-morrow; your father says not." (98)

The beam of the lighthouse brings James and Mrs. Ramsay back to their actual lives, in the same manner as the searchlight, which illuminates Mrs. Ivimey, makes her regain the sense of the here and now. Importantly, Mrs. Ramsay is no longer a source of light as she was when starting her storytelling: she now receives light from the lighthouse, from the external world, in a passive manner. Given that

the light of the lighthouse is turned on at around the same hour every day, this event signifies the moment when she must acquiesce to the demands of the actual world, the world where her husband precedes her. In response to the supposed question from her son—"Are we going to the Lighthouse?"—Mrs. Ramsay decides to say no, yielding to her husband. Thus, in the same way as the fisherman's wife returns to her original status at the end, Mrs. Ramsay herself regains her original character, a devoted wife. Accordingly, it seems, the story of the fairy tale is detached from the context of *To the Lighthouse.*

Yet, a certain connection is retained between the fairy tale and the actual life of the novel. "Light," again, is at work. When his eyes catch the lighthouse beam, James remembers his earlier desire to go to the lighthouse. His feelings must be echoed by his mother, for James and Mrs. Ramsay "shared the same tastes and were comfortable together" (*TL* 90). Mrs. Ramsay "sees a reflection of her own dreams in the boy's eyes" (Stewart 377). Noting the fact that their shared desire appears immediately after one desire is fulfilled—their wish to share some time together through storytelling—we can assume that the light reflected in James's eyes hints at the very nature of desire taken up in the fairy tale, namely, its insatiability. Thus, the story of a wife's unsatisfied wish leaves its traces in actual life.

At the beginning and the end of the storytelling scene, the motifs of light—the flash of Mrs. Ramsay's needles and the lighthouse beam—serve at once to distinguish and to merge two lives,

actual life in the novel and life in the fairy tale. Accordingly, Mrs. Ramsay's character undergoes oscillation: she appears at once devoted and selfish. These motifs of light, in effect, make the fairy tale work at a pre-conscious level, thus presenting the realm of Mrs. Ramsay's almost-unconscious desire as it is, a realm too subtle to describe. Here we see another example of the description of *reality* through the adoption of "light" as a narrative device in the Woolfian world.

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"The Searchlight" can be read as Woolf's defence of the power of fiction against the argument that factual truth is the only means of expressing life as it is. Her attempt is, however, realised not only, as Graham argues, by the characterisation of Mrs. Ivimey, the main narrator, and the development of the frame-story as her narrative background. It is achieved also by the author's subtle use of varieties of light, a device which is in multiple ways linked with her use of similar motifs in *To the Lighthouse*. In Mrs. Ivimey's imagination, the "light" which initially appears as a searchlight in the world of the frame-story undergoes a series of transformations: from a random light, to a light focused on an object, to a light thrown upon the narrator herself. With this, Mrs. Ivimey's narrative perspective changes while she is relating her story. She first takes multiple perspectives, then a single perspective, and finally, is totally deprived of any perspective from which to tell her story. Consequently, her narrative attains dynamism in matter and form.

In addition, there is another element which is closely related to the function of the "light" and therefore should not be disregarded: the frame narrator. She sometimes informs the reader of the movement of the searchlight in the frame-story, thus suggesting the metamorphoses of "light" in the main narrator's mind. This marks every turning point of the main narrative for readers, allowing them to prepare for the next phase, and thus to naturally commit themselves to the progression of the story. The effect is enhanced all the more by the frame narrator's way of presenting herself in the text: acting as a listener in disguise, the narrator is, as Graham's neglect of the frame narrator's existence shows, unlikely to be noticed by the reader.

When combined, these two elements in the framing story—"light" and the frame narrator—succeed in presenting the short story as a dynamic whole, a form which truly engages the reader. They are, in the same way that Conrad uses a frame narrator in *Heart of Darkness*, devices which enable Woolf to subtly mask her manipulation of the main narrative from her readers. In this way, distance works between the author and the narrator; the author and the story; and the author and the reader, flexibly bringing together, and separating, the three different times in the fictional world: Mrs. Ivimey's present, her past, and her great-grandfather's boyhood. This dynamic movement in the progression of the story enhances a sense of immediacy (which is associated with a perception of reality in life in Woolfian terms) in the reading experience. The searchlight, along

with the frame narrator, is thus another example of a material motif exhibiting an alternation between distance and proximity, a rhythm with which Woolf was able to investigate a new sense of time and space in the modern period.

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How, then, could this aesthetic practice be explained within the early twentieth-century context, in which the searchlight (as a historical object) is involved? Integrating scenes from the past into the present moment, as well as dislodging the former from the latter, across time and space, the searchlight in the short story diverges from its role as a military device—its original form of function—which moves within a limited frame of space and time in the present. Its new application to a non-military purpose is borne out by its transformation throughout the story: into the telescope and into the spotlight, two kinds of light which are more or less associated with peacetime activities.[20] If the searchlight was

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[20] The telescope was used as a military instrument in the Second World War (see *Van Nostrand's Encyclopedia*). Yet the optical telescope was first introduced by Galileo Galilei in astronomy as early as the seventeenth century. The history of the telescope is, therefore, longer than that of the searchlight; it was developed fundamentally for peaceful purposes. Henry insists on the military function of the telescope in Woolf's fiction; her point is that Woolf subverts "the telescope's martial applications through her narrative scoping strategies," thereby using the device to frame the short story as a representation of her anti-war position (65). Henry, thus, fails to point to the connection of the telescope with its related motifs as a part of Woolf's pacifist strategy. The prototype of the modern spotlight was also an invention before technological innovation. According to *The New Britannica Encyclopaedia*, the "limelight" was invented by Thomas Drummond as the "first theatrical spotlight" in

developed in association with military strategy to generate a homogeneous space by controlling as much of the territory of the world as possible, the changing light in "The Searchlight" serves to create a heterogeneous space which consists of multiple perspectives and different moments in human history. The searchlight and its versions are, in effect, the author's free, creative spirit in disguise: the devouring desire for totalisation originally attached to the function of the random light is subtly subverted into the ardent desire for peace and democracy. Thus, "The Searchlight" eludes the influence of the political ideal—authoritarianism—prevalent in its time, acting as the author's ingenious statement as a pacifist.

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As suggested in the opening of this chapter, the motifs of light in Woolf's writing are multi-faceted in interpretation. Indeed, the motifs of light in *To the Lighthouse*, especially those presented in "Time Passes," display another distinctive function in the author's creation of a modernist universe. The final chapter of this thesis will focus on the middle part of *To the Lighthouse*, partly exploring this function of the motifs of light. This exploration will be all the more interesting for the setting in which the motifs appear: the empty house of a Victorian family. It will provide a curious conjunction of technological material motifs (the lighthouse beam and the telescopic light) and a traditional material motif (the house).

1816 and was used for the first time in 1837. This light was created through burning calcium. In the late nineteenth century, the limelight was replaced by "the electric arc spotlight."

CHAPTER 4

THE EMPTY HOUSE:

MEMORIES, REDISCOVERY, AND RE-CREATION

IN *TO THE LIGHTHOUSE*

As exemplified in the famous Freudian imagery of the habitation as a symbol of a woman's body, the house is a motif closely associated with human psychology, memories, and the unconscious.[1] Henry James's *The Portrait of a Lady*, for example, displays several kinds of habitation as models of various human characteristics. In Isabel Archer's memory, her grandmother's house in Albany appears as a large, "festal" place, like "a bustling provincial inn," reflecting the "large hospitality" of its owner (32). Gardencourt consists of a sixteenth-century house and a cheerful garden which is "furnished, like a room, with cushioned seats, with rich-coloured rugs, with the books and papers that lay upon the grass" (18). The house is analogous to its owner Daniel Touchett—a fine mixture of the traditional formality of England and the modern, casual spirit of America.[2] (The amalgamation is also evident in the fact that he is running a "grey old bank" of England "in the white American light"

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[1] Freud 408-09. It is well known that Virginia Woolf was familiar with Freud's works. Although, according to Mepham, it was not until 1939 that she started reading Freud (195), his influence upon her generation in its entirety was obvious. (See Jouve 245.) It is, therefore, quite possible that Woolf had long employed part of his theory in her writing (though not necessarily in a straight way). Jouve observes: "[M]anifold recent readings of Woolf's novels show her to be consciously re-writing and countering Freudian notions about the unconscious, the Oedipus Complex, female sexuality" (245-46).

[2] For descriptions of other houses in the novel, see, for example, Stallman; Sabiston. Stallman regards Gilbert Osmond's villa in Florence as a representation of his isolation and incommunicative nature in disguise. The villa's "[a]ngles, crooked piazza, and irregular windows" "all hint at Osmond's moral obliquity" (184). Lockleigh is "the English nobleman's [Lord Warburton's] seat with its romantic moat" (Sabiston 31).

(43).)

Significantly, houses in the novel sometimes appear as having effects upon the minds of their new dwellers and guests. Gilbert Osmond's Roman palace—the Palazzo Roccanera (which means "the black-rock palace")—is described by Isabel as a representation of his blind egotism, and by Edward Rosier (Isabel's childhood friend) as "a dungeon" or "a kind of domestic fortress" (307). In the household, Isabel feels suffocated and insulted like a caged bird, with her husband "peep[ing] down from a small high window and mock[ing] at her" (360).

Perhaps Woolf is one of those who were most aware of one's susceptibility to the atmosphere of one's dwellings—houses' almost anthropomorphic power to affect and transform one's individual life and mental habits.[3] As a child, Woolf herself was a "victim" of a living environment. In the memoir of her childhood, entitled "Old Bloomsbury," her parents' Victorian household appears as characterised by its exercise of patriarchal authority: its structure follows the strict rules of the governing social ideology. 22 Hyde Park Gate, the Stephen family house, where Woolf spent her life until the age of twenty-two, was a dark, unsanitary place packed with as many as eighteen people (eleven family members and seven servants waiting upon them) from the ground floor to the top. This household faithfully reflected the dominant ideology at that time, which

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[3] Woolf writes: "How far surroundings radically affect people's minds, it is not for me to ask [. . .]" ("Haworth, November, 1904," *E*1: 5).

honoured the large family system and consequent necessity of the strictest discipline with which to organise the large household.[4] In this house, there was no private space within which to protect oneself from the scrutiny of the other family members.[5] Along with her education there as an upper-middle-class lady, the house impressed her with the oppressiveness and self-restraint of the former generation.[6]

Yet it is common knowledge that Woolf draws on her parents' Victorian household to depict family life in her fictional works, and that she does so not without nostalgia. Hermione Lee observes: "In her adult life, the memory of the family house fills her with horror, but also with desire. She returns to it repeatedly in her thoughts and in her writing" (*Virginia Woolf* 49). Woolf's feelings towards Victorian households are ambivalent.

This ambivalence is evident also in her way of depicting houses (as material objects) in her fiction. Indisputably, her most well-known description of a house is the Ramsays' summer home in the middle part of *To the Lighthouse*. The house is uninhabited and nearly disintegrates; meanwhile, in the background, it is reported that the First World War breaks out. The disintegrating house seems to be a metaphorical expression of the outbreak of war and the

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[4] See Zwerdling 160.
[5] Zwerdling observes that *A Room of One's Own*, the main argument of which lies in the necessity for the woman writer to have her own room with a lock on the door, "was a slogan that expressed a long-standing and urgent necessity" for Woolf herself (163).
[6] See Woolf's account of her childhood home in *MOB* (44-45).

consequent dissipation of the Victorian world and family life. The Ramsays' summer home represents what has gone for ever, thus receding from actual life. This seems to hint, as has often been observed, at Woolf's mockery towards the preceding generation. The house, however, is also a motif which evokes a sense of proximity to, as well as distance from, the past. The empty house not only presents the process of its own dissolution, but also displays the "lives" of objects (which once belonged to the inhabitants) in the house. Through this process, the past is brought to life in the empty space. This suggests one feature of the motif: the empty house is, like Woolf's imagery of women knitting, books, and portraits, a traditional motif re-rendered within the modernist context.

In this chapter, we will reconsider Woolf's empty houses, especially that in *To the Lighthouse*, in the context of her development of a modernist aesthetic. We will explore how in *To the Lighthouse* the Victorian domestic space is transformed during its dark years of abandonment, and accordingly, how its influence upon its dwellers changes.

I . "A HAUNTED HOUSE"

Before discussing the empty house in *To the Lighthouse*, we have two problems to consider: what does the author intend to express through the motif of houses where people once lived?; and

what does the emptiness of loss and absence mean in the Woolfian world? To explore the first question, let us look at the description of the house in "A Haunted House," a short story written by Woolf between 1917 and 1921.[7] Described by a critic as the origin of *To the Lighthouse*, the story may be taken to epitomise her idea about the house in the later novel.[8]

As its title suggests, the short story is set in a house which is haunted by ghosts. They are the apparitions of a couple, its former residents, who lived and died there "hundreds of years ago" (122). One night, the narrator, a present resident of the house, is sleeping in the house; half-awake, she (if we suppose that the narrator is a woman) feels the ghosts looking around the house for something they have lost. The "something" is called "it" or "the buried treasure" throughout the story, and is not disclosed until the last sentence (122).[9] The story ends when the ghostly couple discover what they were looking for and the narrator wakes out of sleep completely.

With regard to its narrative strategy, what is most characteristic of the story is the conflation between the dead and the living, and the subject and the object. Halfway through the story, the ghostly couple's question about where they have left "it" becomes the question of the narrator herself. In her imagination, the narrator

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[7] According to Dick's notes for *CSF*, the story first appeared in *Monday or Tuesday* (1921), a collection of Woolf's short stories. (See *CSF* 300.)

[8] See Reynier.

[9] The enigma of the ghosts' treasure is also discussed by Baldwin. See Baldwin 23-24.

follows the movement of the couple in her house, and every time their hunting in a room seems to fail, she says, "My hands were empty" (122). Meanwhile, the narrator hears "the pulse of the house," which goes "'Safe, safe, safe'" (122). For the first time it beats "softly," and "gladly" for the second time (122, 123). Near the end, the beat is heard "proudly," and rings out "wildly," just before the discovery of the "buried treasure" (123). It seems as if the house's pulse reflects the gradually increasing pulse of the couple, whose expectation grows as their search progresses. The pulse also seems to be that of the narrator herself, who develops empathy towards the ghosts.

Near the end, the narrator, who is asleep with her partner, feels the ghostly couple enter their bedroom and look into their sleeping faces. Then the husband ghost says to his wife, "'Again you found me'" (123). "Here we left our treasure—," replies the wife (123). Thus the ghostly couple superimpose their past figures upon the narrator and her partner. When the narrator opens her eyes, she feels the couple finally discover their own treasure—for it exists in the heart of the narrator herself. It is "[t]he light in the heart," that is, life and love (123).

It turns out, therefore, that the conflation between the dead and the living—the ghosts and the narrator—is intended for the former's regaining of their past at the end. Or, from the viewpoint of the living—the narrator—the ghosts are the apparitions of the narrator's own sense of loss in life, the embodiment of her ontological question about herself. The ghosts' treasure-hunting can be read as the

narrator's exploration of herself: the story reads as the narrator's self-discovery/recovery, her truth being brought into the light. The house, in effect, appears as a place in which something lost is recovered and revived in the present context.

The same theme is found also in "The Widow and the Parrot: A True Story," another short story written by Woolf between 1922 and 1925. There, as a result of her brother's death, Mrs. Gage becomes the heir to his entire fortune. She visits his empty house and looks around it for the fortune, only to fail. Yet later, led by her late brother's parrot, she successfully discovers the money—that was thought to be lost—in the house.[10]

We have seen something of the possible significance of houses and their ex-inhabitants in Woolf's fiction. The houses are described as "storehouses"—spaces which have inherited something precious from the past and been waiting for it to be discovered in the present—rather than having forever lost memories of the past. This suggests the possibility that empty domestic spaces in Woolf's

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[10] Although in this story, the lost treasure is something material—money—and not, as in "A Haunted House," something spiritual—life and love, the connection between these stories can be easily proved: these fictional houses are modelled on Asham House and a nearby house (The Round House) in Sussex—both houses being unusual in different senses. (See Leonard Woolf 57; Dick's notes for "The Widow and the Parrot" *CSF* (303).) The Woolfs, according to Leonard Woolf, rent Asham House in 1912, and often stayed there until September 1919. They heard from the country people that the house is "haunted" and that there is "treasure buried in the cellar" (Leonard Woolf 57). The Round House is the house the Woolfs moved in after September 1919; Leonard describes it as "a very strange little house up on the hill" (61).

fiction—by which we also mean houses that were empty at one point in the past—are more or less "haunted": they are not empty in the usual sense, but have inside something with which to appeal to, and even have effects upon, the present. This possibility leads us to the second question: what meaning does the condition of "emptiness" stemming from loss and absence bear in Woolf's fictional works in general? For this purpose, we will take up *Jacob's Room*, which centres on the very problem of the "emptiness" of places, as indicated by its title—the room without its occupant.

II. *JACOB'S ROOM* AND EMPTINESS

Jacob's Room is generally read as Woolf's elegy for those killed in the First World War, or a modest—yet not in the least weak—statement of her anti-war position.[11] Julia Briggs, to support this argument, quotes a passage from Woolf's diary entry for 27 August 1918: "The reason why it is easy to kill another person [. . .] must be that one's imagination is too sluggish to conceive what his life means to him—the infinite possibilities of a succession of days which are furled in him, & have already been spent" (84). This can,

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[11] Bazin and Lauter observe, for example, that "Woolf transforms her memorial for her brother into one for all the young men killed in World War I [,] giving Jacob the last name of Flanders and having him die in the war" (15). See also Briggs's *Inner Life* 84; Lee, *Virginia Woolf* 336; Zwerdling 65.

indeed, be read as an interpretation of the novel, which illustrates multiple aspects of the life of Jacob Flanders (who dies young in the war): his childhood, university life, friendships, romances, and travels.

It is noteworthy that a sense of loss prevails from the very beginning of the novel, as if predicting the premature death of Jacob at the end. Motifs associated with the emptiness of loss—not only in a physical sense, but also in a psychological sense—are ingeniously scattered all through the novel.[12] The opening page presents the widow Elizabeth Flanders, Jacob's mother; she is writing a "tear-stained" letter on the beach (5). Having been thus occupied with the letter, she finds that one of her boys—Jacob—is missing; she sends another son to look for his brother: "'Ja—cob! Ja—cob!' Archer shouted" (6). On the same beach lies the skull of a sheep—"[t]he sheep's jaw with the big yellow teeth in it" (12). In Chapter 2, Jacob goes moth-hunting in the forest, where, on the same day, a tree falls (21). Captain Barfoot, a friend of Mrs. Flanders, has incurable wounds: he "was lame and wanted two fingers on the left hand, having served his country" (23). In Chapter 3, Jacob is seen actively leading his life in the university, when it is reported that another tree falls in the forest: it is "a sort of death," says the narrator (30). In the following chapter, Jacob plunges into the water off the Scilly Isles, where "[s]hips have been wrecked" (46); on the "mainland," on

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[12] Ferrer also notes this point, comparing "the entire landscape of this novel, strewn with skull and bones" to "a great corpse in the process of decomposing" (43).

the other hand, the smoke of cottages is issuing like "a mourning emblem, a flag floating its caress over a grave" (47). (This may suggest Jacob's pseudo-death in the sea.) In St. Paul's Cathedral, the vanity of a great Duke who fought, and was buried there, is revealed through the indifferent eye of Mrs. Lidgett, a cleaning lady: his "victories mean nothing to her," and his name is unknown to her (64). Outside, on a London Street in the evening, "an old blind woman" is seen singing (66). At the end of Chapter 8, the snow keeps falling on English fields and hills, until "[t]he land seemed to lie dead" (98). Across Waterloo Bridge, "newly lettered tombstones" are carried on a mason's van (111). In Scarborough, Jacob's mother is seen looking for her lost "garnet brooch," bought for her by Jacob (131). The sense of the emptiness of loss aroused by these motifs seems to culminate in the last scene of the novel. There, Bonamy, a friend of Jacob, visits the protagonist's empty room after his death.

There is, however, another fact about these motifs of loss and emptiness, a fact which has been neglected: that these motifs are presented not in such a way as to emphasise a sense of desertedness, passivity, and helplessness; rather, they are also associated with active powers—a sense of overcoming, of compensating, of recovering, and even of penetrating, something. Let us take up some examples of each of these senses related to emptiness; we will put them in order of gradations from the less positive to the more positive.

The opening part of the book sees the loss of life set side by side with the effort to overcome the adversity. The widowed Mrs. Flanders,

although herself an emblem of loss and emptiness, is neither a secluded nor a passive personality. In the first place, she is seen raising three "naughty" small boys. She is also forming intimate relationships with neighbouring people, such as Captain Barfoot and Mr. Floyd. (With Captain Barfoot, an illicit love affair is suggested.) Thus actively leading her life yet continuing to lament over her late husband—for she rejects Mr. Floyd's proposal of marriage (19)—she appears to be the living reminder of Mr. Flanders, not letting the memory of him fade with the passage of time. Her act of raising their sons also seems to be symbolic, for it leads to developing her relationship with her husband, across the division of time.

Where there is no possibility of overcoming a certain loss, a sense of compensation is produced by the obtaining of some advantage. Mr. Floyd, who is turned down by Mrs. Flanders, is reported later as being promoted in his career. His life is happy on the whole, with the privilege of retiring to Hampstead along with his wife and daughter. Mrs. Barfoot, the wife of Captain Barfoot, is an invalid in her wheelchair. Every Wednesday she sees her husband leave her to visit Mrs. Flanders "as regular as clockwork" (13). Although appearing to be ignorant of her husband's affair—at least in the eyes of Mr. Dickens, her "bath-chair" man—Mrs. Barfoot, in fact, knows it very well. Thus, having a vantage point over the whole affair, she avoids a sense of emptiness which is likely to be evoked by her physical handicap and her husband's infidelity. Her bath-chair man, Mr. Dickens, himself is the embodiment of compensated

emptiness. Neglected at home, he appeases his own dissatisfaction with "the thought of being in the employ of Captain Barfoot" (24).

The juxtaposition between loss and gain is, in other parts of the novel, described as the connection between a tragic event and an optimistic prospect. In Chapter 9, tombstones—a very obvious symbol of death—are seen carried on a van, but they "pass too quick for you to read more" (112). The event of one death is a mere part of the continuous stream of human life in its entirety: the loss of one person is soon made up by the birth of another. The same link of life is seen in the earlier part of the novel as well. Chapter 2 sees a tree fall while Jacob is looking for moths. The moth is a motif which appears several times in Woolf's fictional and non-fictional works, representing "the questing creative mind" (Richter 13).[13] In this respect, Jacob's moth-hunting can be read as a metaphorical expression of his vigorous search for something new, and is thus associated with his creative activity. Here we can find a possible association between death and creativity—the death of one thing is compensated by the birth of another.

A sense of loss is sometimes "recovered" through the gesture of

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[13] An oft-quoted example is the fact that *The Waves* was originally named by Woolf "The Moth." Woolf also wrote a detailed description of a dying moth in the essay "The Death of the Moth." It is not only an elegy for the moth, but also an account of a discovery which is brought about by its death. In *The Voyage Out*, before Rachel's mental journey begins, a moth flies into the hall of the hotel in Santa Marina (216). Fleishman also writes: "[T]he butterfly and moth [in Woolf's works] are associated with the human soul in an emblem of long tradition" (*Critical Reading* 8).

mocking at pessimistic feelings related to the loss. Mrs. Flanders is seen desperately searching for her lost brooch in the Roman Camp, when the narrator hints at an unexpected view by means of which to recover from the sense of hopelessness. It is reported that a sense of eternity reigns over the Roman Camp in Scarborough, where it seems that "[t]he moonlight destroyed nothing [and] [t]he moor accepted everything" (133). So, together with "[t]he Roman skeletons," Mrs. Flanders' brooch is "in sage keeping" (133). In an early scene of the novel, Archer's calling for his missing brother seems at first to presage some tragic event at hand—the infant Jacob being drowned in the sea, for instance. Yet the tension is broken when Archer successfully finds Jacob, who has been absorbed in his own play on the sand.

Other scenes are notable for demonstrating the state of emptiness itself as a positive force associated with creativity of some kind. The skull of the sheep on the beach seems to Mrs. Flanders to be sinister—she finds it "[s]omething horrid" (8)—yet Jacob carries it back home, as if it were something valuable to him. For the reader, just as for Mrs. Flanders, the skull may evoke his destiny of premature death,[14] but for Jacob it does not appear to be a symbol of death or loss. Thus, through Jacob's unprejudiced eyes as a child, the negative symbol of loss is reinterpreted as a positive sign. The skull, at least, appears as a medium for encouraging Jacob's power of

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[14] Briggs, for example, observes that Jacob's act of running towards, and holding the skull is "emblematic—it is as if Jacob is reaching out for his own death" (*Reading* 143).

imagination, his pure sense of the joy of possession.[15] At the end of Chapter 8, the landscape of snowy fields—another motif of emptiness—is juxtaposed with Jacob's—now grown-up—reading of the *Globe*, a newspaper, in his room. Since the word "globe" represents life as it is in Woolf's works,[16] his act of reading the paper may suggest his attempt at groping for some truth in life. In this light, the juxtaposed scene of the white, empty fields implies the embryo of something new, as well as death or ending.

In the following examples, various descriptions of emptiness—physical, psychological, and geographical—appear as representations of a sense of plenitude in disguise. At a bonfire party on Guy Fawkes night, the flames brightly light the face of Florinda, a "brainless" prostitute: "By a trick of the firelight she seemed to have no body," whereas her face and hair are given a clear shape, seeming to be "hung beside the fire with a dark vacuum for background" (72-73). This passage may suggest the emptiness of Florinda's being, with her body literally "vanished." But her lit-up face, which seems to be floating in the air, may also strike the reader as her young, unrestricted energy. This bonfire chapter, in fact, centres on the arrogance of youth. Jacob, together with his friend Timmy Durrant, is seen as "boastful" and "triumphant" (74): the narrator observes

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[15] Freedman also writes that the skull "may have signified death but it also signified freedom, like the coins jingling in his pockets or left on a mantlepiece [sic]" (130).

[16] See, for example, *The Waves*. In his last soliloquy section, Bernard struggles to depict life as it is—"[t]he crystal, the globe of life as one calls it," which "has walls of thinnest air" (182).

from the viewpoint of these young men that "[c]ivilizations stood round them like flowers ready for picking. Ages lapped at their feet like waves fit for sailing" (74).

In Chapter 8, we see a letter from Mrs. Flanders lying on the hall table of Jacob's residence in London. (In the same residence, Jacob is absorbed in flirting with Florinda.) Her letter, although dwelling upon daily trifles in Scarborough (his home town), is, in fact, full of suggestions of her care for her son and hopes to bring him back. Thus, filled with her motherly love and sense of emptiness without her son, Mrs. Flanders' letter appears to be a warning against Jacob's aimless life in London. While suggesting Jacob's sexual intercourse with Florinda in the sitting-room next to the hall, the narrator observes: "[I]f the blue pale envelope [. . .] had the feelings of a mother, the heart was torn by the little creak, the sudden stir" (90). Thus, Mrs. Flanders' sense of "emptiness" is described not as a void, but as possessing some power to call into question her son's life, "penetrating" into it (92). (The narrator goes on to observe that letters are "venerable," "infinitely brave," although "forlorn and lost" (91).) It is soon after this that Jacob detects Florinda, whose fidelity he has naively believed in, "upon another man's arm" (93).

The psychological fullness presented in a form of emptiness is found also in Chapter 4. Here, Mrs. Pascoe, a Cornish woman, lives "alone in the house" "built on the edge of the cliff" (51). Despite her seemingly desolate state, her fertile imagination satisfies her: the narrator says, "Like a miser, she has hoarded her feelings within her

own breast. [. . .] watching her enviously, it seems as if all within must be pure gold" (52-53). Mrs. Pascoe's solitude represents not passiveness towards life, but active involvement in life in her own way—the forging of her imaginative power.

Geographical emptiness can also be read as an expression of the fullness of being. Chapter 9 depicts the scenes in London streets somewhere near Jacob's rooms. In the early morning, Piccadilly is empty, presenting itself as a place lacking in order and reason. By contrast with Jacob's previous academic environment—his university residence—the place does not require anyone to say "anything brilliant" (111). It is suggested by the narrator that the place is, instead, filled with "the ecstasy and hubbub of the soul"—a primeval sense of intoxication (112); that it is "the live, sane, vigorous world" as if "all the drums and trumpets were sounding" (110, 111).[17]

Of all the different kinds of emptiness in the novel, these expressions of emptiness present the most active condition.

The last kind of emptiness is also applied to the scenes of Jacob's empty room, the novel's major motif of emptiness. It first appears in Chapter 3, in a Cambridge college. Although unoccupied,

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[17] Of course, these "drums and trumpets" also evoke the approaching war which involves Jacob. They are, however, often used in allusion to wild nature and primitive human life in Woolf's fiction. In *The Waves*, Rhoda expresses her exhilaration during the first dinner party, saying: "'Horns and trumpets [. . .] ring out. Leaves unfold; the stags blare in the thicket. There is a dancing and a drumming, like the dancing and the drumming of naked men with assagais" (100). In *Flush*, green fields and forests in Farnham make the pet dog Flush wild: "the old trumpets blew; the old ecstasy returns" (133).

the room has no sense of emptiness: rather, with the wide range of Jacob's belongings brought together there, the room serves to disclose multiple aspects of Jacob's life and character in a condensed way. "[A] photograph of his mother" may suggest his nostalgia for Mrs. Flanders's motherliness and his childlike innocence (37). This may also apply to "yellow flags [yellow irises] in a jar on the mantelpiece": with their colour yellow, a colour associated with domesticity in the Woolfian world,[18] these flowers may act for Jacob as a reminder of his mother and home. Yet given that the iris is characterised by its "sword-shaped leaves" and that the flag (in another sense) symbolises "military honor and fidelity," these yellow flags may also be not irrelevant to military flags and Jacob's involvement in the war in the future.[19] "[C]ards from societies with [. . .] crescents, coats of arms, and initials," by contrast, show an aspect of his public life—his integration into society and adult communities (37). "[N]otes," "pipes" and his "essay" tell of his life and habits as a student. The title of his essay, "'Does History consist of the Biographies of Great Men?'," subtly hints at Jacob's ambivalence towards academic authority (37). It also foretells his deviation from academia and wandering after University.[20] Jacob's lively curiosity is apparent in

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[18] See note 16, page 100 to page 101 of this thesis.
[19] The entries for "iris" and "flag" in *The Continuum Encyclopedia of Symbols*.
[20] Jacob's negative relation to academic authority is also pointed out by Little: He must "tolerate caricature dons and oppressive luncheons," and, "though sometimes stirred by his college experience, is oddly untransformed by it" (110, 111).

his collection of books, ranging from "the Faery Queen" to "Lives of the Duke of Wellington," Spinoza, and the works of Dickens and Austen, together with some books on Italian arts (37). They also hint at his impartiality—at least in an academic sense. His "incredibly shabby" slippers show his sloppiness and strong inclination towards spiritual matters rather than practical things: "He is so unworldly," writes Clara Durrant, who loves Jacob, in her diary (69). Even the air in his room—"[l]istless" (37)—seems to reflect his loose, dangling, and half-melancholic character, as is apparent later in his life. Jacob's empty room is, in reality, filled with the signs of his being: the fact that he is absent is not a pointer to nothingness, but a representation of a sense of the plenitude of his existence.[21]

Added to this, it is also noteworthy that these objects in his room produce the conflation of his past, present, and future. Or, to put it more precisely, his past and future life are retold or foretold in his room, in his present context. (Consider, for instance, the mixture of a flashback of his childlike nature and a glimpse of his future involvement in the war in "yellow flags," and a glimpse of his future vagabond life in his choice of books and his worn slippers.)

In the same light, even the room after its occupant's death starts to look like something other than the representation of loss. At the end of the novel, Bonamy, a friend of Jacob's, visits his empty

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[21] Briggs also writes: "Rooms carry complex meanings as the spaces we occupy and shape around ourselves, metaphorically as well as literally, and, like physical appearance, they may be used to characterize their owner" (*Inner Life* 95).

room after his premature death in the war. This scene, at first sight, implies a total loss, a sense which seems to be intensified by Bonamy's cry, "Jacob! Jacob!," in the middle of the room (176). But then Jacob's mother appears—as if replying to him—holding "a pair of Jacob's old shoes" (176). This brings back the old episode on the beach in the opening pages of the novel: Jacob as a small boy leaves his mother and brother for his personal expedition on the beach, which results in his brother's crying for him—"Ja—cob! Ja—cob!"—and his mother's annoyance at "[t]he only one of her sons who never obeyed her" (21). This flashback evokes a sense of repetition: it arouses the impression that Mrs. Flanders is still, as she always did, looking after her obstinate son, who again has escaped her pursuit and is leading his life somewhere else. This view suggestive of recuperation is underscored by his mother's oddly detached, slightly grumpy manner of speaking: she says, "'What am I to do with these, Mr. Bonamy?'," holding out Jacob's old shoes (176). Just as, at the beginning of the novel, she sends Archer to look for his brother for her, so here again Mrs. Flanders seems to turn to Bonamy for a way of dealing with the naughtiness of Jacob. Also, the fact that the shoes she finds are Jacob's "old" shoes—this means that they may have been replaced by another pair of shoes as well as that they were used for a long time—impresses us as a sign of his usual elusiveness.[22]

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[22] About the final scene, especially about Mrs. Flanders' feelings, some critics might say just the opposite. Bazin and Lauter, for

In effect, the final scene functions as a disclosure about Jacob, as do the novel's other scenes: "Jacob" does not merely mean a character; what has been suggested by the name of Jacob throughout the novel is some unintelligible and elusive existence that forever escapes any definition, as shown in his discarding his old shoes—that is, on a metaphorical level, a solid, conventional form. The scene is, as it were, the summing-up of the aim of the previous scenes—to show Jacob as an elusive presence rather than as a mere character. In terms of the author's poetics, here we see another example of the reversed meaning of "emptiness": "emptiness" is not a void, but the emergence of a significant fact, or reality as Woolf understood it, about one individual life or thing; emptiness is a representation of the fullness of being. The empty place is a space where different periods of time in one's life and in history are brought together, conflated, and interrelated. So Woolf writes in her holograph notebooks for *Jacob's Room*: "Let us suppose that the Room will hold it together" (*JRH* 1).

The above argument points to a scarcely noticed dimension of the novel as an elegy. As has often been pointed out, *Jacob's Room* can be read as a demonstration of Woolf's anti-war position. Yet Woolf's

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instance, commenting on the same words by Mrs. Flanders, state that "Woolf conveys the desperate sense of emptiness, unreality, and absurdity felt by the wartime mother who has lost her son. [. . .] The shoes help to convey how his mother feels, namely, hollow and forlorn" (15-16). I do not disagree that Woolf felt indignation about the pointless deaths in the war (as I observed earlier). Still, it would seem dangerous to make a direct connection between how Woolf felt about it in actual life and how she expressed it in her fiction.

method of expression is not as straightforward as has often been imagined: she takes a more subtle way, it seems. She expresses her pacifist outlook not only by describing a sense of emptiness as associated with Jacob's pointless death; she does so also by providing her motifs of emptiness with a sense of recuperation, thereby suggesting the everlasting power of life to recover from devastation.

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It might not be relevant to the present argument about the emptiness of material objects, but another well-known emptiness which proves the point above is the figure of Percival in *The Waves*. His role in the novel—as a missing centre of the novel—was mentioned in Chapter 2 of this thesis, yet it may be profitable to take it up again if we are to elucidate the precise nature of his absence in relation to our present argument about emptiness (as referring to loss and absence). Percival is similar to Jacob in that he is destined to die prematurely; he impresses us "not as a presence but as an absence" (Fleishman, *Critical Reading* 64). Yet unlike Jacob, Percival is totally absent: even before his death halfway through the novel, none of his words is given in the text. The absence of his voice in the text does not mean, however, his nonentity; rather, it represents an existence of the utmost importance.

Because of his "silence," his character becomes apparent from the other six characters' observations about him. Their multiple views establish his character in a dynamic way, emphasising his elusiveness. Louis says: "He is allied with the Latin phrases on the

memorial brasses. He sees nothing; he hears nothing. He is remote from us all in a pagan universe" (25-26). "[H]e cannot read," says Neville, "Yet when I read Shakespeare or Catullus, [. . .] he understands more than Louis" (34). For Rhoda, Percival is "like a stone fallen into a pond round which minnows swarm" (98). Percival is, as Sara Ruddick puts it, a "vacuum-like silence" (203). And he is so not only in the sense that his presence gives unity to the six people (as exemplified in their first dinner party), but also in the sense that his silence gathers up fragmentary facts about him to make a whole out of them.

After his sudden death, Percival is absent from the world of the six characters as well as from the text. Yet his absence still has a "power," though in a different way from that which operated in his lifetime. In their second dinner party, the six people have a sense of emptiness in their meeting place. This, it is suggested, is because of the absence of Percival, who united them at the earlier dinner party. But by thus assembling in one place, and comparing their situations with one another's (in order both to establish themselves and to recognise others), they rebuild their relationships. They recover a sense of unity, or discover a new tie uniting them. This means, in a sense, their recovery of Percival as a uniting power, in their present context; it is the abstraction of his magnetic personality. Thus, in *The Waves*, "emptiness" as referring to absence and loss is revealed as having the power to fuse different perspectives on one thing, or to bring back the past in the present.

In the Woolfian world, empty space or the emptiness of loss is not a mere background or an inert void: it functions as an element intimately related to the actions of her fictional worlds, thus helping to express the dynamic nature of life. What, then, can we say about empty houses in her fiction—empty space as a relic of a past family life? To explore this, let us turn to the famous illustration of an empty house, the Ramsay's empty summer home in the middle section of *To the Lighthouse*.

Ⅲ. "TIME PASSES": THE RAMSAYS' EMPTY SUMMER HOME

First we will look at how the empty-house scene is situated in the novel. When conceiving an idea for *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf describes it as a diagram: "[t]wo blocks [of the same size and shape] joined [horizontally] by a corridor" (*TLH* 48). While this diagram can suggest various themes of the novel,[23] it can be interpreted, as a number of critics have pointed out, as showing the structure of the novel: Part Ⅰ and Part Ⅲ joined by Part Ⅱ—the section dealing with the Ramsays' empty house.[24] In this light, the empty-house section appears to be a key to the establishment of the relationship

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[23] Mepham lists several possible themes which the diagram suggests: "the relation between husband and wife, the tunnel which connects the present moment with powerful scenes from the past, the relationship of a child with its mother in being born into a separate space," and even "the birth of a work of art" (100).

[24] See, for example, Zwerdling 193.

As regards the interior space of the wardrobe in general, Bachelard observes that it is "a center of order that protects the entire house against uncurbed disorder," and that the order "can remember the family history" (79). The wardrobe is, as it were, the quintessence of a well-organised house. To come down to this specific case, the apparition of Mrs. Ramsay in her wardrobe is Mrs. McNab's retrospective vision of the entire family life, the image of the happiness of the family. Furthermore, when Mrs. Ramsay's figure is superimposed upon Mrs. McNab's, a living woman's body, the past interpenetrates the present moment. This marks the moment when the past is "enlivened" in the present as well as the moment of one life being conflated with another. (It is also noteworthy that Mrs. McNab's mind's eye, which is compared to light, is related to body and space. This contrasts with Mr. Carmichael's candlelight and the lighthouse beam associated with him, which concern mind and time.)

Mrs. McNab reappears in Section 9, and once again recalls scenes from past family life. Yet this time, her act of remembering is helped by Mrs. Bast, her cleaning lady colleague. While Mrs. Bast is listening to her, Mrs. McNab describes the past more vividly and in more detail. For example, she remembers the episode of the family cook more successfully than before—that is, more successfully than when she tried alone in the preceding section. At one point, Mrs. Bast finds the "beast's skull" in the nursery room and asks her why it was hung there. This makes Mrs. McNab set about a story of her masters' lives—their relationships and dinner parties (217). When Mrs. Bast

between the sections before and after it.[25] To make clearer this meaning of the diagram, let us take up an important action common to Parts Ⅰ and Ⅲ, namely, Lily's act of painting, and explore how her act is related to the middle part. For reasons which will later become explicit, we will focus on Lily's act in Part Ⅲ.

Occupied mainly by the description of Lily's attempt to complete her painting, which she left unfinished in Part Ⅰ, Part Ⅲ concerns the recovery of the past in the present. By this we mean not only that Lily tries to recollect memories of her unfinished picture, but also that, by resuming the picture, she wishes to recover Mrs. Ramsay, who brought about a sense of unity among the household in Part Ⅰ yet died in the following part. There is, in fact, a link between these two attempts: they are connected by Lily's struggles over "the problem of space"—the problem of how to deal with the state of absence and loss.

At the beginning of Part Ⅲ, Lily finds a sense of emptiness in the Ramsays' house, because of the death of Mrs. Ramsay: "The empty places. Such were some of the parts, but how bring them together?," Lily asks herself (228); "it was a house full of unrelated passions. [. . .] She had looked round for someone who was not there, for Mrs. Ramsay, presumably" (230-31). Then Lily decides to resume painting, in order—though unconsciously—to relieve her sense of

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[25] Remember our discussion in Chapter 2 of this thesis that the middle section functions as a necessary "gap" with which to generate a new sense of unity in the following section (Part Ⅲ). See page 114 of this thesis.

emptiness. "[T]he solution" seems to her to be obvious, at least as far as her picture is concerned: "she knew now what she wanted to do" (229).

Soon after setting about her work, however, Lily is faced with the problem of space: "she scored her canvas with brown running nervous lines which had no sooner settled there than they enclosed (she felt it looming out at her) a space" (244). The space, associated with the sense of loss produced by Mrs. Ramsay's death, seems to Lily to be the "formidable ancient enemy of hers" (245). Lily craves for Mrs. Ramsay, who would give a sense of "stability" to her distracted mind, as shown in her words (in Lily's imagination) "Life stand still here" (250).

In the following scenes, Lily returns to this troublesome "space," struggling to fill it in. She turns—unconsciously—to Mrs. Ramsay in her memory, as if by doing so she could regain her, and thus supply the void. In Section 6, Lily cries, "Heaven be praised for it, the problem of space remained" (264). The space seems to her to "[glare] at her," as if challenging her (264). She tries to imagine Mrs. Ramsay as the perfect organiser of the household, as a symbol of peace and unity. Her desire to eliminate the space with the help of Mrs. Ramsay is also hinted at by her unconscious act while remembering the dead woman: Lily "rammed a little hole in the sand and covered it up, by way of burying in it the perfection of the moment" (265).

Lily's attempt to mitigate the sense of emptiness through her

imagination of Mrs. Ramsay does not, however, lead to her satisfaction. She somehow fails in grasping the perfect image of Mrs. Ramsay—Mrs. Ramsay as she was in her lifetime: "Words fluttered sideways and struck the object inches too low," thinks Lily (274). This fact irritates her and increases her agony:

> (She was looking at the drawing-room steps; they looked extraordinarily empty.) [. . .] To want and not to have, sent all up her body a hardness, a hollowness, a strain. And then to want and not to have—to want and want—how that wrung the heart, and wrung it again and again! Oh Mrs. Ramsay! She called out silently, [. . .] as if to abuse her for having gone, and then having gone, come back again. (275)

Strangely, it is when Lily gives up consciously searching for Mrs. Ramsay—thus leaving aside the problem of space—that she recovers from the sense of emptiness. In Section 8, she has "a sense of some one there, of Mrs. Ramsay" "staying lightly by her side" (278). She moreover finds "how clearly" she can see Mrs. Ramsay at that moment (279). Her unexpected sense of peacefulness is intensified by the serene landscape of the bay spreading before her at the same moment: "[t]he sea without a stain on it" (289) looks "so soft that the sails and the clouds seemed set in its blue" (293). It seems to her that Mr. Ramsay and his two children (who have set out on their journey to the lighthouse by boat) are "swallowed up in that blue, that distance," and somehow achieve sublimity (294). This brings about a revelation in Lily's mind: "so much depends [. . .] upon distance" (293). She also finds a change in her view of the place where she is standing: "Empty it was not, but full to the brim," thinks Lily (295).

As a result of a change in the landscape of the bay at the next moment, Lily soon loses the sense of peacefulness. She finds that the view which "had seemed miraculously fixed, was now unsatisfactory" (296). Yet this swift change in the landscape gives her another important revelation: that, as with the changeable scenery, people have multiple aspects. Even "[f]ifty pairs of eyes were not enough to get round that one woman [Mrs. Ramsay] with," thinks Lily (303). That is, Mrs. Ramsay seems to her to be faultless only because she is dead, residing in the distance. In reality, she also has some points to be criticised. Lily remembers that Mr. Carmichael, a poet and an unworldly figure, tried to avoid Mrs. Ramsay, who intruded on him to take care of him: "She was so direct" that he disliked her (300). "There must have been people," Lily continues to think, "who thought her too sure, too drastic. Also her beauty offended people probably" (300).

This discovery marks the change in Lily's perspective on things: she no longer tries, as earlier, to grasp them in some fixed, stable shape; she accepts the mutability of things, things as they are. The change in her perspective helps her to proceed to completion in her painting. In the next moment somebody "sitting in the chair" in the drawing-room throws "an odd-shaped triangular shadow over the step," thus affecting the design of her picture. From Lily's former point of view, this change in the scene would be a source of irritation. Yet now Lily thinks it "interesting," rather than annoying (309).

In the final scene, Lily finds her picture "blurred," showing "its

attempt at something" (320). She notices, on the other hand, that the steps are empty all the same. This sight, however, no longer urges her to call back Mrs. Ramsay to fix the design of her picture; instead, it evokes satisfaction in her mind. Lily thus enjoys "emptiness," regarding it not as a void, but as a creative space to bring back numerous impressions, thoughts, and ideas about one person (and the subject of her picture).

In effect, Part Ⅲ can be read as the process of Lily's discovering a new meaning in empty space, which at first seems to her to represent nothing but loss or a flaw. She admits that it can serve to realise a sense of fulfilment, containing some power to allow her to create what she desires. In terms of her attempt to recover Mrs. Ramsay, emptiness is not the dead woman's absence, but a useful medium for remembering her as she is—as an existence too elusive to grasp.

Let us now return to the diagram mentioned earlier. The argument above may be adopted to assist in explaining it. The right block linked to the left block by a corridor shows Lily's successful reaching for the past by means of her reconciliation with a sense of emptiness. In its symmetry, the diagram may further suggest that Mrs. Ramsay's absence (in Part Ⅲ) almost assumes equality with her presence (in Part Ⅰ), through Lily's efforts. In this light, Part Ⅱ, situated as it is between the other two parts, appears to be an inevitable passage or space through which the past is integrated into the present and vice versa—a space which enables time to flow in

both normal and reverse ways. (This attaches the image of the sandglass to the diagram: the sandglass is invertible, with its two "glasses" of the same size and shape connected.) This function of Part II is, in fact, also evident in its content—the scene of the empty house. Let us now closely look at the middle part of the novel.

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A number of critics have noted the idiosyncrasy of the treatment of time in the middle part of *To the Lighthouse*. Some have pointed out the highly economical way of rendering the ten-year period, by contrast with the rather lengthy representation of several hours of a day in the first part of the novel. Indeed, the passage of time is so condensed in the small space that all the incidents during the period seem to occur almost concurrently. This point has recently been underscored by studies which claim the influence of contemporary cinematography upon Woolf's narrative technique: in "Time Passes," Woolf adapts camera technique, "[exploring] verbally the artfully disinterested perspective on home and landscape recorded by time-lapse narration" (Hankins 108).

Yet too much focus on its representation of the nature of time has resulted in the relative neglect of another characteristic of this part of the novel: the emptiness of the house. Although some studies, including the cultural studies mentioned above, have suggested the importance of the uninhabited place for the description of the unusual flow of time, there seem to be few discussions of the interrelationship between these two specific characteristics of Part

Ⅱ—time and the empty house.[26] To explore this point, we will draw attention to two motifs which are reiterated in Part Ⅱ: one is Mr. Carmichael reading by candlelight, and the other is Mrs. McNab working in the uninhabited house. Since both motifs relate to time and space in the house, an analysis of them will enable us to disclose the specific nature of the time in relation to the setting, the empty house.

On the opening page of Part Ⅱ, Mr. Carmichael is seen reading by candlelight at night, while all the other residents of the house are sleeping. In his discussion of "intimate places" in *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard explores the most primitive image of the house as a place of intimacy. It is a "hermit's hut" lighted in darkness, an image hinting at an existence that is to welcome and thus to protect us when we are afflicted with hardship in actual life (32). Given that the darkness of night in which Mr. Carmichael reads foretells, as has often been observed, the tragedy of the Ramsays and the confusion in the aftermath of the war in the succeeding scenes, he is easily identified here with a hermit who "keeps vigil" in his solitary, lighted hut in darkness (Bachelard 33). Indeed, Mr. Carmichael is

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[26] Gordon, among other critics, has tried to explain what the emptiness means in relation to the swift passage of time. She regards Part Ⅱ as a "counter-history" in which war is dismissed as "a vacant period through which time rushes" (161). In this part of the novel, "Virginia Woolf rewrites history to show war as a time when the constructive energies of our species sleep," she writes (162). Yet her argument does not fully explore why the "vacant period" should be described as an empty *house*, not just as an empty *space*: what the specifying of the kind of space means.

depicted as a hermit-like presence in the preceding part of the novel as well. He is completely satisfied with what he is, as exemplified in his rejecting Mrs. Ramsay's offers to give him something; he detaches himself from daily incidents which happen around him—he is, for example, indifferent to Mr. Ramsay's irritation when he alone asks for another cup of soup at the dinner party. Some even observe that Mr. Carmichael is an avatar of a deity, or that he is equated with the (almost) omniscient narrator of *To the Lighthouse*, who for the most part transcends every character's mind, exploring each individual inner life "from the perspective of death" (Miller 178).[27]

At first sight, the image of Mr. Carmichael in his hut might seem irrelevant, for the house accommodates other people as well as him. But the image is underscored by the strangely generalised depiction of the interior of the house in the following scene. In "the profusion of darkness," the narrator, unlike in the preceding part of the novel, calls neither character nor object by name (196). The house is a particular house yet seems something "legendary" at the same time, deprived of its locality in the real world.

In line with his character, Mr. Carmichael's solitary light in the house is also meaningful. In the discussion referred to above, Bachelard also states that "[t]he lamp in the window [of a hermit's hut] is the house's eye" (34). The "lamp *is waiting* in the window, and through it, the house, too, is waiting. The lamp is the symbol of

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[27] Fleishman regards Mr. Carmichael as "shamanistic" (*Critical Reading* 114); Elliott compares him to Proteus, "one of the sea gods" in Greek myth (360).

prolonged waiting," observes Bachelard (34). This could be applied to our present discussion: Mr. Carmichael's light in the house can be considered to be the embodiment of his spirit pursuing something, against the chaos of exterior darkness. Although he blows out his candle at the end of the second section, he returns, at the end of Part Ⅱ, with his candle lit in his window. The repetition of his act at the end of the same part evokes the impression that Mr. Carmichael keeps his light—not as his real candlelight, but as his vigilant spirit—burning throughout the years in Part Ⅱ. Indeed, his spiritual light "keeps burning" during the years: despite the argument that Part Ⅱ consists of the scenes of darkness, the sudden appearance of light is witnessed by the narrator from time to time. Throughout this part of the novel, light appears intermittently; it undergoes transformations, corresponding to the incidents and events reported or suggested in each section. The personified light seems to explore, meditate upon, and cope with each situation in its own way. To elucidate this point, let us look at several sections in Part Ⅱ.

Section 2 (of Part Ⅱ) is set in the night of the same day as the preceding part (Part Ⅰ), and sees all the residents of the house, except Mr. Carmichael, asleep. Although the darkness of the scene can be interpreted as predicting the family tragedy in the succeeding scenes, it shows an ordinary night of the Ramsays' life. The house full of people sleeping recalls an oft-quoted sentence of Part Ⅰ, "The house seemed full of children sleeping and Mrs. Ramsay listening; of

shaded lights and regular breathing" (80). In this scene of peacefulness, the narrator sees "some random light" from "some uncovered star, or wandering ship, or the Lighthouse" enter the house (197). This playful, unfocused light evokes the image of the relaxed, spontaneous state of the human mind, free from perplexity and anxiety.

Section 4 comes just after the report of Mrs. Ramsay's death. The narrator describes the emptiness of the house, stressing how everything that was once there has been lost forever:

> What people had shed and left—a pair of shoes, a shooting cap, some faded skirts and coats in wardrobes—those alone kept the human shape and in the emptiness indicated how once they were filled and animated; how once hands were busy with hooks and buttons; how once the looking-glass had held a face [. . .]. (200)

As if reflecting the shock of the sudden loss of life, light pouring into the house throws itself upon no object there. Light "reflected itself" on "the wall opposite," staying there motionless all day, like a human mind too paralysed to perceive anything.

Section 6 sees another two deaths of family members, Prue and Andrew, and suggests the overturning of the existent social system in the aftermath of the war. In this state of disorder, the act of searching for the truth is described as futile: "That dream [. . .] of sharing, completing, finding in solitude on the beach an answer, was but a reflection in a mirror [. . .]" (208). Here, as if expressing sympathy and responding to the dissolving social order, "the stroke of

the Lighthouse," which once assumed a tinge of "authority," comes now in "the softer light of spring mixed with moonlight gliding gently" (205-06).

In Section 9, the house is totally "deserted" (212): "The place was gone to rack and ruin" (213). Plants and wild creatures intrude in the house, thus trespassing the boundary between the exterior and the interior. Meanwhile, "the Lighthouse beam entered the rooms for a moment, sent its sudden stare over bed and wall [. . .], looked with equanimity" at the state of desolation (214). With its impersonal, detached perspective upon the gradual dissolution of the house, the light evokes the human mind in composure, as a result of its attempt to accept the whole situation as it is.[28]

This argument—that the metamorphosed light is a representation of the perception and meditation of the human mind in general, but also specifically of Mr. Carmichael's,—suggests a metaphorical meaning of the empty space, which is traversed by the light. The dark, enclosed house is, on one level, a material space which accommodates material objects belonging to the Ramsays. Yet on another level, it represents the human mind's world of imagination, or more specifically, that of the hermit-like Mr.

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[28] Bachelard states that only "enclosed light"—light in the house which "[filters] to the outside"—can be used as a symbol of human contemplation (34). In this respect, the lighthouse beam is seemingly inappropriate for the image of the human spirit. (In this empty-house scene, it is coming from the outside.) Yet, at its source, the light is also "enclosed"—that is, the bulbs of the lighthouse are shut up inside the windowpanes of the lighthouse. The lighthouse beam is a version of a representation of the human mind's meditation.

Carmichael: it is, to put it again in Bachelard's words, "a universe of meditation and prayer" (32). In fact, this is suggested by the appearance of Mr. Carmichael's act of reading by candlelight both at the beginning and at the end of the part. This makes all the events in Part II seem to occur in one night: they happen not in real life, but in Mr. Carmichael's mind; he meditates upon what happened in the past from the perspective of hindsight.

This supposition is underscored by several points. First, the entire part is described from a retrospective viewpoint. In Part I, the narrator sometimes cannot enter characters' minds, wondering, for example, "What was there behind it—her [Mrs. Ramsay's] beauty, her splendour?" (49). [29] This produces the impression of the narrator's real-time relating of each scene. Yet in Part II, the narrator has little hesitation in describing the whole scene: the narrator possesses a kind of omniscience, as if he or she possessed a retrospective viewpoint on all the events of this part of the novel. In addition, events of the part are interrelated in a rather contrived way. Let us take up an example—the description of the gradual loosening of Mrs. Ramsay's shawl in the house. The shawl is the one Mrs. Ramsay folds around the beast's skull hung in the nursery room in Part I, in order to satisfy the contradictory demands of James and

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[29] Citing the same questioning of the narrator, Auerbach discusses in detail the narrator's character in this part of the novel: "The person speaking here, whoever it is, acts the part of one who has only an impression of Mrs. Ramsay, who looks at her face and renders the impression received, but is doubtful of its proper interpretation" (531-32).

Cam: James insists that it stay there, whereas Cam gets frightened by it and pleads to remove it. The folded shawl in the house, therefore, represents the presence of Mrs. Ramsay's power of unifying different people with various demands, her power delineated in the dinner-party scene of Part Ⅰ. During Part Ⅱ, this folded shawl loosens three times: after Mrs. Ramsay dies (202); after Prue—one of her daughters—dies (206); and immediately before the war breaks out and Andrew—a son of Mrs. Ramsay's—is killed (206). The loosening of the shawl is thus presented as parallel with the occurrence of three deaths. Moreover, the unfolding of the shawl is connected with a more general event—the gradual dissolution of the whole world. At one point it is reported that "one fold of the shawl loosened" in a room of the house (202). This incident is, at the same time, compared to an incident in nature far away from the house: "a rock rends itself from the mountain and hurtles crashing into the valley" (202). We then see that as the shawl is loosened, the house becomes ruined; and furthermore, the dissolution of the house corresponds to the outbreak of the war and the collapse of the social system as a result of it. This orderly relationship between cause and result, or the symmetry between events across time and space, hints at a human retrospective viewpoint upon these events and his or her rearrangement of them.

The second point concerns the treatment of historical and other important events in the text. As has often been pointed out, events such as the war and deaths are parenthesised throughout Part Ⅱ.

Some have argued that this suggests the author's gesture of cynicism towards grand historical events,[30] yet there may also be another reason. As indicated above, events are interrelated with each other in this part. Since most of it is set in the Ramsays' empty house, focusing on what happens inside the house, other events occurring outside are rendered in relation to the house: the description of the inner space of the house functions as an allegory of all the events outside it. For example, Mrs. Ramsay's death, a parenthesised event in Part Ⅱ, is preceded by the prediction of the advent of long-term desolation and a sense of emptiness: the human world is described as deserted by "divine goodness," assaulted by "wind and destruction"; any human attempt to search for "an answer" to ontological questions is likely to fail (199). The whole scene is, as it were, an elegy for Mrs. Ramsay's death. The parenthesised report of her death succeeding the scene offers a complementary explanation of what the whole scene suggests.[31] With its metaphorical nature, the whole part seems to be produced some time after the occurrence of events, during a period of ten years, as a result of contemplation on their meanings.

In effect, the empty interior of the house represents Mr. Carmichael's interiority. This is his re-registering in his own way of the events occurring over ten years. With light as a metaphor for his

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[30] Randles observes: "the narrator renders information about human life within brackets, Woolf's version of phenomenological reduction" (200).

[31] Laura Marcus also presents the possibility that the parenthesised words are not necessarily insignificant: they are "framed by the brackets as of by a window" (*Virginia Woolf* 103).

perceptions inserted from time to time, the space is governed by his inner time, which is heterogeneous, fluid, and reversible. This is the spiritual space, in which he foretells the beginning of a new life in the following part of the novel. The gradual disintegration of the house can also be explained in this context: it is his image of the fashioning of an ideal space for a hermit, a "hut" which "possesses the felicity of intense poverty" (Bachelard 32). It marks, as it were, its resident's—his own—approaching spiritual enlightenment, for, as Bachelard puts it, "as destitution increases it gives us access to absolute refuge" (32). This paradoxical theorem is explicitly shown in the fact that during the process of the dissolution of the house, Mr. Carmichael produces a spiritual achievement: he "brought out a volume of poems [. . .], which had an unexpected success" (208).

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Let us now turn to another motif which appears multiple times in Part Ⅱ: the cleaning lady Mrs. McNab working in the empty house. Although regarded by some critics as a symbol of the overturning of the class system—for she intrudes in the middle-class house, exploring her masters' belongings at will[32]—Mrs. McNab has been a relatively neglected character in the critical literature. Yet as almost the only character to visit the empty house, she can be profitably

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[32] For detailed discussions of this interpretation of Mrs. McNab, see Tratner 3; Minow-Pinkney, *Problem of the Subject* 101. "In 'Time Passes,' the hidden working class women emerge into the very rooms from which they have been excluded [. . .]. The violence of the dark world is an outgrowth of the tensions created by the rigid boundaries of the English class system" (Tratner 3).

turned to in our exploration of a possible meaning of this seemingly insignificant special enclosure.

Unlike Mr. Carmichael, who plays a marginal role in the fictional world, Mrs. McNab is difficult to neglect: by contrast with the former reticent and saint-like character, she is intrusive, materialistic, and dissatisfied. She is well integrated into the Ramsay household (though not as a member of her master's family): she remembers that she "was always welcome in the kitchen," enjoying talking with other servants. (212). She proudly recalls that she was a favourite of her dead mistress: Mrs. Ramsay "told cook to keep a plate of milk soup for her" (211). On the other hand, she continues to think that her life "was one long sorrow and trouble" (203). If Mr. Carmichael is characterised by his spiritual thought, Mrs. McNab is marked by her ostentatiously bodily and earthly existence. And in Part Ⅱ, if the former produces a perception of, and meditation upon, past family life and its loss, the latter evokes memories concerning body and personal life—all physical and concrete. In order to further explore this point, let us look at several sections concerning her in Part Ⅱ.

Mrs. McNab first appears at the end of Section 4, in which a sense of loss and emptiness as a result of Mrs. Ramsay's death reigns over the house:

> Mrs. McNab, tearing the veil of silence with hands that had stood in the wash-tub, grinding it with boots that had crunched the shingle, came as directed to open all windows, and dust the bedrooms. (202)

Her bodily existence is explicit in her matter-of-fact attitude towards the philosophical mood of the scene: she coarsely disrupts the narrative's meditative tone implicit in "the veil of silence"—for she "tears" it—with her intrusion. Although her purpose is, on a practical level, to take care of the uninhabited house, her appearance after her mistress's death assumes a metaphorical meaning as well.

The following section (Section 5) sees her working in the house by herself. It is noteworthy that meanwhile, her personal history is partly disclosed by the narrator. At one point, she sees herself in the mirror, and begins to "mumble out [an] old music hall song" as if remembering her joys and pleasure in the past (203). Her self-reflective act corresponds to the narrator's retrospective description of the house in the past, a description which appears in the preceding section. There the narrator enumerates what has been lost, just as Mrs. McNab recalls what she has lost: he says, "a pair of shoes, a shooting cap, some faded skirts and coats in wardrobes—those [. . .] in the emptiness indicated how once they were filled and animated; how once hands were busy with hooks and buttons; how once the looking-glass had held a face [. . .]" (200).

Indeed, Mrs. McNab has much in common with the empty house. Just as the house is "ramshackle" (196), so Mrs. McNab is a weary old woman, who "lurched" and "leered" (202). Her "creaking and groaning" during her work may evoke the sounds the old house itself makes while she is moving about in the house (203). As the house is half-deserted by its owners, so Mrs. McNab, it is reported by the

narrator, has been "deserted" by one of her children (and possibly not taken care of by anyone) (203). Her sorrow for her own life, exemplified in her lamenting, "how long shall it endure?," seems to correspond to a sense of misery about the deserted house itself, a sense represented by the murmur of "certain airs" to the house, "[h]ow long would they [objects in the house] endure?" (197)

These resemblances between the empty house and its caretaker may have an explanation in the intimate relationship between house and servant. Since the maid of a family purely serves the family and arranges their furnishings according to their demands, when the family leaves and the house is deserted, the role of the maid loses its purpose. The emptiness of the deserted house is, therefore, equated with the maids' emptiness without any rewarding jobs. In effect, Mrs. McNab is the forlorn house personified. She appears to represent memories of the house as well as memories of her own personal life.

This is made explicit in Section 8 of the same part. Here, as discussed in the preceding chapter, in her mind's eye Mrs. McNab sees her dead mistress. As has already been discussed, then, her imagination brings back the figure of Mrs. Ramsay, who, "stooping over her flowers, went wandering over the bedroom wall, up the dressing-table, across the wash-stand," until at last the figure is superimposed upon Mrs. McNab herself (211). In addition, what should be noted here is that this "reflection" happens when Mrs. McNab looks into Mrs. Ramsay's wardrobe and finds there "the old grey cloak she wore gardening" (210).

laments their loss of the family gardener, "old Kennedy," this discloses a contract between the family and the gardener, a contract which was possibly made in the past: the family depended on old Kennedy to take care of their garden, but because of his bad leg, he has been replaced by another gardener (218). Thus, through the two cleaning ladies' conversation, more scenes are revived from the past.

The section sees the revival of the house itself, which is also achieved by the two women. They clean and repair the house for its returning residents. With her mind excavating the past while her hands prepare for the future, Mrs. McNab represents the empty house, where the past, the present, and the future are conflated and actively interrelated. It might also be said that she embodies the re-decoration of the past for the future.

The interrelation between the past and the present is also shown in the description of the work of George, Mrs. Bast's son, who accompanies her; while the two women are working in the house, he scythes the grass of the family garden. Regarded by his mother as "a great one for work," he is the successor to the former competent gardener old Kennedy (218). Yet it is suggested, also by his mother, that he takes his own way, not following Kennedy's way: Mrs. Bast thinks that "they [the Ramsays]'d find it [their garden] changed" (218). George appears as both the successor to, and the reformer of, the old way, of the former gardener: the old way is altered—yet not altogether discarded.

Thus, Mrs. McNab is presented as an existence who revives the

past in the present for the future. Her status as a maid is very appropriate for this role, for the maid is an existence who "recreates"—re-establishes—herself in order to fit herself into a new life, according to her master's demands. The maid can be seen as a pertinent symbol for the conjunction of the past, the present, and the future of a house. With the appearance of Mrs. McNab in the house, the meaning of its emptiness becomes explicit. The vacant space is intended not for describing a mere void or loss, but for suggesting a space in which memories of the past are recreated for a new life: it is a germ of a new creative space.

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The re-decoration of a house for a new life is also a major theme of *Howards End* by E. M. Forster. And here also we can find an example of a woman who looks after an uninhabited house: Miss Avery, a neighbour of the Wilcoxes. Although not a servant, Miss Avery is regarded by the Wilcoxes as working class,[33] and is asked by them to take care of their house—Howards End—while it is empty. Miss Avery's relationship with the Wilcoxes is, therefore, similar to Mrs. McNab's with the Ramsays.

Margaret Schlegel, who has just become Henry Wilcox's second wife, visits Howards End, the house once owned by his late wife, Ruth Wilcox. The house was supposed to be uninhabited, but there she encounters Miss Avery. The woman says to Margaret, "'I took you for

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[33] For instance, Henry Wilcox describes Miss Avery as "[u]neducated" or "one of the crew at the farm" (203).

Ruth Wilcox,' for '[y]ou had her way of walking'" (202). Later in the book, Margaret finds the house refurnished by Miss Avery with the belongings of the Schlegels—of her own family. Towards Margaret, who blames her for this unnecessary arrangement—because she is not thinking of living in the house at this stage—Miss Avery replies, "You think that you won't come back to live here, Mrs. Wilcox, but you will" (267).

These enigmatic remarks of the caretaker not only act as oracles predicting what will happen later, but also point to an important fact: there is a close connection between the inner space of a house and the inner nature of its residents. The house decides its residents' nature in the same way as the latter makes the former.[34] In the case of the house once inhabited, it "recreates"—affects—its new residents, as if trying to regain its former residents. Thus, the empty house in *Howards End* is also described as the storage of working memories with which to recreate life.

Margaret's re-arrangement of the house after Miss Avery's furnishing can be regarded as her act of modifying the function of the house's memories. Victoria Rosner observes that Margaret's acts of moving the furniture to make them fit her family's lifestyle mean the "modernization" of the Wilcoxes'—a traditional family's—way of

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[34] Remember our discussion of *The Portrait of a Lady* in the opening of this chapter. Isabel, in order to protect her free will and independence in Osmond's "dungeon"-like home, struggles against its oppressive force towards bringing her into total obedience to her husband.

living (145).[35] Here again, therefore, we see problems presented that are similar to those of "Time Passes" by Virginia Woolf : how to revive memories of the past which have seemed to be lost, and how to rearrange them so that they can fit into a new life.

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Saturated with memories and perceptions, the empty house in "Time Passes" is a space in which events and scenes from the past are picked up, explored, and interrelated at random. This can be regarded as the re-rendering of the past in the present from a modernist viewpoint. On one level, the uninhabited house is a metaphorical space for Mr. Carmichael to transform historical time into inner time. The house is also literally rearranged by its caretaker, Mrs. McNab, for its returning residents, who are to start their new life. As the empty house personified, Mrs. McNab's change during Part Ⅱ, from a weary old woman who only reflects upon the past into a vivacious woman who "rebuilds" the house, may suggest the process of the house's memories being excavated and revived.

At the end of Part Ⅱ, Lily, Woolf's alter ego as a modernist, wakes up in the "re-created" house, and, in Part Ⅲ, sets about her second attempt in her painting. As if reflecting the nature of the

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[35] Rosner predicts the possible argument that it is impossible to connect "[t]he fashioning of modernist interiority" with the modernist innovation of interior decorations, an act which is seemingly too "explicitly formalist" to be relevant to the more "dynamic nature" of the problems of the mind (129). Against this, she draws attention to Walter Benjamin's claim that "the increasing symmetry between [the] two senses of the interior ["one's inner nature" and "the inside of a particular space"] marks "the advent of modern life" (129).

space—not completely new, but re-used—her picture is not totally new: Lily "re-uses" her old subject, which she embarked on in Part Ⅰ, exploring a new way of expressing it. Also her spirit as an artist, which is gradually released during Part Ⅲ, echoes Mr. Carmichael's free spirit as a hermit in his metaphysical exploration of actual life. The empty-house scene in Part Ⅱ represents the creation of a space and spirit for Lily's new artistic attempt in Part Ⅲ, an attempt which is to be completed at the end of the novel.

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The word "emptiness," when used to refer to loss and absence, is, in the Woolfian world, associated with death and vanity on one hand, yet is relevant to creativity and the fullness of being on the other hand. In *Jacob's Room*, this word is connected not so much with passivity as with activity, as exemplified in Mrs. Flanders' energetic life despite her sorrow for her husband's death and in the free interplay between past, present, and future in Jacob's empty room. The condition of emptiness is a representation of the dynamic nature of human life in Woolf's fiction. This idiosyncratic idea of "emptiness" is clarified when it is depicted in relation to houses—enclosed spaces which are saturated with memories and the past of their inhabitants.

The house in the middle part of *To the Lighthouse* appears as the place where the Ramsays once lived. The empty space is filled with memories of the traditional family, as evident in the cleaning lady Mrs. McNab's excavation of them in the house. Yet the empty house is also a space which expects the generation of a new life in the

following part. The life is a modern one—more dynamic in nature than a traditional one. (The nature of the new life is epitomised in Part Ⅲ, especially in Lily's painting, which consists of sets of contradictory elements—the soft and the hard, the evanescent and the permanent and so forth—thus aiming to grasp something elusive and inexplicable.) Through the attempts of Mr. Carmichael and Mrs. McNab—one psychological and the other practical—the house is transformed from a traditional space into a modern space. The new space sees the free interplay between past and present, interior and exterior, and the specific and the general. The concurrence of the two attempts at different levels—spiritual and practical—also suggests the interpenetration between the spiritual and the material in the new space.

This does not mean, however, that the new space thus created is totally new, severed from the past and tradition. Rather, the old interior of the house is a significant part of modern experiments, as is evident in the fact that the image of the house gives Mr. Carmichael resources for re-rendering the past and that Mrs. McNab repairs it for a new life. The empty house is a source of the new idea of interiority, as well as being an element to be integrated into the reconfigured world. This idea of establishing the new upon the old—not discarding the past—is related to the Bloomsbury artists' formula for an innovation in inner life.[36] The empty house is an

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[36] It is noteworthy that the Bloomsbury circle itself was considered to be modelled on the Victorian family relationship, although with

ingenious device by means of which Woolf expresses her understanding of modernist interiority.

The empty house in Woolf's fiction is a motif that is at once reticent and demonstrative, like the motif of women knitting, which we discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. Just as her women knitters offer a traditional figure for women who are excluded from the mainstream of human activities, so the empty house conveys a sense of obscurity, with its residents absent. Yet again, as the women knitters' reticence is also an aspect of their role as women artists, and accordingly, represents the author's stance as a woman modernist writer, so the house's emptiness is also a subtle expression of the author's modernist aesthetics.

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The above discussion discloses an important feature of the motif of the empty house: with its complicated nature as a sign of both distance from, and proximity to, the past, the empty house makes two different periods—the pre-First World War period and the post-First World War period—interpenetrate each other. The author's evacuation of the former generation's residence may imply, as with her re-creation of traditional women knitters into New Women, her gesture of distancing herself from the Victorian world. Yet again, as

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some twist given to it. Zwerdling argues: just as close, emotional relationships supported the family bonds of Victorian households, so "[t]he deliberately chosen proximity of their Bloomsbury residences encouraged shared meals and constant visits, produced lifelong loyalties despite serious disagreements, and created a sense of group identity" (175).

with her knitters, Woolf does not create this distancing imagery to imply a conflict between the past and the present. Rather, she points to a sense of oscillation between these two. (This subtle experimentation with the empty-house scene—stressing the passage of time and simultaneously calling back the past in the flow of time—recalls Lily's aesthetic ideal presented as the achievement of two contradictory intentions: "Beautiful and bright it should be on the surface, feathery and evanescent [. . .] but beneath the fabric must be clamped together with bolts of iron" (*TL* 264).) Just like the motifs of modern inventions—the telephone and the searchlight—the empty house functions as a significant element in the creation of a heterogeneous fictional universe, transcending its apparent status as a material object. In this case, the motif is itself a paradigm of a fictional world diverse in time and space.

CONCLUSION

We have explored the functional similarity of motifs of the past and the present in Woolf's fiction—both motifs being related to what I have called the modern rhythm, the alternation between distance and proximity—thus revealing her attempt to depict an interpenetrating relationship between these in her fictional representations of the modern world. This exploration reveals a relatively neglected aspect of Woolf's representation of these two concepts of time: despite the argument that the past and the present co-exist or confront one another in the Woolfian world, these two notions of time are related in a more interactive way.

From our exploration of selected motifs, we can elicit another noteworthy point: that the complications of the past and the present are presented by means of the characteristics of each motif itself, as well as in the association of one motif with another. As one traditional motif functions in a similar way to one technological motif, so each individual traditional or technological motif works beyond its time- and space-bound status as real existence, oscillating between the traditional and the modern. Knitting women are presented as both traditional, domestic women and a version of New Women. The searchlight appears as at once a technological weapon and a pair of devices of a traditional kind, of aiding sight—a telescope and a spotlight. The telephone serves a practical purpose in actual modern

life, yet at the same time works as a facilitator of the imagination—a traditional human mental habit. The empty house is both a "storehouse" of memories of Victorian life and the embryo of an idea of modern life. In these motifs, the concepts of proximity and distance in space are presented in conjunction with the concepts of the past and the present.

Moreover, Woolf's representation of this modern rhythm—alternate senses of distance and proximity—in each motif is intertwined with her production of other interchanging rhythms: the alternation between light and darkness, high and low, oneself and another, dream and reality, void and fullness, and so forth. Since we have mentioned or delineated a number of them throughout this thesis, let us review a few examples here. Women knitting display their oscillating status as traditional women and New Women through the flicking of their needles, a movement associated with the pulsating rhythm of lighthouse beams or the waves of the sea. The searchlight integrates spatial and temporal distances into, and dislodges them from, the narrator's present by merging and separating her sense of herself and of other selves. The telephone, generating alternating senses of closeness and separateness, spans two distinct spheres of life—dream and reality. A kind of "reversing poetics" is employed in the description of the empty house as a storehouse of the past and a space of creation, when its empty condition, at a metaphorical level, points to a condition of saturation. Also significantly, the alternation between closeness and separation

is associated with another kind of oscillation in fictional form and matter, oscillation aimed at rendering reality as Woolf understood it. Domestic commonness and inaccessibility interchange in the characterisation of women knitters, producing alternate figures of familiarity and detachment as a representation of the elusiveness of life. The searchlight, with its function of integrating and dislodging fictional matter, brings about oscillation in the meaning of the concluding phrase of the main story of "The Searchlight": the narrator says, "'he, I suppose, vanished'." This remark places the main story in the sphere where things are left incompletely expressed, a sphere described by Lily Briscoe as one where it is possible to express the "very jar on the nerves, the thing itself before it has been made anything" (*TL* 297). Thus, the concepts of distance and proximity are presented as a widely-echoed rhythm in the Woolfian world, both as subject and form.

At first glance, this seems to merely suggest Woolf's extreme susceptibility to the changes in perception brought about by the technologically developing world of her time. The concepts of closeness and separateness seem to be effected in both a large binary structure—the past and the present—and a number of small rhythmic patterns—light and darkness, and so forth—in her fictional world in its entirety. Yet this can also be regarded as a manifestation of Woolf's challenging view of the modern world. As discussed throughout the chapters, Woolf was very alert to the outcomes of the phenomena produced by technology—authoritarian points of view,

imperialist desires, and wars—as well as being interested in the phenomena themselves; moreover, she sometimes displays superlative skills in overturning conventions by employing the convention itself and subtly undermining the structure and idea embedded in it. (Remember Beer's argument about Woolf's quasi-biographies, *Flush* and *Orlando*, taken up in the Introduction. In these works, Woolf employs the traditional form of the biography, yet for the purpose of playing with it. *A Room of One's Own*, her feminist polemic, is written in a "feminine" style—a charming, conversational style—but with a full awareness of its effect upon the reader, especially the male reader. By charming the reader, Woolf schemes to engage him in her narrative and thus to make him admit her points without noticing it.[1])

In fact, her treatment of the modern rhythm as a permeating element in her fiction reads as an ingenious contrivance as well. In the opening of the Introduction, we argued that an interchanging rhythm is one of the most significant characteristics of Woolf's poetics of fiction. By associating the modern rhythm with many other rhythms, such as the alternation between light and darkness or high and low, her fiction integrates the modern rhythm into the entire system of rhythmic patterns in the Woolfian world. This deprives the modern rhythm of its prioritised status as an innovative structure, making it look like one of numerous representations of her binary

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[1] Laura Marcus also notes this "'tea-table manner'" in *AROO*, regarding it as a "rhetorical strategy" rather than as suggesting Woolf's obedience to the convention ("Feminism" 217).

rhythmic structure. This reads as a representation of both her involvement with, and her simultaneous detachment from, modern perceptual changes. It is interesting to see that one of the most characteristic features in her fiction—interchanging senses of distance and proximity—assumes a self-reflective structure—the author's detachment from, and involvement with, the modern rhythm.

This discussion may be developed into a suggestion as to the treatment of the issue of the relationship between Woolf and technology (and other modern phenomena), a popular subject in the recent critical literature. That is, the connection between the changes in perception produced by technology and Woolf's aesthetic is a controversial issue rather than, as often observed, a readily provable issue. To be sure, this study takes up only one modern phenomenon involving perception—alternating senses of distance and proximity—and therefore, it would be hasty to argue that the trend built upon several elaborate discussions of Woolf's works in relation to technological issues is problematic. Yet a close analysis of Woolf's involvement with the rendering of the modern rhythm has revealed one unignorable fact: her interest in technological phenomena is associated with her fascination with phenomena existing since the pre-motor age. Woolf may have keenly taken up technological effects on perception in the creation of her fiction, yet her intention in doing so lies somewhere deeper than in innovation in textual expression. She does not forget to draw attention to what their effects reveal

about life, a point applicable to the pre-mechanical and mechanical ages. She thus undermines the conspicuous effects of technologies on her fictional representations, both in theme and form. At least it is safe to say that, when dealing with technological issues in Woolf studies we need to do so in conjunction with another important issue—Woolf's multiple responses to the preceding generation—even though these two kinds of issue have often been discussed separately. This enables us not to lose sight of her elusive position in relation to the public and private spheres—in her involvement in socio-political issues and her aesthetic practice—a position corresponding to her writing rhythm presented as the alternation between opposite conditions.

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