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Good Phrases Shining, One Wave After Another : A Look at Virginia Woolf's Creative Process and The Waves

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Good Phrases Shining, One Wave After Another: A Look at Virginia Woolf's Creative Process and *The Waves*

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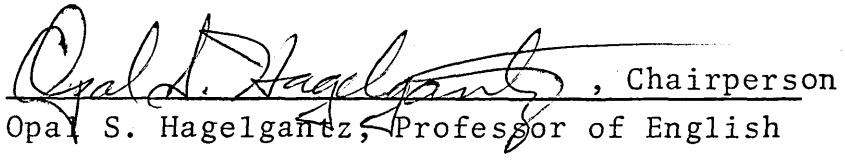

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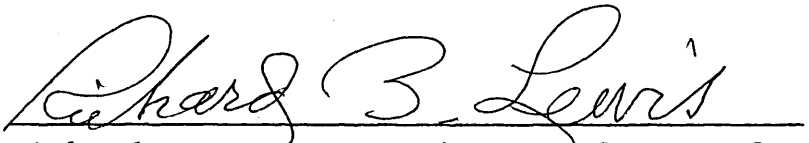

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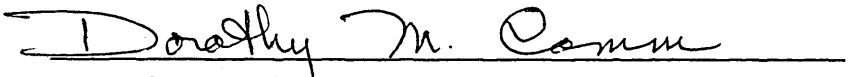

Dorothy M. Comm, Professor of English

to Marcelle Birkenstock

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Introduction

Novels are frightfully clumsy and overpowering of course; still if one could get hold of them it would be superb. I daresay one ought to invent a completely new form.

Virginia Woolf
(Letter to David Garnett July 26, 1917)

The purpose of this thesis is first to understand the nature of Virginia Woolf's creative process and second to show that the writing of The Waves is illustrative of the maturity of that process.

The fact that Virginia Woolf was highly imaginative in the writing of her fiction has long been recognized. What has not often been understood is that by looking at her creative process one is better equipped to understand what she was attempting to do. The creative process is what a writer, or anyone creating something original, goes through in producing what he creates. It is more than just a look at an artist's method for it deals with the evolution of an artist's thinking and ability, and of how and perhaps why he organized his vision the way he did. The creative process examines the dynamic of the creative act. By so doing it proposes to give some insight into the meaning of an artist and his work.

The creative process is compelling because, "the creative order . . . is not an elaboration of the established, but a movement beyond the established. . . . The first need is therefore to transcend the old order."[1] This is especially true for Woolf for she deliberately set out to do something new with the English novel. She set out to find new forms. In The Waves she found one of the best to represent her vision.

As a critical approach to literature the creative

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[1]Brewster Ghiselin in his introduction to The Creative Process: A Symposium, p. 14.

process does not fall neatly into one of the already established and widely practiced approaches. It is not historical or purely textual in method. The creative process is both aware of the historical setting and it is attentive to the text. It is not purely formal, psychological, archetypal, or exponential in approach. The creative process, as a critical approach, may contain elements of some of these methods, depending on how one defines one's terms. The modern critic, Douglas Bush, in stating what he thinks "adequate criticism" should do, says:

> Every work must be understood on its own terms as the product of a particular mind in a particular setting, and that mind and setting must be recreated through all the resources that learning and the historical imagination can muster--not excluding the author's intention, if that is known.[2]

This is what an approach that looks at the process of a writer writing attempts to do. The creative process as a critical method is certainly one of the "resources that learning and the historical imagination can muster."

Chapter One of this thesis introduces Virginia Woolf and gives reasons that she is a good subject for a study of the creative process. It also discusses briefly The Waves and why it was chosen as an example of the product of her creative imagination. Chapter Two deals with some of the related critical material. Chapter Three discusses Woolf's creative process, specifically, my point being

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[2]Douglas Bush, "Literary History and Literary Criticism," reprinted in Criticism: The Major Texts, Ed. by W. J. Bate.

that in order for a work like The Waves to be written there needs to be a maturity of vision and a perfection of craft, and that by understanding how Woolf's vision and craft came to be, one can better understand the product. Chapter Four discusses the actual writing of The Waves, its method of composition being the outworking of Woolf's creative process. In the conclusion I draw some lessons from Woolf's experience that an aspiring creative writer may find of value to his own experience. The appendices provide, I hope, some interesting corollary material.

One

One does not want an established reputation, such as I think I was getting, as one of our leading female novelists. I have still, of course, to gather in all the private criticism, which is the real test. When I have weighed this I shall be able to say whether I am "interesting" or obsolete. Anyhow, I feel quite alert enough to stop, If I'm obsolete. . . . As I write, there rises somewhere in my head that queer and very pleasant sense of something which I want to write; my own point of view.

Virginia Woolf
A Writer's Diary
April 8, 1921

The focus of Chapter One is to provide an introduction to the intellectual climate in which Woolf wrote, and to give an introduction to the content of The Waves.

Virginia Woolf and The Waves

Background on Virginia Woolf

Virginia Woolf in January of 1882 was born into the household of one of England's leading intellectuals--Sir Leslie Stephen, the first editor of The Dictionary of National Biography. All her life Woolf was part of England's intellectual elite, in spite of the fact that she never went to Cambridge. In a sense, Cambridge came to her. Woolf's oldest brother, Thoby Stephen, while at Cambridge, became part of a nucleus of an important group of friends who, in turn, were introduced to Woolf and her sister, Vanessa Stephen. The friendships that formed were an important part of the stimulating and questioning intellectual milieu in England at the turn of the century. The philosopher G. E. Moore and his Principia Ethica (1903) were an important influence on these friends, all of whom were challenging and questioning the legacy of moral and artistic standards and values of Victorian England.

Bloomsbury has become a catchall term for these friends. The name is derived from the suburb of London where the Stephen children lived after the death of Sir Leslie in 1904. Friends of the Stephen children would meet occasionally at the Stephen house to discuss projects and ideas. Some of the friends who were associated with Bloomsbury included: Lytton Strachey, Clive Bell, Roger Fry, Desmond

MacCarthy, J. Maynard Keynes, and Bertrand Russell. Lytton Strachey is best known as an iconoclastic biographer for his Eminent Victorians and Queen Victoria. Clive Bell married Vanessa Stephen. As an eminent art critic he published, in 1922, an influencial book on the post-Impressionists, Since Cezanne. Roger Fry was a painter and also the most important art critic since John Ruskin. In 1910 with the drama critic Desmond MacCarthy he organized the first post-Impressionist exhibition in London. The show sent shock waves through proper English society and Fry emerged as something of a cult hero among young English painters. J. Maynard Keynes was an economist with revolutionary concepts that won him world renow. Of the group, Bertrand Russell was considered the most brillians.

Out of this kind of intellectual climate Woolf developed her own ideas. She called into question the methods of her predecessors and sought to find new forms for the English novel. In her essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" Woolf divides her contemporary novelists into two camps: the "Edwardians" and the "Georgians."[1] The "Edwardians" included: Wells, Bennett, and Galsworthy; the "Georgians" included: Forster, Lawrence, Joyce, and Eliot. Woolf felt that the novels of the "Edwardians" were incomplete. When describing a character, they would describe everything around the character

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[1]The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays, pp. 94-119.

without getting at the character at all. The "Georgians," with whom she identified, were better at getting at a character directly, she felt. The "Georgians" were willing to try new methods. A Lawrence novel and a Woolf novel each read very differently, but the "Georgians" were all exploring new forms in the presentation of reality. Henry James had gone about as far as one could go in meticulously detailing for pages on end the external actions and environment of a character. The only other direction was to move internally and get at a character's thinking directly.

Freud has often been credited as being a major influence on writers who sought to explore the workings of the mind. By 1911 Freud was part of the intellectual talk of Bloomsbury; in 1922 the Woolfs undertook the publication of The International Psychoanalytical Library. It can thus be assumed that Woolf was acquainted with Freud's theories; however, to find specific influence in Woolf's fiction is difficult.[2] Woolf's writing was a product mainly of her own observation and understanding. She was not a philosopher. Jean Gaiguet documents, in Virginia Woolf and Her Works, that Woolf felt that although Freudian theories are helpful in explaining the behavior of an author's characters, one should not push the application too far.[3] Freud's influence is present in Woolf, but mainly in just a general manner.

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[2]Harvena Richter, Virginia Woolf: The Inward Voyage, p. 64.

[3]Guiguet, p. 35.

The influence of Bloomsbury on Woolf was also of a general nature. In 1932 Harmon H. Goldstone wrote to Woolf asking questions about Bloomsbury's influence, because he was planning a book on her. In her reply (16 August 1932) Woolf stated that "to dwell upon Bloomsbury as an influence is liable to lead to judgments that, as far as I know have no basis in fact."[4] What Bloomsbury provided was an opportunity for friendships to develop among a group of intelligent people who were, for the most part, independent of mind.

One of the new forms of writing fiction that emerged at the beginning of the century has been termed, "stream of consciousness." The term was coined by William James in his Principles of Psychology (1890), and Woolf is commonly thought of as a stream of consciousness writer. The term "stream of consciousness" has come to mean that type of writing where the reality that exists is inside the narrator's or the main character's mind. To do this a writer uses techniques of soliloquy, omniscient narration of thoughts, and interior monologue. James Joyce is usually given as the main example of a writer using this approach.[5] Although Woolf uses these techniques, it is misleading to put Joyce and Woolf under the same label. For Joyce there was only the reality of the mind. For Woolf the reality of the mind needed to be in contact with the reality of the outside world.

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[4] Letters, V, p. 90. Goldstone never wrote his book.

[5] See The Harper Dictionary of Modern Thought.

One of Woolf's chief concerns in her fiction was her presentation of reality as she saw it. While she was writing her fiction, she left a record in her diary (and to some extent in her letters) that traces the process of her writing. This is one reason why Woolf makes a good subject for a study of the creative process. She was also a critic; in her essays she made it clear what she thought literature should be doing. Woolf has thus left a triple legacy: the product of her imagination, her comments on the process, and critical theory that supports the creation. It is not often that a creative artist is also an articulate commentator on his own work. The reason Woolf wrote so much is that for her the act of writing was part and parcel of the act of living. When she was done writing a "serious" novel, she wrote a "holiday" novel to recuperate. Orlando and Flush are such novels. If she was not writing a novel there were always criticism, essays, reviews, her diary, and letters that she was writing. Just her letters, in their published form, comprise six volumes of about six hundred pages each.

The Waves: An Introduction

Of the comments Woolf makes in her diary about her own writing process most of them are made about the writing of The Waves. The Waves is Woolf's most imaginative work. Leonard Woolf, in his preface to her A Writer's Diary, states that "The Waves seems to me a great work of art,

far and away the greatest of her books."[6] It is the tightest, the most lyrical, and the most thoroughly worked of all Woolf's novels. She stated when she was writing The Waves that "this is the most concentrated work I have ever done" (AWD, 167), and that "few books have interested me more to write than The Waves" (AWD, 161).

In The Waves one is given, as it were, a view through a window into the minds of six characters. Through this window one sees moments in their lives as they move from childhood to old age and death. These moments are woven together in a rich texture by the use of patterns and images. The window is made up of monologues, but the monologues are not ordinary, everyday talk. The monologues are also not meanderings of the mind. Rather the speeches are stylized. One has the impression that nothing is being said, and that what is recorded is what the six characters think or wish they could say. The monologues form nine episodes and the episodes are framed by ten interludes.

The interludes contain detailed, lyrical descriptions of the physical world. In the interludes one has descriptions of the sun, the ocean, a garden, and a house. Taken together one has, in the interludes, a description of the passage of a day. Because the interludes alternate with the episodes, one has not only the passage of a day, but the passage of life. The episodes deal consecutively with:

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[6] p. ix. A Writer's Diary is hereafter referred to in the text as AWD.

childhood; school; college; a farewell dinner; the death of a friend, Percival (who was modeled on Woolf's brother, Thoby, who died in the prime of life); their working lives; age; a reunion dinner; and finally in the last episode there is only one speaker, Bernard. The first line of every interlude gives the position of the sun, and the sun's position parallels the action of the following episode. The following diagram should make this clear:

Interlude	Episode
1. "The sun had not yet risen."	1. Childhood
2. "The sun rose higher."	2. School
3. "The sun rose. Bars of yellow and green fell . . ."	3. College
4. "The sun, risen, . . ."	4. Farewell dinner
5. "The sun had risen to its full height . . ."	5. Death of Percival
6. "The sun no longer stood in the middle of the sky."	6. Life Occupations
7. "The sun had now sunk lower in the sky."	7. Age
8. "The sun was sinking."	8. Reunion dinner
9. "The sun had sunk."	9. Bernard's summation
10. "The waves broke on the shore." (This is the last line of *The Waves*.)	

One is told a story in The Waves, but not by conventional methods. Woolf makes images perform many of the functions that dialogue, narration, and evaluative commentary co in a conventional narrative. To do this, and still provide the intense emotional impact that the book gives, Woolf had to completely rewrite the book out in longhand twice. Thses two drafts have been made available to the general reader by J. W. Graham in his meticulously transcribed and edited Virginia Woolf: "The Waves": The Two Holograph Drafts. By doing this Graham had made available an important instrument in the study of Woolf's creative process and her method in the writing of The Waves.

The Waves is by no means a conventional novel with a plot, climax, and conclusion. With the alternation of interludes and episodes a rhythm is set up that must work with the images to be emotionally and imaginatively effective. No wonder Woolf found this hard work. The era in which Woolf wrote was no doubt a catalyst that helped bring about in her imaginative thinking the idea to find new forms for the writing of fiction.

Two

I tried to analyse my depression: how my brain is jaded with the conflict within of two types of thought, the critical, the creative . . .

Virginia Woolf
A Writer's Diary
May 26, 1932

Art is being rid of all preaching: things in themselves: the sentence in itself beautiful: multitudinous seas; daffodils that come before the swallow dares . . .

Virginia Woolf
A Writer's Diary
October 2, 1932

The focus of this chapter is a brief review of what other critics have done with regards to Woolf's creative process.

Some Related Critical Material

Before one looks at Woolf's creative process and the new forms she sought to explore, one must look at some of the related critical material. Because Woolf wrote as much as she did and at the same time broke new ground, critics have had a field day with her and her work. In spite of all the critical material that has been done on Woolf, her own work has remained the best source of information, especially when one is concerned with her creative process.

Besides her own writing, works of her husband and friends have proved to be helpful. Leonard Woolf's introduction to A Writer's Diary and his autobiography covering the years 1919-1932 entitled Downhill All the Way have been specifically helpful in this regard. Indispensable to any study on Woolf is, of course, Quentin Bell's Virginia Woolf: A Biography. Then there is E. M. Forster's insightful Rede lecture on Woolf, delivered at Cambridge, May 29, 1941. A good introduction to Woolf is given by John Lehmann in his Virginia Woolf and Her World. Lehmann, as a young man, worked for the Woolfs at the Hogarth Press.

Beyond the work of family and friends the large body of critical material that grew up around Woolf has proliferated greatly in recent years. Two periodicals, the

Virginia Woolf Quarterly and Virginia Woolf Miscellany, are now devoted to the preservation of her memory and reputation. The critical material covers a wide spectrum of approaches to Woolf and her work. Words and phrases such as "feminism," "philosophy," "Bloomsbury," "mysticism," "personality," "liberal humanism," "symbolism," and "psychology" are popular. Numerous works attempt to explicate her various novels. As a result, relatively little has dealt with her creative process. There are, however, some important studies that should be noted, for while pursuing other goals they deal also with the creative process.

One of these studies is Jean Guiguet's comprehensive work, Virginia Woolf and Her Works (1965). Guiguet's work is in part a biography, but by providing analysis of Woolf and her works, Guiguet strives to provide a study of Woolf's purpose. As a part of doing this it was Guiguet's intention "to trace the creative movement from its germ to the completed work of literature. . . ." (27). What this comes to mean in her book is that she traces Woolf's references to the writing of her various novels through A Writer's Diary. Guiguet quotes extensively from A Writer's Diary providing speculation and commentary along the way. Essentially what Guiguet does in reference to Woolf's creative process (with regards to The Waves) is an elaboration of Appendix A of this study.

Guiguet decides that The Waves is essentially not a

novel, but a "playpoem" (302). This is a term Woolf herself used (AWD, 134). This distinction is simply a matter of definition of terms, but novel or playpoem, Guiguet finds that:

> The Waves is unquestionably Virginia Woolf's masterpiece, if such a term describes the creation that most faithfully conveys its author's conception of the world, and in which she includes the most completely what she thinks, feels and is. (p. 297)

Harvena Richter in her book, Virginia Woolf: The Inward Voyage (1970), analyzes the ways a reader of Woolf becomes a part of the consciousness of Woolf's characters. One is drawn into the mind of a character and becomes to a certain extent that character and thus experiences the stimuli and responses of the character. This is Richter's "inward voyage."

Richter, who is a novelist herself, finds that for Woolf method and form fused. The creative process for Woolf involved the process of self-examination, of understanding one's feelings and expressing what one finds in language. The form of Woolf's novels then draws the reader into the mind of a character that is often seeking to understand his feelings and define his identity. Discovering one's identity is a constant preoccupation with the characters in The Waves. Woolf's diary shows that she was constantly exploring her own experience. Richter finds, as does the conclusion of this study, that a writer reading Woolf can find principles which may be employed by any fiction writer.

Richter concludes her study by saying:

> One does not draw a particular philosophy or discipline from [Woolf's] work. One can only conclude that her examination of her own encounter with lived experience was transmuted into the novel's form: modes of life became modes of fiction. (Virginia Woolf: The Inward Voyage, p. 245)

Virginia Woolf: A Collection of Criticism (1975), edited by Thomas S. W. Lewis, contains some of the best critical material on Woolf that is not of book length. This collection includes pieces by James Hafley, Joanne Trautmann, Nigel Nicolson, and, of greatest relevance to this study, J. W. Graham's article "Point of View in The Waves: Some Services of Style." Graham looks at the drafts of The Waves and presents an interesting study of the problems Woolf had in establishing a narrator's role. In the text there is almost no trace of this narrator. One is only hinted at by the use of "said" to introduce each speaker. In the last episode there is only one speaker, Bernard, who becomes a narrator "summing up" to an unknown listener. Graham goes on to show how, by the use of style, the reader becomes caught up in Woolf's vision "with its strange blend of fear and excitement, detachment and involvement, remoteness and intensity, impersonality and rapt absorption" (p. 112).

An article by Simon O. Lesser in the University of Hartford: Studies in Literature (10: 49-69, 1978) entitled "Creativity versus Death: Virginia Woolf," gives a chronological commentary on Woolf's mental breakdowns. Lesser presents childhood psychological problems and Woolf's genius as causes

for Woolf's illness. Her genius drove her to seek perfection constantly, which led to feelings of guilt and self-dissatisfaction. No doubt Woolf's illness played an important role in her creative process, but I doubt whether it does with the severity that Lesser suggests.

Two studies that confirm and elaborate the point (referred to later in this study) that Woolf's fiction can be compared to painting are John H. Robert's "'Vision and Design' in Virginia Woolf," (PMLA, LXI, 835-847), and Jacquelin G. Thayer's dissertation, "Virginia Woolf: From Impressionism to Abstract Art" (University of Tulsa, 1977). Roberts deals with how Roger Fry and his theories influenced Woolf. The post-Impressionist painters were seeking to attain reality through new forms and they felt that the artistic creation was first a creation of form. Thayer uses Woolf's "Walter Sickert" essay as preliminary justification for tracing the correlation between Woolf's artistic development and that of contemporary painting. The Waves becomes for Thayer something of an abstract painting.

What a review of the literature indicates is that, while a substantial amount of critical work has been done on Woolf, little has been done specifically on her creative process. This fact is lamentable. This lack of material is no doubt due to the reason that only recently has the creative process emerged as a method of studying literature.

Three

For the creation of a master-work of literature two powers must concur, the power of the man and the power of the moment, and the man is not enough without the moment.

Matthew Arnold
The Function of Criticism at the Present Time

Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions--trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from the old; the moment of importance came not here but there; so that, if a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style, and perhaps not a single button sewn on as the Bond Street tailors would have it. Life is not a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible? We are not pleading merely for courage and sincerity; we are suggesting that the proper stuff of fiction is a little other than custom would have us believe it.

Virginia Woolf
"Modern Fiction"

The focus of this chapter is a study of the nature and development of Woolf's creative process.

Virginia Woolf's Creative Process

Great works of art almost invariably have years of training and struggle behind them. The process of finding new forms to express a vision such as The Waves is not something that happens quickly. To create a work of art an artist must have a certain maturity to bring to his vision; he must have a mastery of his craft; and he must have a certain fortitude of spirit to bring the work into existence. This is especially applicable to Virginia Woolf. She was forty-nine when she wrote The Waves and it was her seventh novel. To better appreciate how she came to bring her imaginative powers to bear in the creation of The Waves, it is helpful to first obtain a perspective of her creative process. Because the term "creative process" can cover a number of related topics, the following divisions have been made: "Her Style, Craft, and Vision," "Her Moments of Being," "The Analogy with Painting," "The Difficulty of the Task," Her Marriage," and "The Novels Before The Waves."

Her Style, Craft, and Vision

Virginia Woolf was capable of writing in a number of different styles. In her letters and diary her style is relaxed and she often rambles, and it is evident that she took delight in this type of writing. Writing letters

or writing in her diary was a way for her to relax from the strain of writing her fiction. Her essays, reviews, and works like A Room of One's Own have a logical, playful, and sometimes even an ironic style that reveals her subtle sense of humor. Orlando and Flush, her two novels written as a way of taking a break from her serious fiction, also have a style that is easy and free-flowing. The style of her serious novels is quite different. This is because Woolf was obsessed with the task of getting her novels to portray adequately her view of the fabric that makes up a life. As such her style is dense, controlled, humorless, yet lyrical, flowing in carefully crafted patterns. E. M. Forster describes her serious novels in the following manner:

> Belongong to the world of poetry, but fascinated by another world, she is always stretching out from her enchanted tree and snatching bits from the flux of daily life as they float past, and out of these bits she builds novels. . . .
>
> So that is her problem. She is a poet, who wants to write something as near to a novel as possible.[1]

Woolf wrote nine full-length novels and as such her output is, as Leonard Woolf points out, more prolific than Fanny Burney, Jane Austen, the Brontës, George Eliot, Thackery, Joyce, and E. M. Forster.[2] Even when she was not writing a

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[1] Virginia Woolf, p. 23. From a published lecture he gave at Cambridge May 29, 1941.

[2] Downhill All The Way: An Autobiography of the Years 1919-1939, p. 156.

novel, she was still single-mindedly committed to her fiction. There was rarely "a time that she was not living inside a work of imagination."[3]

Although Woolf wrote much, she was a slow writer when it came to her serious fiction. She took almost three years to write The Waves and it took her some four years to write The Years; yet the reason she was still able to produce so much is given by Leonard Woolf:

> Neither of us ever took a day's holiday. We should have felt it to be not merely wrong but unpleasant not to work every morning for seven days a week and for about eleven months a year. Every morning, therefore, at about 9:30 after breakfast each of us, as if moved by a law of unquestioned nature, went off and 'worked' (sic) until lunch at 1. (Downhill, p. 156)

The Woolfs did, of course, take vacations as journals and letters show, but they were carefully planned into the above routine. Writing as much as she did, Woolf often complained about how difficult it was, yet there was no doubt that she loved writing.

To say that she loved writing is also to say, as E. M. Forster noted, that she loved "receiving sensations--sights, sounds, tastes" and she enjoyed the process of "passing them through her mind, where they encountered theories and memories, and then bringing them out again, through a pen, on to a bit of paper" (Virginia Woolf, 6). This process gave her a hold on life, a hold that she was constantly trying to define and describe. Everything else

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[3]Michael Rosenthal, Virginia Woolf, p. 16.

was secondary. Writing helped her keep a hold on her sanity. When she felt that she could no longer concentrate, no longer read, no longer write, and that the madness was taking over, she drowned herself in the River Ouse on March 28, 1941.

Woolf's style in her serious novels came from a lifelong search for new forms and shapes that would convey her understanding of reality and what she felt was the truth about life. Where other writers are known for their handling of plot and character, Woolf has been accused of having no plot and no character and thus it is thought that nothing happens in a Woolf novel. In Woolf's fiction character and plot are not conventionally developed, but that is what Woolf wanted. She wanted to get away from the conventional ways of writing a novel and try something new. It is not that she did not try conventional methods. Her first two novels, The Voyage Out and Night and Day are conventional in that characters are introduced as one expects and they follow a definite, linear plot that moves to a climax and resolution. Woolf was not, however, completely satisfied with these attempts at presenting her vision. They did not do what she wanted. Rereading The Voyage Out some eight years after it was published, Woolf wrote that the "failures are ghastly enough to make my cheeks burn" (AWD, 23), yet there were parts she liked and she kept writing

Almost invariably when Woolf thought of a new idea for

a novel the idea came not in the form of a character, or a plot, but in a whole new way of presenting her perception of experience. She refers to a new idea for a novel in terms of "form," or "shape" (AWD, 22). In July of 1917 Clive Bell wrote to Woolf praising her story "Mark on the Wall." Thanking him, in reply, she reveals that Bell was the first person who ever thought that she could write well. She goes on to say, "It's an absorbing thing (I mean writing is) and it's high time we found some new shapes, don't you think so?" (Letters, II, 167). "Mark on the Wall," "Kew Gardens," and "An Unwritten Novel" are all short pieces in which she explored new forms to describe experience in a radically different way from what she had done in her first two novels. "Mark on the Wall" follows the meanderings of a narrator's mind as he looks at a mark on the wall. In the narrator's mind one moves by association through time and thought. The process may at first seem random, but a pattern and meaning emerge that speaks of the frailty of human understanding. "Kew Gardens" gives the reader a view of the world from the perspective of a snail. In "An Unwritten Novel" the narrator sits across from an unknown lady in a railway carriage. He gradually recreates the life of this person in his imagination. The reader gets drawn in only to discover, when the lady gets off the train, that the life the narrator has created has nothing to do with her real life.

This impressionistic approach to writing excited Woolf with its possibilities. At thirty-eight she was wanting to do for two hundred pages what she had done in "An Unwritten Novel." She had doubts however:

> My doubt is how far it will enclose the human heart--Am I sufficiently mistress of my dialogue to net it there? For I figure that the approach will be entirely different this time: no scaffolding; scarcely a brick to be seen; all crepuscular, but the heart, the passion, humour, everything as bright as fire in the mist. (AWD, 22)

This is one of the ways Woolf describes what she wants to do; it emphasizes her preoccupation with form. With this approach she set out to get at that "fire in the mist." She no longer paid any attention to the "Bond Street tailors" and, except for her "holiday" novels, her fiction takes on and explores the directions she experimented with in the three short sketches.

Woolf, as with most other writers, was well aware that for a work of the creative imagination to succeed, the artist needs two basic things: a vision and a mastery of his craft. And vision and craft need to work together. The craft is needed to shape and communicate the vision effectively. Although Woolf was very conscious of what she put into her work, she was constantly surprised at what her readers found once her vision came into contact with their own experience. These two processes, vision and craft, were clearly noted by Leonard Woolf. Watching her write he found that:

> In the process of her writing--of her artistic creation--there were long periods of, first quiet and intense dreamlike rumination when she drifted through London streets or walked across the Sussex water-meadows or merely sat by the fire, and secondly of intense, analytical, critical revision of what she had written. (Downhill, 53)

Woolf acquired her craft in a number of ways. The first was her home environment. For various reasons, one of them being that her father was firmly entrenched in the ideals of the nineteenth century, Woolf did not receive a formal education as her brothers did. Her parents were also not very good teachers in the sense that they did not understand how to train a young mind. Although the young Woolf had various tutors in Latin and Greek, most of what she and the other Stephen children learned they picked up on their own. Woolf was fortunate, however, in that she was a child of Sir Leslie Stephen, one of England's leading intellectuals. This meant that she grew up in an atmosphere that was charged with ideas and intellectual conversation. Thus at a young age she was introduced to the world of ideas.

The second way she acquired her craft was that early on she developed a love for reading. Here again she was fortunate that she was Sir Leslie's daughter for he gave her his own love for literature and access to his large library. At first Woolf was given some suggestions as to what she should read, but she was soon given complete freedom to read whatever caught her imagination. To say

that she read a lot is an understatement. Throughout her life she read incessantly and widely. She read novels, drama, poetry, memoirs, biography, letters, history, and psychology. She read from the Greeks, the French, the Russians, the English, and the Americans. By reading she learned what worked and what did not work in writing. She read attentively, and the critical sense she developed is evident in the large number of essays she wrote.

The third way she learned her craft was in the writing of criticism. It gave her a chance of "flexing her muscles" and it got her into the habit of writing. On May 27, 1938, she received a letter from Bruce Richmond ending her thirty-year connection with him and the Times Literary Supplement. In her diary she reflects on this association by saying, "I learnt a lot of my craft writing for him: how to compress; how to enliven; and also was made to read with a pen and notebook, seriously" (AWD, 283).

To say how Woolf obtained her vision is more difficult and perhaps impossible. Quentin Bell wrote that her imagination "was furnished with an accelerator but no brakes."[4] But, to handle a vision, for Woolf at least, a certain maturity was needed. She was thirty-four before her first novel appeared. In a letter to Gerald Brenan, who at the time was a young man and very serious about being a writer, she said:

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[4]Quoted by John Lehmann in Virginia Woolf and Her World, p. 22.

> As for writing, at 30 I was still writing, reading; tearing up industriously. I had not published a word (save reviews). I despaired. Perhaps at that age one is really most a writer. Then one cannot write, not for lack of skill, but because the object is too near, too vast. I think it must recede before one can take a pen to it. (Letters, II, p. 599)

Perhaps the artist needs this sort of trial period in the development of his creative process. The vision needs to settle and form; a perspective needs to be gotten. Each new experience needs a past for it to mature properly. For Woolf the present moment was always enriched by the past and that past was enriched by the present.[5] Woolf's vision was born and nurtured by her life and for her to convey "this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit"[6] she needed some time with it. Woolf found that for her:

> The past only comes back when the present runs so smoothly that it is like the sliding surface of a deep river. Then one sees through the surface to the depths. In these moments I find some of my greatest satisfactions, not that I am living most fully in the present. For the present when backed by the past is a thousand times deeper than the present so close that you can feel nothing else. . . . (Moments of Being, p. 98)

It was under such conditions that Woolf let her craft act on her vision to produce the moments, the scenes, the novels she wanted to write.

Her Moments of Being

There are two realities for Woolf. There is the inner reality of what happens in the mind and there is the outer

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[5] See Moments of Being, pp. 13-15.

[6] Woolf, "Modern Fiction," Criticism: The Major Texts, p. 650.

reality of what is happening in the physical world. For Woolf these two realities were not mutually exclusive. Much of Woolf's fiction deals with the juxtaposition and the interrelationship of these two realities. In Mrs. Dalloway the external reality of Big Ben striking the hours penetrates and becomes part of the thinking of the characters. In To the Lighthouse there is the masterful "Time Passages" section where the characters are only mentioned in passing, and in The Waves there are not only monologues by the characters, but detailed, almost lyrical descriptions of the physical world. It is the coming together of these two realities that constitutes a part of what were for Woolf "moments of being."

The make up of a moment, for Woolf, also included the present and the past. It is for this reason that time is such an important element in her novels. Two types of time exist which correspond to the two realities: physical time and personal time. Mrs. Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The Waves, and Between the Acts all have a rough physical time of one day. (In To the Lighthouse the "day" is broken by a ten-year span.) At the same time, however, one has a sense of whole lives being lived.

Woolf was very conscious of Arnold's "power of the moment." Her novels are made of scenes, of moments, one flowing into the next. The ordinary mind receiving "myriad impressions" forgets most of them in the course of the

day. The impressions of a day that one does happen to remember suggest that they have some sort of shock value. For Woolf, this shock-receiving capacity was one of the things that made her a writer. The desire to explain and to make the revelation real by putting it into words always followed.[7] Woolf describes such moments this way: "We are sealed vessels afloat on what it is convenient to call reality; and at some moments, the sealing matter cracks; in floods reality; that is, these scenes. . . ." (Moments of Being, 72). These floods of reality are not necessarily of earth shattering importance. On the contrary, they are often insignificant things that happen. It is these "insignificant" incidents--Big Ben striking, the sunlight in the garden, the flight of rooks in the trees--that Woolf takes and invests with meaning. It is such things that, for the most part, make up the reality of our lives. Thus nothing happens in a Woolf novel only if one expects the conventional.

In The Waves at Percival's farewell dinner the six friends realize that they are experiencing a moment of importance together and they desire to hold on to the moment. "Let us hold it for one moment," says Jinny (Waves, 145). But time, always an important factor for Woolf, moves them on and that moment is gone. Often her characters do not fully understand the importance of the moment. When

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[7]See Moments of Being, p. 72.

they do, they want to hold on to it because it gives them an identity.

The search for individual identity is another of Woolf's consistent themes. She believed that the individual identity was always in a state of flux and that each "moment of being" changed the shape of that identity. Her characters are always in a search for the answer to the question "Who am I?"

Bernard, one of the six friends in The Waves, asks this question. To try to answer it he keeps a book of phrases that he hopes to one day make into a story. At the end of The Waves his book of phrases cannot give the recreation of the moments he wants and he laments:

> What is a phrase for the moon? And the phrase for love? By what name are we to call death? I need a little language such as lovers use, words of one syllable such as children speak when they come into the room and find their mother sewing. . . . I need a howl: a cry. (Waves, p. 295)

In the face of this realization he finds that his phrases are false and his book drops to the floor to be swept away by the charwoman. His phrases don't give "the moment whole" (AWD, 136). That is why they fail. It is this "moment whole" that Woolf is trying to give to her own writing.

Giving the moment whole is not easy, but Woolf arrived at this way of creating moments because she constantly strove to describe what she saw. Ralph Freedman found that the moment for an artist like Woolf was her "awareness of significant conjunctions between [her] private sensibility and appropriate

fact in the outer world."[8] This awareness for Woolf manifested itself in her making up of scenes. She asked herself once, "Are other people scene makers? . . . in all the writing I have done, I have almost always had to make a scene."[9] A memorable example of her ability to make a scene is Mrs. Ramsay's evening meal in To The Lighthouse. To create such scenes, or moments, the artist must be able to create the experience in himself. The vision must be compelling. Woolf noted that "whether you are writing a review or a love letter the great thing is to be confronted with a very vivid idea of your subject."[10] In writing, this is perhaps the first lesson.

Besides having a "vivid idea" of her subject, Woolf's mind had a resilience that enabled her constantly to take in impressions and to make associations. With this ability she also had the desire to convert that vision into words so that the reader could share the same vision and feeling. She also knew that this took practice, and her diary was one place where she did practice. It is "my belief," she wrote, "that the habit of writing thus for my own eye only is good practice. It loosens the ligaments" (AWD, 13). An example of this in practice--where she sees something and then tries to describe it--is the following:

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[8] The Lyrical Novel: Studies in Hermann Hesse, Andre Gide, and Virginia Woolf, p. 192.

[9] Moments of Being, p. 122.

[10] Collected Essays, IV, p. 42.

> The look of things has a great power over me. Even now, I have to watch the rooks beating up against the wind, which is high and still I say to myself instinctively "What's the phrase for that?" and try to make more vivid the roughness of the air current and the tremor of the rook's wing slicing as if the air were full of ridges and ripples and roughnesses. . . . But what a little I can get down into my pen of what is vivid to my eyes. . . . (AWD, p. 128)

What is evident here is a mind that is not only a trained observer, but a mind that keeps stretching to make written transcriptions of what the senses bring in. For the mind of an artist to be constantly able to stretch and make associations and to get at the work in him. The mind needs to be, as Woolf believed, "incandescent, like Shakespeare's mind. . . . There must be no obstacle in it, no foreign matter unconsumed."[11] There is to be no distraction. There must be a singular commitment to writing and to the vision. Woolf had both.

For Woolf two distinct yet interrelated processes of the mind seemed to be needed in the creative process: both the unconscious and the conscious mind need to be at work, often simultaneously. The need for the conscious action of the mind is evident from comments like the following in a letter to Janet Case: "The better a thing is expressed the more completely it is thought" (Letters, III, 201). As she was writing Woolf thought long, hard, and critically about her work; yet she was also able to write to John Lehmann that "in actually writing one's mind, as you know,

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[11] A Room of One's Own, p. 97.

gets into a trance, and the different images seem to come unconsciously. It is very interesting to me, though, to see how deliberate it looks to a critic" (Letters, V, 422). Here the unconscious is at work. It is one of the intangibles of the creative process, yet it is vital.

The images in Woolf draw the reader from one moment to the next. This process gives her writing a rich textural quality, and, as the critic David Daiches says: "It is the texture of Virginia Woolf's novels which holds the reader."[12] The textural quality, made up of images, and not the conventional tricks of plot and character holds and interests the reader.

The Analogy with Painting

In speaking of texture it is helpful to use painting, as an analogy, as another way of explaining Woolf's method. This analogy is invited by Woolf herself. Woolf's sister, Vanessa Bell, was an artist, and Roger Fry, known as the father of modern British painting, was a close friend. She speaks of her own writing by using the painting metaphor. Completing Orlando she wrote: ". . . the canvas is covered. Thre will be three months of close work needed . . . for I have scrambled and splashed and the canvas shows through in a thousand places" (AWD, 122). In "A Sketch of the Past," talking of her childhood, she describes how she would

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[12] Critics on Virginia Woolf, ed. by Jacqueline E. M. Latham, p. 13.

paint the scene if she were a painter: "I should make a picture of carved petals; of shells; of things that were semi-transparent."[13] Making things semi-transparent is also one of the things she does in her fiction. Her characters, for example, sometimes seem more dreamlike than real. This is true of Jacob's Room perhaps more than her other novels.

In her essay on the painter Walter Sickert, Woolf speaks directly about the relationship of the two arts saying that "painting and writing have much to tell each other; they have much in common."[14] They have much in common because both present a scene; the novelist and the painter want to make their audience see and, if possible, to see in a new way. In the same essay she goes on to declare that all of the great writers were great colorists as well. Sickert was greatly pleased with Woolf's discussion of him, but it is evident in the essay that Woolf is talking as much about writing as she is about Sickert's painting.

One of the best descriptions of what Woolf was trying to do as a novelist was given by Roger Fry; however, Roger Fry was not talking about Woolf but about the post-Impressionists. Woolf quotes the passage in her Roger Fry: A Biography (pp. 177-178):

> Now these artists . . . do not seek to give what can, after all, be but a pale reflex of actual appearance,

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[13] See Moments of Being, p. 66.

[14] Walter Sickert: A Conversation, p. 22.

> but to arouse the conviction of a new and definite reality. They do not seek to imitate form, but to create form, not to imitate life, but to find an equivalent for life. By that I mean that they wish to make images which by the clearness of their logical structure, and by their closely knit unity of texture, shall appeal to our disinterested and contemplative imagination with something of the same vividness as the things of actual life appeal to our practical activities.[15]

Lily Brisco is also this type of artist for she is doing on her canvases what Woolf is doing with her novel. When Lily Brisco states at the end that she has had her vision, Woolf has also had hers. The line completes the book as well as the painting. When Lily Brisco speaks of her painting, she is also speaking of the texture of Woolf's novel. One such passage is:

> Beautiful and bright it should be on the surface, feathery and evanescent, one colour melting into another like the colours on a butterfly's wing; but beneath the fabric must be clamped together with bolts of iron. (To the Lighthouse, p. 255)

This in itself is a good piece of descriptive writing, but it must be remembered that it is only an analogy of what Woolf was trying to do with words in making up her scenes. Trying to write in this unconventional manner and still get at her vision was not easy. Woolf found the task particularly difficult.

The Difficulty of the Task

Writing, for Woolf, was an intensely personal and private labor. She wrote to please herself (AWD, 59). When the writing was coming easy and the vision was strong,

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[15]Rosenthal suggests this point. See pp. 39-40.

shaping itself easily on the page, writing was for Woolf the "happiest feeling in the world" (AWD, 68). This "happiest feeling" was often a long time in coming. This is because Woolf had a number of barriers to overcome. These barriers included: the mental strain brought on by trying to frame her vision into words, her susceptibility to environment, the fact that she was a woman, and her vulnerability to mental illness.

In a letter to her friend, Vita Sackville-West, she wrote that in beginning a novel one feels as if one cannot really write it, but that you see it as if it "exists on the far side of a gulf, which words can't cross: that its to be pulled through only in a breathless anguish . . ." (Letters, Vol. III, 529). This pulling through had both emotions of ecstasy and agony. Woolf sometimes asked herself why she wrote at all, but then as she wrote in a letter to Edward Sackville-West (Letters, Vol. III, 511) when the book is done one forgets the grind, the misery, and the drudgery and one starts in again on a new novel and it all seems a delight again. Woolf found that often the creative juice "bubbles pleasantly at first" (AWD, 24), but then it becomes difficult as one struggles to pull it across the gulf, vision and craft intact. Sometimes the pressure was so great that she stated: "Few people can be so tortured by writing as I am" (AWD, 260). This particular sentiment was expressed at the end of writing

The Years, which Woolf found perhaps the most difficult of all her books to write. It is clear from her diary, however, that all her serious novels worked a tremendous strain on her, a strain brought on by the constant taxing of the imagination.

To write, to see similarities, and to make metaphors Woolf needed a freedom of mind that would allow for movement back and forth between the conscious and the subconscious. She would sometimes keep an idea for a book in mind for months without writing much down. She would want a certain "pressure" to be built up. This was true of The Waves. In late December of 1928 she wrote in reference to what would be The Waves, "As for my next book, I am going to hold myself from writing till I have it impending in me: grown heavy in my mind like a ripe pear; pendant, gravid, asking to be cut or it will fall" (AWD, 136). She did wait. It was not until some seven months later that she did begin to write. Even then the "pear" did not simply drop into her lap. She struggled with The Waves almost all the way through. Sometimes after long contemplation of an idea for a book the whole form would come suddenly. She made up To The Lighthouse "one day walking round Tavistock Square . . . in a great, apparently involuntary rush."[16]

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[16]See Moments of Being, p. 81. From 1924 to 1939, 52 Tavistock Squre was the Woolf's London home. Jacob's Room is also described as coming quickly, but in one place she says she made it up on her walks (AWD, 27) and in another she says that she made it up looking at the fire at Hogarth House (AWD, 105). Both are probably correct.

It seems from what Woolf has indicated that an idea would simmer for some time and then suddenly the vision with some sort of structuring form would break through on her conscious thinking. It is then that the laborious task of getting it down on paper would begin. The "apparently involuntary rush" that brought To The Lighthouse was some time in preparation. In the same passage she speaks of the book coming suddenly, she also writes that the memory of her mother had "obsessed" her for some thirty-five years and that this obsession ceased only after she had written To The Lighthouse.

Pulling her book across the gulf was a delicate task and her creative process demanded certain conditions. Although her writing room was usually a mess, she needed it as a place where she could concentrate and be isolated from the mundane concerns and petty worries of day-to-day living. Woolf was freed from most of the concerns of running a house because the Woolfs had domestic help. It was not that Woolf could not be domestic, but she needed time for solitude. She needed time for her "dreamlike rumination" so that an idea for a book could form. Moving would break the rhythm of her writing and she would always need time to adjust to a new room. After moving to Rodmell in 1930, she found that she could not write "naturally in my new room. . . . Everything must be absolutely what I am used to" (AWD, 149).

Although Woolf enjoyed people and society tremendously, they became a hindrance at times when she wanted to get something done. In a letter to Ethel Smyth she wrote that what she needed in order to write was silence. She went on to say that that day she had seen nobody and with no one around the flame of her book had begun to draw. Commenting on this she concluded that "writing is so damnably susceptible to atmosphere" (Letters, IV, 159).

Part of this atmosphere was where she was living. Sometimes she needed the country setting of Monk's house in Rodmell and sometimes she needed the stimulus of London. At times she would write that to write a novel "in the heart of London is next to an impossibility." This was because she felt as if she were trying to "nail a flag to the top of a mast in a raging gale" (Letters, III, 244). There were other occasions, however, when she needed that kind of stimulus for her writing, and she would love to walk the streets of London.[17] It all depended on what sort of stimulus she needed to keep the flame of her book flickering.

Besides being faced with the difficulties presented by her environment and her struggle to give her "moments whole," Woolf was faced with two other major difficulties. The first was the fact of her sex, and the second was her often precarious state of health.

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[17] See A Writer's Diary, p. 61 and Letters, IV, p. 200.

The difficulties that a woman novelist has are clearly and brilliantly given in her A Room of One's Own. For a woman to write she needs to be freed from financial dependence and from the demands of motherhood and domestic servitude.[18] A woman who wants to be a writer needs a chance at an education. In A Room of One's Own Woolf contrasts the fine, wealthy men's college with the bare survival conditions at a college for women. A woman writer needs a room of her own--a place that she can call her own--and the time to use it. To have time one must have some sort of financial independence. It is for this reason, Woolf says, that art has almost always been a product of the upper classes. If a woman is lucky enough to have these basic conditions met, she still faces the problems of trying to write without hate or bitterness and without falling into the trap of trying to write like a man. The woman writer, even in the face of ridicule from a male-dominated world, must still write with an integrity and a fidelity to her own emotions and her own vision. Woolf admits that the chances of all this happening in one person are small. Thus, she has great admiration for writers like the Brontës, Jane Austen, and George Eliot.

More than this, however, Woolf concludes that a truly great mind, male or female, needs to be androgynous. She

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[18]Virginia Woolf liked children and it was only because of her health that the Woolfs decided against having children. See pages 7-8 of Bell's biography, Volume Two.

defines what she means by an androgynous mind by saying that it is a mind that is "resonant and porous; that . . . transmits emotion without impediment; that . . . is naturally creative, incandescent and undivided" (Room of One's Own, 97). Having money, an education, and a room of one's own thus help, but do not guarantee a great work of art. When Woolf wrote, men had these advantages readily available to them; women did not. This irked Woolf and it led her to wonder how many potentially great artists were never able to produce simply because of their sex.

The exact nature of her illness was never accurately determined. It was known that it was some sort of mental illness that began with a severe headache and then plunged her into deep depression and then insanity. She had her first attack the summer after her mother's death. In 1904 she had her second major breakdown, and soon after The Voyage Out was accepted for publication (and not too long after her marriage) she had her third major attack. It took her almost two years to recover from the attack and from then on the Woolfs were never completely free from the threat of mental illness, although she did not have such a serious attack again. During her recovery when she was again able to get at her writing, Leonard Woolf thought that it would be a good thing if she did some manual work so as to rest her mind. This led to the setting up of a press. At first it was just for therapy, but the press

caught on and became the Hogarth Press. Woolf's work, from Jacob's Room on, was all published by Hogarth. Woolf, to her great relief, was freed from having to submit her work to an editor. Leonard Woolf was always the first to read her work, and she greatly respected his judgment.

It has become convenient to think that Woolf was most susceptible to illness just after she completed a book. The dates of when she fell ill do not really bear this out as is indicated in the introduction to volume II of her letters. It was only after her last book Between the Acts, that she felt her mind was going. This is not to say that when she completed a book it was not a critical time. Leonard would watch her very carefully and at the first sign of a headache would make her rest. Because Leonard watched her so carefully he knew just how taxing the creative process was for her. He wrote that

> whenever Virginia was actually writing a novel--or rather the first draft of a novel . . . the tension was great and unremitting; it was emotionally volcanic; the conscious mind, though intent, seemed to follow a hair's breath behind the voice, or the "thought," which, because it naturally produced mental exhaustion, made her writing a perpetual menace to her mental stability. (Downhill, p. 54)

Ironically, writing was also the way Woolf was able to keep a grip on reality. Knowing this danger and living with it is perhaps one reason there is such a concern in her work for "getting at reality" and "getting at life." It must not be concluded that Woolf, even though she did make some suicide attempts and eventually succeeded, was

morbid and depressing to be around. Rather, the contrary is true. She loved life and enjoyed being with people. It was only her fear that she no longer would be able to live rationally, and that she would become a burden to those she loved that led her to take her own life.

Woolf's illness, ironically, had another positive effect, besides the creation of the press. It did have a worthwhile effect on her creative process. When Woolf came out of a period of illness, while she had little to do and could not yet resume her writing, her ever active mind would wander and make associations. She explained this in two letters to Ethel Smyth. In one she says that this is the time when she finds most of the things she writes about (Letters, IV, 180). In the second letter a few months later she continues by saying that when she is lying in bed after being ill she makes up poems and stories in her head "and thus sketched," she says, "all that I know, by the light of reason, try to put into prose" (Letters, IV, 231). Thus the periods of recovery became a fertile bed for the imagination. This also illustrates just how much writing was part and parcel of her existence. She was even able to treat the subject of being ill with humor in her essay, "On Being Ill."

Her Marriage

Fortunately Virginia married the right person. Leonard Woolf helped her meet and overcome many of the difficulties

she faced as a writer. Virginia found in Leonard a man of independent mind who was able to understand and love her. He was never jealous of her gifted imagination. He was able to nurture her genius, shield her personally, watch carefully her fluctuating health, and with the right understanding was able to leave her alone in her writing room, yet he was always available when needed in an adjoining room. Virginia responded with a strong, steadfast love of her own. In 1922 she told Jacques Raverat that she could not have married anyone else.[19] This is true. The combination of two independent minds worked well for both of them.

In a letter to Leonard she wrote,

> Precious mongoose . . . I lie and think of my precious beast, who does make me more happy every day and instant of my life than I thought it possible to be. There's no doubt I'm terribly in love with you. (Letters, II, p. 90)

This sort of sentiment with the private pet names was characteristic of her letters to Leonard throughout her life. They were seldom apart, but on one occasion she went for a week's holiday to Burgundy with Vita Sackville-West. She wrote to him every day; she sent him a telegram because she had not heard from him in four days, and she wrote that she put in a request for an hour of "antelope kissing" the moment she returned (Letters, III, 535).

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[19] See Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann's introduction to volume II of Letters, p. xiii.

Leonard Woolf is sometimes thought to have done little more than protect a fragile woman writer. This notion is simply not true. Leonard Woolf did what he wanted to do in life, and his own accomplishments in social and political fields are impressive. It was very seldom that he had to sacrifice his own desires to care for Virginia.

On March 28, 1941, Virginia Woolf wrote her last letter to Leonard: "Dearest, I feel certain I am going mad again. I feel we can't go through another of those terrible times. And I shan't recover this time. . . . You have given me the greatest possible happiness. . . ."[20] She then went down to the river and drowned herself. The threat of madness was the greatest obstacle that Woolf had to overcome in order to create. If it had not been for the healthy love relationship she had with Leonard Woolf, she may well have succumbed to her illness and committed suicide much sooner.

The Novels Before The Waves

The Waves was written at the height of Woolf's creative powers and as such it is necessary to take a brief look at the novels that came before for themes and ideas that emerge as part of the fabric of The Waves. It must not be thought that all her previous novels are somehow incomplete, that she finally found her vision in the triumph of The Waves. It is true that the first three are in some ways

[20]Quoted by Bell, II, p. 226.

inadequate, but all her novels have similar themes, yet they are all very different. They differ in that each takes a new approach in getting down her vision and the novels are all complete in themselves. They each have their own form.

It has been popular to disregard Woolf's first two novels, The Voyage Out and Night and Day, and begin a discussion of her with Jacob's Room or her short, experimental pieces. Her first two novels are important not only because they helped her learn her craft, but also because she needed to try conventional methods of novel writing in order to find their limitations in conveying her vision. In finding conventional methods limiting, Woolf was stimulated to find new forms.

The Voyage Out and Night and Day have other values of interest to the creative process. In The Voyage Out the Dalloways appear and Woolf was sufficiently interested in them to bring them back, in a modified form, in Mrs. Dalloway. Helen and Terrence in The Voyage Out begin asking questions about their identity that almost all of Woolf's subsequent characters ask. Terrence is also the first of the artists that Woolf has in her fiction. In this case Terrence is a struggling young writer, not unlike Woolf herself. In this first novel, Woolf also begins her bubble metaphor that reappears in much of her fiction. A bubble, or a globe, in her fiction represents different

things, but it usually has something to do with a person feeling isolated, rounded off, closed from others, and yet still part of society. The world in Woolf's fiction is a fragmented and difficult place. There is very little certainty outside of one's self, if one can ever come to a point where one knows who one is. This theme of alienation, yet still feeling a part of society and feeling the terrible difficulty of significant human relationships begins in The Voyage Out, runs through all her novels, and is perhaps most fully developed in Between The Acts. Night and Day deals specifically with the entangled relationships of four main characters. Woolf felt that Night and Day was a more mature and finished work that The Voyage Out (AWD, 10). It received high praise from critics and friends as her first novel had, but with the advantage of the perspective of her later novels her first two novels do not come off as well.

Jacob's Room was her bold attempt at her new method. One follows the course of Jacob's life through a series of moments, each unimportant in itself, but when put together, a life emerges. The image is hazy, however, and the scenes are choppy. Here Woolf explores the technique of interior monologue that works so well in The Waves, written some fourteen years later. The moments that Woolf gives us are each in themselves well-crafted. One of the problems with Jacob's Room is that these individual moments

do not flow well one into another. Jacob's Room did show that she could do something sustained that she had been able to do in her story "An Unwritten Novel" (See AWD, 22). In October of 1922 Jacob's Room came out. Reflecting on the reaction to it she writes, "I expect I could have screwed Jacob up tighter, if I had foreseen; but I had to make my path as I went" (AWD, 53). This is exactly what she did by pressing on with Mrs. Dalloway. By the time she came to The Waves she wrote, "Never have I screwed my brain so tight over a book" (AWD, 162-163). By then she knew her path. E. M. Forster, who Woolf thought was perhaps the only one (besides Leonard) who really understood what she was doing (Letters, III, 189), wrote that Jacob's Room, although uneven "represents her great departure. . . . It leads on to her genius in its fulness" (Virginia Woolf, 14). This is perhaps the true significance of Jacob's Room.

Mrs. Dalloway introduces the strict limitations of time that would be a part of a number of novels. In Dalloway there is the external time of moments backed up by the past. In this novel Woolf's moments achieve the richness of meaning that is the mark of her mature work. In Mrs. Dalloway one becomes involved in the destinies of two people who never meet--Mrs. Dalloway the perfect London hostess, and Septimus who goes mad and commits suicide. In Mrs. Dalloway one moves easily from the consciousness of one

character to the next. The result is a tightly structured book full of subtle ironies. The ironies emphasize both the essential isolation of the human experience and yet the unity of humanity as Clarrisa and Septimus become doubles of each other without ever meeting.[21] This theme of individual isolation and the need for unity is one of the themes that is carried throughout The Waves.

Woolf complicates further the use of time in To The Lighthouse. In Lighthouse there is the "Time Passes" section that separates the afternoon and morning of a day by the passage of night and ten years. This section is of importance to The Waves not only because The Waves complicates time further, but because it served as a prototype for the descriptive, lyrical interludes of The Waves. There are almost no people in this section; Woolf had to give to an empty house the effect of the passage of time. Working on this section Woolf asked herself, "Is it nonsense, is it brilliance?" (AWD, 87). Writing like this was new for her, because she was dealing exclusively with external reality. As it turned out, it was brilliant as this passage shows:

> Night after night, summer and winter, the torment of storms, the arrow-like stillness of fine weather, held their court without interference. Listening (had there been any one to listen) from the upper rooms of the empty house only gigantic chaos streaked with lightning could have been heard tumbling and tossing, as the wind and waves disported themselves like amorphous bulks of leviathans whose brows are pierced by no light of reason. . . . (To The Lighthouse, p. 202)

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[21] Rosenthal, pp. 87-102.

This type of description of time acting on the physical environment is similar to the description Woolf later used in the interludes of The Waves. With this experience behind her and the relaxation of mind that Orlando brought, Woolf was ready for and fascinated with the form and idea of The Waves, first referred to as The Moths.

Woolf was a prolific writer because writing and living were, for her, the same act. As such she worked relentlessly to perfect her craft as her vision presented her with new challenges of form. By articulating her vision with her craft, Woolf constantly sought to present moments of being that explore the elusive, yet vital, meaning of the relationships between the reality of the mind and the reality of the external world. One can find this type of effort paralleled in the work of the post-Impressionists. Woolf enjoyed the task of writing; however, it was taxing, all the more so because Woolf was a woman and because she had to battle mental illness. Fortunately for Woolf, she married the right person. Because of the strength Leonard provided, she was able to hold on to sanity and to write the novels that gave her the experience she needed so that The Waves could be written.

Four

The idea has come to me that what I want now to do is to saturate every atom. I mean to eliminate all waste, deadness, superfluity: to give the moment whole; whatever it includes. Say that the moment is a combination of thought; sensation; the voice of the sea. Waste, deadness, come from the inclusion of things that don't belong to the moment' this appalling narrative business of the realist: getting on from lunch to dinner: it is false, unreal, merely conventional. . . . The poets succeeding by simplifying: practically everything is left out. I want to put practically everything in: yet to saturate.

Virginia Woolf
A Writer's Diary
November 28, 1928

The focus of this chapter is to illustrate in the writing of The Waves Woolf's creative process in action.

The Writing of *The Waves*

The concerns Woolf expresses in her diary and letters about her creative process surface only thinly disguised in *The Waves*. On September 30, 1926, while finishing *To The Lighthouse* and being in a state of solicitude, she had something of a mystical experience. Trying to describe it she writes, "One sees a fin passing far out. What image can I reach to convey what I mean?" (*AWD*, 100). In the same entry she believes that this may be an impulse behind another book. She concludes the entry by stating, "I want to see how the idea at first acurs [*sic*]. I want to trace my own process."[1] The fin becomes a symbol of her vision and the impulse eventually becomes *The Waves*. The day she finished the first draft of *The Waves* (April 29, 1930), she referred to this experience and concluded that her work is "a reach after that vision I had . . . at Rodmell, after finishing the *Lighthouse*" (*AWD*, 155). The image of the fin surfaces in *The Waves*.

The fin becomes the symbol of a vision for Bernard, who is also a writer. Bernard says:

> Leaning over this parapet I see far out a waste of water. A fin turns. This visual impression is unattached to any line of reason. . . . Visual impressions often communicate thus briefly statements that we shall in time come to uncover and coax into words. I note under F., therefore, "Fin in a waste of waters." (*The Waves* p. 189).

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[1]For a look at the way Woolf does trace her own process see Appendix A.

This might well be, except for the reference to Bernard's notebook, a note made by Woolf in her diary. Her work on The Waves was, for the most part, a struggle to coax into words a visual experience, or vision. This struggle of getting what is in the imagination to the page is a struggle all writers face.

Near the end of his final "summing up" episode Bernard uses the fin image again. Bernard wants a vision, but finds that "Now there is nothing. No fin breaks the waste of this immeasurable sea." He is old, all his friends have died, and with no vision he finds that "Life has destroyed me" (Waves, 284). He finds that in his notebook he has not recorded any visions, but "merely changes; a shadow" (Waves, 285). This illustrates the importance of a vision for a creative artist. A vision is absolutely necessary as a reason for living and as a reason for creating. Bernard, in the end, makes a final, valiant effort to conquer his despair; consequently, he receives a vision:

> But there is a kindling in the sky whether of lamplight or of dawn. There is a stir of some sort. . . . There is a sense of the break of day. I will not call it dawn. . . . Yes, this is the eternal renewal, the incessant rise and fall and fall and rise again.
>
> And in me too the wave rises. It swells; it arches its back. I am aware once more of a new desire . . . (Waves, pp. 296-297)

With a few more lines Woolf concludes her vision and when she wrote these last lines at the end of draft two she experienced emotions similar to Bernard's. She writes: "I have been sitting these 15 minutes in a state of glory, and calm, and some tears, thinking of Thoby. . . ." (AWD, 165).

Other similarities between Bernard's and Woolf's creative process exist. Like Woolf, Bernard finds that he must "make phrases." He does so for the same reason Woolf does, to explain moments of being. Bernard states, "I must make phrases . . . and so interpose something hard between myself and the stare of housemaids . . ." (The Waves, 30). Like Woolf he loves images (The Waves, 38). As a writer he is susceptible also to his physical environment (The Waves, 77). But one aspect of the creative process that Woolf possesses and Bernard does not is the critical ability to know what to do with a vision once it comes. The Waves, as a mature example of Woolf's imaginative ability, is as much a result of deliberate, critical thinking as it is a result of a vision, a fin seen on a waste of waters.

Background to and the Writing of The Waves

In 1927 Woolf wrote an essay entitled "The Narrow Bridge of Art" where she speaks of the inability of poetry as a genre to deal with the complexities, ironies, and the fragmentation of the modern world. It is not that poetry has not been written, but what is written is too personal and limited. Woolf goes on to say that since poetry no longer speaks with the commanding authority it once had, perhaps prose is taking over some of the functions that once belonged to poetry. She felt that perhaps now the task of prose is to interpret the world for us. Woolf then describes some of the features of this new prose. These new novels will be:

> written in prose, but in prose which has the characteristics of poetry. It will have something of the exaltation of poetry, but much of the ordinariness of prose. It will be dramatic, and yet not a play. . . . it will differ from the novel as we know it now chiefly in that it will stand further back from life. It will give, as poetry does, the outline rather than the detail. . . . It will tell us very little about the houses, incomes, occupations of its characters . . . it will express the feeling and ideas of the characters closely and vividly, but from a different angle. (Essays, vol. II, pp. 224-225)

This prophecy of the future novel was not far from being fulfilled by Woolf herself in the publication of The Waves in 1931.

It was the type of thinking described in "The Narrow Bridge of Art" that eventually gave rise to the form Woolf was seeking for The Waves, but the actual idea that would give substance to the form was inadvertantly suggested by Vanessa Bell in a letter to Woolf. Writing from Cassis she told Woolf about some very large beautiful moths that were hitting against the window and how they proceeded to catch one.[2] In her reply (8 May 1927) Woolf wrote that she was so fascinated by the story of the moth that she was going to write a story about it (Letters, IV, 372).

This story and the ideas of what a poetical novel should be set her creative process in motion, yet it was not until July of 1929 that she actually began writing. The ideas had to hover in the back of her brain for some time and as the vision formed the idea of the moths gave way to that of the waves.

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[2]See Bell's biography, Vol. II, p. 126.

As a product of sustained creative effort The Waves is amazing. It is even more amazing when one realizes that Woolf sustained her creative effort for a period of two years, July to July, 1929-1931. Woolf wrote out The Waves twice in longhand, typed three times, making revisions before having it professionally typed for the fourth time. Even after this typing she made some changes (See Letters, IV, 352, 257). Her method of writing The Waves was a little different from for her other books. With most of her other books she just wrote out one longhand draft and then did her revising at the typewriter. With The Waves, however, she did most her revisions in her handwritten draft.[3] Thus, in the handwritten drafts a single scene, or passage may be revised a number of times. This is especially true of draft one. In fact, after writing some fifty-nine pages of draft one, she stopped and started all over again. Naturally, some changes were made by Woolf as she typed her various drafts. Leonard Woolf indicates, however, that writing and typing were two different operations of her mind. While she was typing, her conscious, critical mind was at work and there was not the tension that was there during the act of creation. Leonard Woolf could tell just by looking at her what type of writing she was doing (Downhill, 54n). It is not surprising that the effort of creating The Waves spun her brain into a tight knot (AWD, 167).

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[3]L. Woolf, Downhill, p. 52. See also Graham's introduction, pp. 29-30.

While writing The Waves, Woolf had two major distractions. Illness (not just mental illness) plagued her as she tried to write. With an illness, no matter what sort, Woolf was unable to write at all. The other distraction came in the form of the formidable Ethel Smyth. Ethel Smyth was a phenomenon. She was a composer and she championed her music vehemently. She was egotistical, impetuous, totally engaging, and at seventy-one fell in love with Virginia Woolf. Woolf described it as being "caught by a giant crab," yet she was ingrigued and fascinated.[4] Woolf, however, was able to write The Waves in spite of Ethel Smyth and her periods of illness actually gave her brain a chance to rest.

When one looks at the diary entries that are related to the writing of The Waves, an interesting cycle emerges.[5] The entries start by her speaking of the slow struggle of writing and that she is plagued with uncertainty. In the November 2, 1929, entry she writes that she "can't get at it, squarely." This feeling lasts throughout the end of the year. Then in the January 12, 1930, entry there is a sudden change and it now seems that she can't write fast enough. The creative power is at full force. This period of intense activity does not last long. On February 16,

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[4]The quote is from the introduction to volume IV of Letters where there is an interesting summary given of their relationship; see pp. xv-xix.

[5]See Appendix A for a chronology of the writing of The Waves.

she writes that she is ill, an illness brought on by a sensory overload. She records that "something happens in my mind. It refuses to go on registering impressions. It shuts itself up. It becomes chrysalis. I lie quite turpid, often with acute physical pain" (AWD, 150). In the same entry she says that although she can not write there is still some benefit. If she had another fortnight in bed she would be able to see the whole of The Waves in her mind. After this the writing of the book again becomes slow and difficult. It slowly picks up and by April 29, the first draft of The Waves is completed. On June 13 she begins draft two and by August things are going well and The Waves seems to be resolving itself into "dramatic soliloquies" (AWD, 156). By January of 1931 she feels the pressure and is only able to write for a little more than an hour each morning, but on February 7 she has draft two completed and the difficult task of revising begins. It is only on July 18, after correcting typescript number four, that she gives it to Leonard to read. At the end the doubts returned. Even after it was published she wrote to John Lehmann that "At present it seems to me a complete failure" (Letters, IV, 377).

The writing of The Waves was for Woolf, by her own admission, the most difficult task she had ever undertaken, yet as she says in the August 20, 1930 diary entry, it was also her "greatest opportunity." Her task does pay off and

she does succeed in making the "good phrases shine. One wave after another" (AWD, 156).

The Structuring of The Waves

The characters' monologues in The Waves are always introduced by "said" ("Bernard said," "Louis said," "Susan said"). This becomes a ritual that gives the illusion of speech, but there is not speech, no exchange of dialogue. Everything is in the present tense and they "speak" with active verbs in the indicative mood--"I sit," "I go," "I life," "I knead." This action is described, but as with speech there is no action. The monologues are also not just the speech of the subconscious, or the thoughts of the mind. The speeches are too formalized and controlled. What becomes apparent then is that there seems to be a single narrator that is common to all and speaks in the minds of each character in turn. It is clear that the six friends are all individuals with different desires, feelings and perspectives, but they all "speak" with the same sentence patterns and they have a common way of using images. In a sense then the characters are all one. As Bernard says at the end of his life, "I am not one person; I am many people; I do not altogether know who I am--Jinny, Susan, Neville, Rhoda, or Louis: or how to distinguish my life from theirs" (Waves, 276).

Woolf intended this. In a letter to G. L. Dickinson soon after Waves came out she wrote, "The six characters were supposed to be one. I'm getting old myself . . . and

I come to feel more and more how difficult it is to collect oneself into one Virginia . . ." (Letters, IV, 397). Woolf has thus used language itself to help carry the theme of the irony of personal isolation within a group. What makes up their unit is their friendship. They know that their lives and that their friendship has meaning, but what that meaning is they are never certain. Realizing this one wishes that they would speak to each other, but then one would have a very different novel.

In The Waves the story of the lives of six friends is told, but it is not a conventional narrative. One knows for example, that Louis is a businessman, but this sort of narrative fact is almost incidental. What one has rather, is their feelings about themselves and the world around them. The world outside the mind is important in The Waves in that it constitutes the outer reality and in order for a particular moment to be whole there needs to be a fusion of both the inner and outer realities. Woven in with the story of the character's lives are parallel cycles of events in the natural world. Starting with childhood and moving to death there are the parallel movements, in the interludes, that go from dawn to dusk, spring through winter, and there is also a suggestion of a movement from early history to the decline of civilization. In the interludes the waves move with the tide's ebb and flow. The movement of the waves is something of a paradox in the book, as well as

in life, in that while there is constant change and motion life goes on much the same as it always has. After one wave has built, crashed, and spent itself on the shore, there is always another right behind.

In the alternation of interludes and episodes, which in itself is a wave-like structure, one has in the interludes a description of events in the physical world that parallels what happens in the following episode in the lives of the friends. The fifth interlude, for example, comes just before the episode where the friends learn of Percival's death. In that interlude one is told that the sun is harsh giving "to everything its exact measure of colour" (The Waves, 148f). Through the window in the house "sharp-edged wedges of light lay upon the window-sill" (p. 150) and behind the cabinets and bookcases there hangs a "zone of shadow in which might be a further shape to be disencumbered of shadow or still denser depths of darkness" (p. 150). Of the waves we learn that "one after another they massed themselves and fell" (p. 150). They are described as being "great horses" that "fell; withdrew and fell again, like the thud of a great beast stamping" (p. 150). With such images of light and waves we are set up for what happens in the following episode. And what follows is the death of Percival. Right after the lines about the waves falling Neville begins the episode by saying, "He is dead. . . . He fell. His horse tripped. He was thrown" (See The Waves, p. 151).

The moment that follows, the moment of the perception and reaction to Percival's death in the lives of the friends, is made up of a number of elements. There are past memories, "remember how he scratched his head" (Waves, 158); actions of the present, "The butcher delivers meat next door (Waves, 153); feelings, "such is the complexity of things. . . . My son is born; Percival is dead. I am upheld by pillars, shored up on either side by stark emotions; but which is sorrow, which is joy?" (Waves, 153); questionings of the mind, "Why meet and resume?" (Waves, 152), "Why hurry? Why catch the trains?" (Waves, 155); imaginings of the event, "He lies on a camp-bed, bandaged, in some hot Indian hospital. . . ." (Waves, 153); actions of the present, "I sob, I sob" (Waves, 152), "I will walk. I will go up these steps. . . ." (Waves, 155); and perceived actions of the future, "We will gallop together over desert hills . . ." (Waves, 164). All of these work together to constitute the "moment whole; whatever it includes" (AWD, 136).

In the speeches there are often allusions or references to what has taken place in the preceding interlude. Bernard states, "I am now at the zenith of an experience" (Waves, 155), and one remembers that the sun is also at its Zenith as described in the preceding interlude. In speaking of his thoughts he says, "the idea breaks. . . . Ideas break a thousand times. . . . They break; they fall over me" (Waves, 157-158), and one remembers the action of the waves.

Thus, the moments that make up The Waves, have complex interrelationships. But Woolf's prose flows easily and one moves comfortably from the speech of one character to the next. Woolf uses a number of ways to make the transition from one character to the next. For example one of the characters will begin his speech with the same words and subject that the previous speaker ended with. Neville at one point speaks of the summer holidays. He ends his monologue with the line, "It is the first day of the summer holidays." The next speaker, Susan, starts with the same line, "'It is the first day of the summer holidays,' said Susan" (Waves, 61). Another transition technique is where one character will be speaking about another and then that character will speak. (See Waves, p. 49, for one example.) The transitions might also be effected simply because the characters are all feeling the same thing. In episode five they are all experiencing grief over Percival's death. In episode seven they are all confronted with the fact that they are aging.

Of all the difficulties Woolf had in writing The Waves her most difficult problem was getting the interludes the way she wanted them. Working through the minds of six characters she felt that she needed to set them against something. She needed both the internal reality of the mind and the external physical reality. In order to get at both she faced two problems. The first was to avoid

falling into the trap of the "appalling narrative business of the realist" (AWD, 136), which she felt was too often contrived and conventional. The second was to get down in words on a page a way by which the two realities would complement each other, since both are present in the composition of a moment. She writes:

> I am convinced that I am right to seek for a station whence I can set my people against time and sea--but Lord, the difficulty of digging oneself in there, with conviction. (AWD, p. 146)

A short passage from draft one illustrates this concern.[6]

This then was ~~the garden~~; ~~that~~ ~~this was~~ what the figure brooding at the table if ~~there~~ it had ~~been~~ h ~~conscious could have~~ heard ~~or seen~~ would have heard - the sea washing over the pebbles, turning them this way & that way; the regular stamp of/ the sea;

the incoming & outgoing

& then, if its eyes had opened & it had watched the light striking in the room, it would ( ) there, . . .

Here one can see something of the struggle. One has here a person, the sea (with the marginal note dealing with the

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[6]Quotes from the drafts have been taken from J. W. Graham's meticulously transcribed and edited edition of the two handwritten drafts of The Waves. Virginia Woolf's handwriting is not always easy to read, thus in the selections chosen where there is the following: ( ), this indicates a word in the manuscript that Mr. Graham could not decipher. Where there is: (---), this indicates that the undecipherable word was crossed out by Virginia Woolf. Where there is, for example" (ice?), the question mark indicates that Mr. Graham was not certain that ice was the correct word. The quotes have been typed the way they are so as to represent Woolf's actual manuscript line.

rhythm of the sea), and light. Light comes more and more to serve as an indicator of the passage of time. Shadows, and the movement of light across a wall or a table become important images. Light links the interludes together. All the interludes (except the last which is just one line) begin with a statement that tells of the passage of the sun. This statement is also directly related to the age of the characters in the upcoming episode.

The Ordering of Images

In draft one the interludes are not clearly differentiated or as yet clearly associated with specific episodes. This is one of the main developments of draft two. The struggle in draft one was essentially to get down the images. Passages of what was developed into interludes are interspersed with passages that were developed into episodes as Woolf struggled to get down in words the nature of the two realities.

Interlude seven is an interesting one to study. This interlude, when it appears finally in the text, precedes the episode that deals with middle age. What follows is the beginning of that interlude after its fourth revision in draft one.

> The stubble was full of sharp flashing pointed. now that the sun had gone very slightly behind the hill. The cows horns were sharp crescents; the slant of a roof was ~~sharp now~~; like that of some arab tent in a desert, the slates black,/ & the

line clear cut against the haze and suffusion of the (---)
clouds. ~~A dog turn running & barking might~~
A shepherd might be coal black, & then, turning (---)
~~to red & suddenly &~~ red faced, with ~~a white jacket~~
& (---) ~~trousers~~. clothes steeped in whiteness.
~~Water~~ ~~The riv~~ Running gold in midstream, the river
became black as a pit beneath the bank.
Drawing ripples of gold in the air, suddenly birds vanished/
as into
nothingness.

The setting here is a pastoral one. There is also a diversity of images: "hill," "cows horns," "arab tent," "slates black," "dog barking," "shepherd," "clothes," "river," and "birds" being the main ones. This diversity is indicative of the workings of a mind searching to find the exact, or the right set of images. There is here no clear direction of where Woolf wants to go. She knew, however, that she had something. The problem was to get at it. And the way to get at it was to get the images down and then go back and work out the patterns and rhythms.

In draft two the interlude undergoes a radical change.

The waves ~~re~~ swept over the beach. I
of the colour mussles, violet black; they raced in,
splashed into coves, where ~~only~~ the roots of seaweed lay dry,
& receded, further; & left the line of old straw &
small black corks higher. filling the caves with
hoarse clamour; & tossing a wet drop onto ledges

erratically. Now ~~the sun~~ burnt through
islands of cloud; ~~purple~~ & ~~yellow~~ yellow vapours;
& therefore fell obscurely, in whirls had advanced
in curious cohorts, swimming directly, as if the on purpose
& had lost
unclouded blaze of majesty, proved wearisome,
the fiery
redness, The rocks had shadows, & the trembling sea holly. &
the hills, blowing like blue cloth across the sea.

Here the pastoral setting has been dropped along with almost everything else. The beginning of the interlude now deals with waves. This interlude has also now been placed before episode seven. One will notice that the waves here have lots of energy. The tide is also high. Both these concepts are not compatible with the idea of middle age. The sun, however, "had lost the fiery redness." This image is compatible with the following episode, but not compatible with the action of the waves. Although all the main images that are to appear in the text are present here, the relationships of the images within the interlude and then with the following episode still remain to be worked out. The images here are more developed than in draft one. There has been a centering on the two dominant images of the sea and the sun. Images like "some arab tent in a desert" have been found to be irrelevant and thus have been cut out.

In the beginning of this interlude, as it appears in the text, there is not quite such a radical change as

it may appear at first glance:

> The sun had now sunk lower in the sky. The islands of cloud had gained in density and drew themselves across the sun so that the rocks went suddenly black, and the trembling sea holly lost its blue and turned silver, and shadows were blown like grey cloths over the sea. The waves no longer visited the further pools or reached the dotted black line which lay irregularly marked upon the beach. The sand was pearl white, smoothed and shining.
>
> Birds swooped and circled high up in the air. (Waves, p. 182)

The main change here is a shift in the order of the two main images. The sun becomes the dominant image and the sea the secondary image in this first paragraph. Both sets of images now work together. It is low tide and the sun is low in the sky. The image of the sun also links this interlude with the others. The images have been further condensed and sharpened and we now have a clear, sharp, consistent picture of the scene. Notice the colors, for example. There is no "fiery redness," but "white," "silver," "grey," "black," and the sea holly has "lost its blue." These are the colors of middle age. Thus one is subtly, almost unconsciously prepared for episode seven. It is by such use of concrete images that Woolf creates moments both vivid and visual.

Later on in the interlude just examined, one has further images that continue the suggestion of age. There is an image of a bird sitting "solitary on a white stake." In the garden some petals "had fallen" and a dead leaf had been "blown," "running . . . now pausing, against some stalk." Then there is Bernard's opening remark in the episode, "'And time . . . lets fall its drop. The drop that has formed on the roof of the soul falls.'" (Waves, 184).

With this preparation one comes to Jinny's monologue, her realization of the fall of the drop for her. Jinny is the one who kisses Louis as a child in the first episode. She is attractive, the one who wants and has lovers. Of the six she is the socialite and as such counts on getting by on her appearance. "'I am arrayed, I am prepared'" (p. 101), she says. She is always ready to be the center of attention. She has her hair "'Swept in a curve'" (Waves, 101), her lips are "'precisely red'" (Waves, 101). and she says, "'I can imagine nothing beyond the circle cast by my body. My body goes before me, like a lantern down a dark lane. . . . I dazzle you; I make you believe that this is all'" (Waves, 128-129).

These statements have all come in earlier episodes. Up until now this has been the course of Jinny's life, then comes this skillfully crafted moment in episode seven. The moment has come when Jinny realizes that her youth and beauty will not last forever.

> "Here I stand," said Jinny, "in the Tube station where everything that is desirable meets--Piccadilly South side, Piccadilly North Side, Regent Street and the Haymarket. I stand for a moment under the pavement in the heart of London. Innumerable wheels rush and feet press just over my head. The great avenues of civilisation meet here and strike this way and that. I am in the heart of life. But look--there is my body in that looking glass. How solitary, how shrunk, how aged! I am no longer young. I am no longer part of the procession. Millions descend those stairs in a terrible descent. Great wheels churn inexorably urging them downwards. Millions have died. Percival died. I still move. I still live. But who will come if I signal?
>
> "Little animal that I am, sucking my flanks in and out with fear, I stand here, palpitating, trembling. But I will not be afraid." (Waves, p. 193)

The setting here is that of a subway station. Jinny is below ground and is thus in an in-between world. She is between, as it were, life and death. Her moment of illumination comes as she looks at herself in a mirror. Jinny is here at a center point. A specific point under the "heart" of London. This center point is symbolic perhaps of the social center where she has always been, yet now she is alone. Life is rushing on above her head. The statements, "where everything that is desirable meets," and, "I am in the heart of life," become sadly ironic. What she sees in the mirror, what she has always counted on is now "shrunk" and "aged." In this in-between position one almost has, in the phrase, "those stairs in a terrible descent," an echo of Dante's entrance into hell.

The images that begin this section are specific ones ("Piccadilly South Side, Piccadilly North Side") and they move to more general ones, "innumerable wheels," "rush of

feet," and "great avenues of civilisation." This is then contrasted with the picture of Jinny's image in the mirror. Then there is a movement from general to specific: "procession," "Millions descend," "Great wheels churn inexorably," "Millions have died," and "Percival died." It is here that there is an expression of a death wish and by the time one has come again to the specific, "Percival died," one has completed a circle to the physical reality of being in a subway station. Jinny at this point discovers that she is still alive and there is a note of pathos in the line, "But who will come if I signal?" (See p. 193).

In the images that begin this passage one has images of movement that have the suggestion of time, life, and when they become more generalized, of all humanity and even history rushing on. There is here no rest, no holding of the past, no hanging on to a moment. They are images with hard sounds: "pavement," "innumerable," "feet press," and "strike." This activity is contrasted with a moment of stillness as Jinny looks into the mirror. One slows down and there is a softer sound in the words, "looking glass," "solitary," "shrunk," "I am no longer young," and "I am no longer part of the procession." This type of contrast serves to generate feeling, and it is a feeling of sadness, almost despondency.

The first part of the second paragraph with the beginning set up of a new pattern of images (and one notices that

Jinny sees herself now as a "little animal" and no longer "like a lantern down a dark lane") are included because of their appearance in earlier drafts of this passage. Here it is as it appears in draft one.

No, said Jinny, I am not sure.

~~Jinny st~~ ~~And there is~~ ~~It is a~~ ~~Any way is~~

Piccadilly South Side, Regent Street North, ~~Haymarket~~ Piccadilly West ~~said Jinny~~, "Life has played this trick - too often. ~~I know this mood~~. All of a sudden things are ~~suddenly~~ shaken to (ice?) - ~~here where I stand~~. ~~Rhoda~~ I see everything very distinctly ~~the~~ all because Rhoda is dead: Percival is dead. And then, little animal that I am, ~~with my for I am like a field mouse, I think, very~~ with my ~~my thin flanks that are sucked in & out~~. bright eyes & flanks that are sucked in & out with every breath - I scamper away, alive. They were crushed by a boot; or snapped up by a ~~big~~ dog. I am ~~fe~~ have my choice. This is ~~an~~ a junction, under the pavement, where all that is desirable & ~~exciting~~ meet, ~~together~~. I love

The heel came very near my little body but it missed it. But after all

Moreover, I will not be afraid.

The first thing that is evident here is that Woolf rewrote as she wrote. This can be seen in the second line with four tries to start the next sentence.

One then has the first set of images and these stay as the first set of images in the text. However, that is about all that survives to the final draft. Here the "little animal" image is the one that gets the development. This image is used in the text in the following paragraph. "Junction" and "pavement" here only get minor attention. There is here almost no development of a setting. One also only has fragments of what will be Jinny's moment of illumination. The "looking glass" image does appear in draft one, but only several lines later amongst other material that Woolf later discards.

Again and again it seems evident from looking at the first draft of The Waves that there was a constant struggle on the part of Woolf to catch hold of her vision and to get down what she wanted to say. It seems that on the first time around her imagination gave her only what was essential.

A look at the draft two version of this passage reveals that much progress has been made.

> "Here I stand," said Jinny, "where everything that is desirable meets. Piccadilly South Side, Piccadilly North Side, Regent Street West, & the Haymarket. I am under the pavement, in the centre of London. Innumerable wheels roll over my head. ~~&~~ The great avenues of civilisation meet here & strike away. And ~~though~~ a millions have died, for one reason ^or^ & another.

> I do not know for what reason they died. Little animal that I am, sucking my flanks in with every breath, I stand here palpitating - alive. They have been crushed by boots; they have been killed by stones; or like Percival, have been pitched off their horses ~~for no~~ because of a ~~na~~ molehill. I can still run. I am alive.
>
> Moreover I will not be afraid. I am not a whimpering little animal, always making for the shadow. For a moment, catching sight of myself in that glass, before I had time to make those preparations with which I always prepare myself for the sight of myself, I was dismayed. I am no longer young.

The setting here has been more clearly defined and the beginning of the cyclical structure has been started. However, one still has the "little animal" image at the center. The mirror has been moved up to the second paragraph almost as if it is ready to switch places with the animal image. What still remains to be done is the collecting of the various images together, sharpening the images, and getting them in the right order to get the desired rhythms. Also, there is still some irrelevant material that needs to be cut out, for example, the part about Percival being pitched off a horse because of a molehill. In the text we will already have known how Percival died and so simply saying, "Percival died" will bring to mind the images of Percival falling off his horse in India.

Woolf used the first draft to get her images down. In the second draft she started ordering those images, cutting out what she will not use and adding fresh material to fill the gaps. Now that nearly all the material was down that would be in the printed text, her mind was freed to concentrate on ordering the material to her vision. She could now work over in her mind rhythms and relationships until she had caught hold of exactly what she wanted to say.

Woolf was very conscious of the structuring of her images, and would use cyclical structures to suggest the movement of the waves. The friends in episode seven are finding that they are aging, not accomplishing what they once did, or hoped to do. The aging process is reflected in nature. In the interlude that precedes episode seven this is suggested by the observation that "The waves no longer visited the further pools or reached the dotted black line which lay irregularly marked upon the beach" (Waves, 182). In the face of this Jinny realizes that the world will still go on as usual, "Lifts rise and fall; trains stop, trains start as regularly as the waves of the sea" (Waves, 195). And one comes back here to the rhythm of the sea, which was for Woolf also the rhythm of life. Confronting this rhythm, knowing that one is part of the outgoing tide, the only thing one can do is do what Jinny did and that is to face it with determination.

She decides that she will powder her face, and redden her lips. Then she says, "I will rise to the surface, standing erect with the others in Piccadilly Circus" (Waves, 195). This rhythm, that the images help to establish, is precisely what Woolf was aiming at. In August of 1930 just when she wrote in her diary that The Waves was resolving itself into "dramatic soliloquies" (AWD, 156) Woolf wrote to Ethel Smyth that "I think . . . that my difficulty is that I am writing to a rhythm and not to a plot. . . . the rhythmical is more natural to me than the narrative, it is completely opposed to the tradition of fiction and I am casting about all the time for some rope to throw to the reader" (Letters, IV, 204). The rope that Woolf succeeds in throwing to the reader is her very careful structuring of images. For another example it would be well to take a look at a passage spoken by Susan.

Susan is the antithesis of Jinny in almost every way. She is the homemaker, the country girl, the farmer's wife. As a child she is the one who sees Jinny kissing Louis and she flees in a fit of jealousy. Right from the beginning, earth or country images are associated with Susan. One of her first statements is, "A caterpillar is curled in a green ring," while one of Jinny's first statements is, "I see a crimson tassel twisted with gold threads" (p. 9). In the last episode when Bernard is summing up he says of Susan, "It was Susan who first became wholly

woman, purely feminine. . . . She was born to be adored of poets, since poets require safety . . ." (p. 248).

A passage that typifies Susan is one from her monologue in episode three:

> " . . . I like best the stare of shepherds met in the road; the stare of gipsy women beside a cart in a ditch suckling their children as I shall suckle my children. For soon in the hot midday when the bees hum round the hollyhocks my lover will come. He will stand under the cedar tree. To his one word I shall answer my one word. What has formed in me I shall give him. I shall have children; I shall have maids in aprons; men with pitchforks; a kitchen where they bring ailing lambs to warm in baskets, where the hams hang and the onions glisten. I shall be like my mother, silent in a blue apron locking up the cupboards." (Waves, pp. 98-99)

This passage is looking toward the future and in that future there is an affirmation of life. Here a life force contrasts with Jinny's death wish. The setting here is pastoral as opposed to Jinny's urban setting, and even structurally the two pieces are opposites.

If one reads this section out loud it sounds almost Biblical. This is because of the parallel structure of the piece; "stare of shepherds . . . stare of gipsy women," "suckling their children, I shall suckle my children," and "his one word . . . my one word." This is very much like synthetic or cumulative parallelism where the last part of the line completes the first. What then follows is much like stair or climactic parallelism where there is an ascending rhythm. This starts with the line, "I shall have children" and continues with, "I shall have maids . . . men with pitchforks . . . a kitchen where

they bring ailing lambs" (p. 98). One is presented, in an ascending manner the world that Susan is going to have. It climaxes with the line, "I shall be like my mother . . ." (p. 99).

Other poetic devices present include the use of alliteration of the consonant sounds in "hot," "hum," and "hollyhocks," and then "hum" rhymes with "come." When one comes to the line, "He will stand under the cedar tree," (p. 98) one hears an echo of the Song of Songs. In tone and content Susan's speech gives the suggestion of an epithalamium or, at least, a Biblical blessing of children and the produce of the land.

Such an affirmation of life is quite contrary to that of Jinny's. Looking at both Jinny and Susan and the way they play counterpoint, one can begin to see something of the elaborate structure of The Waves. The quoted passage of Susan's monologue does not have a recognizable precedent in the drafts. It must have emerged as Woolf tightened as she typed. Early in her writing of The Waves, Woolf realized that her structure needed to be elaborate so that the texture would carry the reader. She wrote in her diary that whenever she made a mark, she had to think of its relation of "a dozen" other things (AWD, 143).

It has already been noted that Virginia Woolf did her creative writing in longhand in her drafts and that she did extensive rewriting as she wrote. What follows

is the beginning of The Waves as it first appears in draft two. In draft one this beginning of the first interlude has already been written five times.

The Waves

The sun had not yet risen. ~~A black bar lay on the~~ horizon. The sea ~~& the sky~~ was indistinguishable from the sky, except that the sea was slightly creased;/ ~~like a~~ as if a cloth had grey ~~like~~ a cloth. ~~As t~~ ~~Gradually~~, ~~And~~ Gradually, the sky whitened; ~~& the creases deepened, & it seemed as if they moved something moved moved beneath, rolling them on, to~~ them ed ~~Then~~ a dark bar lay on the horizon; dividing the sea & the sky; & ~~then~~ the grey creased cloth became ~~slowly~~ deeper & deeper; & the bars which stretched across it were long ~~backed~~ waves. barred with thich strokes. moving, one after another, across the breadth of the sea, regularly. ~~The~~

Here is evidence again of the constant struggle she had to find the right words and images. This and other portions of this beginning interlude were still to be written another five times before the final version in the text. In draft one there are some sections, or portions of sections that are rewritten some twenty-five times and still not figure prominently, if at all, in draft two.

There are also numerous sections which appear for the first time in draft two and are revised only one or

two times. There are also a few incidents, such as the following, where a passage appears for the first time and only once in draft two.

> "All my bar boats ~~have white sails"~~ are white said Rhoda. "I do not want ~~roses. I want red flowers:~~ hollyhocks & geraniums. I want ~~shallow leaved~~ white petals: like I want that just float, ~~when I tip~~ on the waves the basin; ~~but~~ & ~~but~~ I have a ~~great~~ fleet now; ~~for I have~~ swimming from shore to shore; ~~but there are tremendous cliffs~~, between these ~~tremendous~~ great glazed cliffs I will ~~put~~ drop a twig in, as a raft, ~~for a~~ if a sailor shd ( ) drowning ~~sub~~ silor, I will drop in ~~pebbles~~ a flower - ~~that is to say~~ & see the bubbles rise from the depths of the sea.

Here is the next appearance of the passage that we have (the typescripts being lost) and it is as it appears in the text.

> "All my ships are white," said Rhoda. "I do not want red petals of hollyhocks or geranium. I want white petals that float when I top the basin up. I have a fleet now swimming from shore to shore. I will drop a twig in as a raft for a drowning sailor. I will drop a stone in and see bubbles rise from the depths of the sea. (Waves, p. 18)

What is interesting to note about this passage and also the other passages that have been looked at (See also Appendix B) is not so much the similarities, but the differences. There is much that takes place in between drafts and in between

the drafts and the text. Some of the differences between draft two and the text must be accounted for in the typescripts which Virginia Woolf in her diary says she "corrects." However I do not feel that this solves the problem completely, especially in the light of Leonard Woolf's observation on the nature of the typescripts. When one looks at the drafts and the revisions in the drafts, it seems that Woolf was capable of writing passages, revising, and organizing those passages in her mind before putting them on paper. While working on a specific passage she also had the ability to look at the book as a whole and see that particular passage in the context of the whole book. This is especially true of draft two and with what happens between draft two and the text. Her husband noted that:

> No writer could possibly have given more time and intense thought to the preparation for writing and to the revision of what she had written. . . . there were . . . for her two periods of passion and excitement. The first was in the moment of creation, in the whole process of actual writing. I think that, when writing, Virginia was almost the whole time writing with concentrated passion. The long strenuous intellectual process was over and would be called in again for revision; now emotion and imagination took control. (Downhill, p. 53)

To aid in her revision, she made use of notebooks to jot down ideas and to make outlines of what she wanted her characters to do as she wrote the drafts.[7]

An example of this can be seen in her notebook number six and it is within other notes that deal with the speeches given during the farewell dinner in episode four.

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[7]See Graham, pp. 749-769.

That they should say things to correspond
with the wave: & the (~~pattern?~~)
illuminating of the house.

This no doubt is in reference to the speeches of the characters, yet as Mr. Graham points out, this note could also refer to the relation between the episodes and the interludes throughout the book.[8]

Here is a fairly typical outline for an episode. This is for episode five and it is from notebook number eight.

The death Chapter

Neville has the actual personal loss.
Now let pain begin: let it feed on my
flesh.
Bernard had the speculative, but
humane sorrow, which is half joy;
& rubs it off among other human
beings.
Rhoda has the entirely visionary
or ideal sorrow; in images; which she
tries to verify by referring
them to actual experiences.
How you will haunt my dreams - how
sleep will be more beautiful.

---

[8]Graham, p. 753.

It should be kept simple & large.. the
rhythmic design should dominate the
facts. Only one or two scenes.

Rhoda dislikes crude life: regains her
sense of beauty at the concert: of
order of reason:
How can one make this alone?
I cant go to Hampton Court alone.
"Bernard will enter under D phrases
fit for use on a friends death.

This outline was made up sometime after draft one had been completed and work on draft two had begun. It again gives evidence to the idea that Virginia Woolf paid careful attention to character and to structure. It is also part of the sharpening process that went on in draft two after the initial work of getting down the images had taken place in draft one. Woolf knew what she wanted her characters to do and feel and that she now had to get them to work in with her rhythmic design.

A note in notebook number fourteen concerning the last episode states:

The last Chapter.
What this needs is some conflict, so that there
can be an end. Death I think must come in as

the antagonist: must be an argument
between them.

There should be interludes.

When one remembers the last lines of the book and the power of Bernard's words, "Against you I will fling myself, unvanquished and unyielding, O Death!" one realizes just how successful Virginia Woolf was in doing what she set out to do.

"The test of a book (to a writer)," she states in her diary, "is if it makes a space in which, quite naturally, you can say what you want to say. As this morning I could say what Rhoda said. This proves that the book itself is alive" (AWD, 153).

Making The Waves alive was a long and difficult task. It began with the theory that perhaps it was the task of the novel to take over some of the functions of poetry. An idea for a story was inadvertently suggested by Woolf's sister. After some months of thought the actual process of writing The Waves, that took two years to complete, began. During that time Woolf first had to get down her images, as draft one shows. The Waves then needed to be rewritten so that order and structure could be brought to the images. When order and structure worked, they gave life to the vision.

Conclusion

There was something about fame I had it in mind to say yesterday. Oh, I think it was that I have made up my mind that I'm not going to be popular, and so genuinely that I look upon disregard or abuse as part of my bargain. I'm to write what I like; and they're to say what they like. My only interest as a writer lies, I begin to see, in some queer individuality; not in strength, or passion, or anything startling, but then I say to myself, is not "some queer individuality" precisely the quality I respect?

Virginia Woolf
A Writer's Diary
February 18, 1922

Although Woolf's creative process may not be a pattern for everyone who writes, the focus of the conclusion is to present some lessons from her process that a writer of fiction may find applicable.

Conclusion

Woolf's "queer individuality" has earned for her a reputation that is still growing some thirty-nine years after her death. This would no doubt surprise Woolf, but because of her "queer individuality" and what that individuality produced she is still read. Probably no other author has left the same triple legacy of fiction, commentary, and theory that dovetails as well as hers does. Few have been as committed to the art of writing as she was. She could in all honesty state, "I feel that by writing I am doing what is far more necessary than anything else" (Moments of Being, 73). The make up of Woolf's creative process is unique, and only Woolf could have written The Waves, but because she elucidates so clearly her own writing process there are some lessons that are applicable to anyone who desires to write. The lessons are not universal or unique. Their validity lies in the fact that they worked for Virginia Woolf.

One learns that there must first be a total commitment to writing. Writing, as with any art, is not easily possible if one just does it in one's spare time. It is relentless in its demands. The next lesson in the creative process is that one must have a mastery of the craft. In writing this comes about by reading and practicing. This apprenticeship will no doubt take time; maturity is needed in order

to handle the vision. Maturity means two things. It means first that one has had some experience with life, because, as Woolf believed, the present moment takes on meaning only when it is backed by, and evaluated in terms of, the past. Secondly, maturity means that the artist has the ability to transcend his particular limitations; be it one's sex, education, associates, environment, or health.

The vision does not come by being passive. It comes most often after one has been engaged from some time in its deliberate pursuit. The mind must be free from distractions so that it can concentrate on receiving stimuli, making associations, and relating the present with the past. When the mind is thus engaged that often, unexpectedly, the pieces will come together in a rush and they will burst upon the conscious mind. It is unexpected because the mind, at the time of illumination, is not consciously trying to force the pieces together. When the illumination or vision comes, then the training and maturity of the critical mind comes into play. Now the task is to transport the vision as whole as possible across the "gulf" that separates the vision as seen by the imagination with its existence on paper. This task if difficult, often physically and mentally taxing, but when completed it can also be extremely rewarding. Woolf's genius lies in her extraordinary ability to do this so well in a form that is unique. The Waves is a prime example.

Perhaps because of her unconventional use of form there is a unique richness and beauty to Woolf's work. Commenting on this in a letter to Gerald Breman she writes:

> I think I mean that beauty, which you say I sometimes achieve, is only got by the failure to get it; by grinding all the flints together; by facing what must be humiliation--the things one can't do. To aim at beauty deliberately, without this apparently insesate struggle, would result, I think, in little daisies and forget-me-nots--simpering sweetness . . . (Letters, II, p. 599).

"Grinding all the flints together" is the creative process, and the result for Woolf certainly does not have any "daisies" or "forget-me-nots." In the moments she vividly recreates beauty and emotion do emerge. A pattern, and then a meaning, developes. This is what happens in The Waves. There should be no doubt that The Waves was wrought by the grinding of all the flints together. In the writing of The Waves it is clear that Woolf was committed to her vision; and, because of the maturity of her artistic experience, she was able to shape her vision in a complex, highly textured manner and still make her phrases shine, one wave after another.

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Appendix A

A Chronology of the Writing of *The Waves*

What follows is a time line of the creation of *The Waves* that is based primarily on Woolf's *A Writer's Diary*. The November 28, 1928 entry was when she wrote, I believe, her controlling creative concept. The ideas expressed in that entry were very much a part of Woolf's thinking all through the writing of *The Waves*. This is true, although she did not actually begin writing what was to become *The Waves* for another seven months. There is no way of absolutely proving this suffice to say that a study of the work bears out that she succeeded in doing what she set out to do in that statement.

In a diary entry dated July 14, 1931, Woolf writes, "But my *Waves* account runs, I think, as follows . . ." and a list of dates follows that differs to some extent from the dates listed here as to when she began and ended various drafts. There is ample evidence that the dates listed are the correct ones.[1]

1926 - September 30 - Woolf states that her mind is empty

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[1]Mr. Graham in his introduction deals at length with this problem, leaving little doubt as to which are the correct dates.

"I want to watch and see how the idea at first occurs. I want to trace my own process" (p. 100).[2]

November 23 - Woolf states that she wants to write "some semi-mystic very profound life of a woman, which shall all be told on one occasion; and time shall be utterly obliterated; future shall somehow blossom out of the past" (p. 101).

1927 - February 21 - A record of a play with an idea. "Why not invent a new kind of play; as for instance:

Woman thinks . . .

He does.

Organ plays.

She writes.

They say:

She sings.

Night speaks

They miss

I think it must be something on this line--though I can't now see what. Away from facts; free; yet concentrated; prose yet poetry; a novel and a play" (p. 103).

February 28 - Woolf writes that after a holiday the creative power will return. " . . . the old

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[2]All page references are to A Writer's Diary unless otherwise indicated.

ideas will come to me as usual; seeming fresher, more important than ever; and I shall be off again, feeling that extraordinary exhilaration, that ardour and lust of creation . . ." (pp. 103-104).

May 8 - In a letter to her sister she states that she is going to write a story about the moths Vanessa has told her about (See Letters, IV, 472).

June 18 - More ideas start coming in the form of images; "the sea," "night," "a garden under the window" (p. 107). Woolf notes that she is working while listening to Beethoven sonatas.

1928 - March 18 and May 31 - Woolf declares that she does not want to write a novel again (pp. 122, 126).

August 12 - She writes, "The Moths hovers somewhere at the back of my brain" (p. 128).

September 10 - Woolf writes that it is reality that is the "most necessary thing" to her and that is what she wants to seek (p. 130).

September 22 - Woolf realizes that The Moths is going to be different from what she has done before (p. 131).

November 7 - Woolf talks of The Moths as being a play-poem and as something where she is going to

have to come to terms with her "mystical feelings" (p. 134).

The following is a statement of the controlling creative concept of the book. From here on she is committed to pulling The Waves across the gulf that separates the idea for a book from its physical reality.

November 28 - "The idea has come to me that what I want now to do is to saturate every atom. I mean to eliminate all waste, deadness, superfluity: to give the moment whole; whatever it includes. Say that the moment is a combination of thought; sensation; the voice of the sea. Waste, deadness, come from the inclusion of things that don't belong to the moment: this appalling narrative business of the realist: getting from lunch to dinner: it is false, unreal, merely conventional. . . . The poets succeeding by simplifying: practically everything is left out. I want to put practically everything in: yet to saturate. That is what I want to do in The Moths" (p. 136).

June 23 - Woolf begins to get a visual picture of the book as images surface; "dawn," "shells on a beach," "voices of cock and nightingale," "children at a long table," "lessons," and "boats on the pond."

She also asks, "Could one not get the waves to be heard all through?" (p. 141).

July 2* - Woolf begins work on the first of what was to be The Waves.[3]

September 10 - Woolf gives evidence that the subconscious is still forming the book. She also realizes that Moths will not be the title (Later, July 14, 1931, she writes that this is the date she began seriously to write The Waves.).

October 11 - First suggestion of Waves as a title. She realizes that the design is going to be elaborate. " . . . whenever I make a mark I have to think of its relation to a dozen others" (p. 143).

November 2 - " . . . concerned with my Waves. I've just typed out my morning's work; and can't feel altogether sure. There is something there . . . but I can't get at it, squarely." Woolf finds the work more difficult than Lighthouse, and Orlando was "mere child's play." She also wonders about her method. "I am convinced that I am right to seek for a station whence I can set my people against time and sea--but Lord, the difficulty of digging oneself in there, with conviction" (p. 146).

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[3]The information that is marked with an asterisk is taken from J. W. Graham's introduction, p. 28f.

November 30 - She is still plagued by uncertainty. "I don't know. I don't know. I feel that I am only accumulating notes for a book" (p. 146).

December 26 - The writing is going slowly. She talks of "blundering on at The Waves" (p. 147).

1930 - January 12 - Woolf writes that she can think of "nothing else." She wants to write fast so as not to break the mood. She does not want to be disturbed, "no holiday, no interval if possible" (p. 149).

January 26 - The creative power at full force. "I am stuck fast in that book--I mean glued to it." Woolf feels that now she can break through to something "central." She finds the interludes difficult, yet feels that they are important (pp. 149-150).

February 16 - After a period of intense activity Woolf finds herself ill. "A cloud swims in my head. . . . Something happens in my mind. It refuses to go on registering impressions. It shuts itself up. . . . Then suddenly something springs. . . . I am swimming in the head and write rather to stabilize myself than to make a correct statement . . . all the door opening; and this is I believe the moth shaking its wings in me. I then begin to make up my story whatever it is; ideas rush in me; often

though this is before I can control my mind or pen. It is no use trying to write at this stage. And I doubt if I can fill this white monster . . . my mind works in idleness. To do nothing is often my most profitable way" (pp. 150-151).

March 28 - Difficulty with the book. Woolf reading much of it out loud, "like poetry" (p. 153).

April 9 - Woolf states that the rewriting will have to be "drastic" (p. 154).

April 23 - Considered by Woolf to be an important date because she can now see to the end of the book. She has got Bernard "into the final stride" (p. 154).

April 29 - FIRST DRAFT OF THE WAVES COMPLETED. "Yes, it was the greatest stretch of mind I ever knew; certainly the last pages . . ." (p. 155).

May 1 - Woolf wants to get back to Waves and to begin taking out irrelevant material, to clear and sharpen and to make the "good phrases shine. One wave after another" (p. 156).

June 13* - Draft two begun.

August 20 - The Waves seems to be resolving itself into "dramatic soliloquies." Woolf considers this work to be the greatest opportunity" she has given herself. She is also concerned about the rhythm of the waves (p. 156).

December 2 - Woolf finds that she can't write a difficult passage because of an upcoming party (p. 151).

December 12 - The last day of a break from writing before taking on the last section of Waves (p. 158).

December 21 - While listening to a Beethoven quartet, Woolf gets the idea of merging interjected passages into Bernard's final speech, yet she is concerned how this will work artistically (p. 159).

December 30 - Woolf finds that she wants to avoid the use of chapters so as to run things together more by the use of "rhythms" (p. 160).

1931 - January 7 - The Waves written at "high pressure." Woolf is only able to write for a little more than an hour each morning (p. 161).

January 20 - While taking a bath, Woolf comes up with an idea for a new book (Three Guineas). She finds this new idea so exciting that she can't get back "inside Bernard" (pp. 161-162).

January 26 - Woolf is able to regain her concentration for Waves and is able to see the book as a whole (p. 162).

February 2 - Woolf senses that she is about to finish

the second draft of Waves. "Never have I screwed up my brain so tight over a book. . . ." She feels a need to end this "vision" and she has the sense that she has done what she wanted to do (pp. 162-163).

February 4 - The day is ruined for writing due to household disturbances (p. 163).

February 7 - SECOND DRAFT COMPLETED. "I have been sitting these 15 minutes in a state of glory, and calm, and some tears. . . . what interests me in the last stage was the freedom and boldness with which my imagination picked up, used and tossed aside all the images, symbols which I had prepared." The second typescript also completed (p. 165).

May 5* - Typescript number three begun.

May 13 - Woolf talks of typing seven or eight pages a day while making corrections (p. 166).

May 30 - Woolf talks of writing the death chapter, having already rewritten it twice. "This is the most concentrated work I have ever done--and oh the relief when it is finished. But also the most interesting" (p. 167).

June 22 - Finished retyping The Waves (p. 162).

June 25* - Woolf starts word correcting typescript number four. Typescript number four was done by a professional typist. It seems that the typist received The Waves in sections to type, once Woolf was done with parts of typescript number three. It would be difficult for even a professional typist to type all of The Waves in three days.

July 7 - Woolf goes for a walk to get away from "this absurd know in which my brain has been so tight spun--I mean The Waves" (p. 167).

July 17 - Woolf completes her corrections of typescript number four. She states that she will give it to Leonard tomorrow and is nervous about his reaction for she knows that he will be honest (p. 168).

July 19 - Leonard likes the work calling it a "master-piece" and Woolf is relieved. In "jubilation" she takes a walk in the rain (pp. 168-169).

August 10-17 - Woolf corrects the proofs and is pleased with her work, although she can only read a few pages at a time. She also suspects that this is the last time she will read The Waves (pp. 167-168).

Appendix B

Part of Bernard's final speech in the draft forms and text follows. (The draft forms are taken from J. W. Graham.) Many of the same elements that have already been discussed can be seen in the various drafts of Bernard's speech.

Episode 9 - Draft 1 (Third revision in draft one.)

"Now heaven be praised for solitude. Now I could raise a hymn to all solitary places where people have died. I begin to put on the splendor & restfulness reflection serenity of death,/ with this old coat. ~~Now~~, I shall be alone for once, & make perhaps in this little passage down stairs, a ~~good~~ phrase. Look I am here now apart from all glitter & lights. I am unknown. I am single; no longer sprayed out on the lips of many/ people. but I am folded together. I can put forth no more, by way of laughter or ~~curses~~ anger or tears; I can no longer walk up & down stairs, in & out of houses, & meeting new people, & forever noticing something new. Hush. hush I say! as I come to the street door to the voices of the wind; here is the something that falls asleep & lets its fingers unclose;/ here is the ~~a unive~~ on the conqueror/

~~Well where am I? Piccadilly or some open country road?~~ ~~Then~~ where I am, & what I am, I do not know."

Episode 9 - Draft 2 (Part of first revision in draft two.)

"Now the face is gone - now the person is gone whom I seemed to have seen once. And I am alone. I am now speaking to myself without an audience. That pressure is removed. Now I need lie no longer."

Episode 9 - Draft 2 (Second revision in draft two.)

"So that too has left me. That door has opened. That life has gone. I am alone now Out into the street to catch a train, to take a cab, the already that almost unknown person has gone. The pressure is removed. Here are empty coffee cups. Here are chairs, turned, but nobody sits in them. Heaven be praised for solitude. Let me now raise my (shout?) of glory. To be alone. ~~to be~~

Let me now cast off, shake away, cast myself free. Let me be alone. Let me throw off this veil of being; this mutable & changing cloud that topples with the least breath that changes as the sun changes. that has been changing 7 turning all day, all night. While I sat here I watched the stars change. I

saw the clouds pass & go. I have forgotten who I am. For no one sees me. Heaven be praised,"

Episode 9 - Text (p. 294)

"Heaven be praised for solitude! I am alone now. That almost unknown person has gone, to catch some train, to take some cab, to go to some place or person whom I do not know. The face looking at me has gone. The pressure is removed. Here are empty coffee-cups. Here are chairs turned but nobody sits on them. Here are empty tables and nobody any more coming to dine at them tonight.

"Let me now raise my song of glory. Heaven be praised for solitude. Let me be alone. Let me cast and throw away this veil of being, this cloud that changes with the least breath, night and day, and all night and all day. While I sat here I have been changing. I have watched the sky change. I have seen clouds cover the stars, then free the stars, then cover the stars again. Now I look at their changing no more. Now no one sees me and I change no more. Heaven be praised for solitude that has removed the pressure of the eye, the solicitation of the body, and all need of lies and phrases.

"My book, stuffed with phrases, has dropped to the floor."

Appendix C

A Chronology of Virginia Woolf's Life With Publication Dates[1]

1882 25 January	Virginia Stephen born. Her father was Sir Leslie Stephen, a scholar, critic, biographer. In November of 1882 he became the first editor of The Dictionary of National Biography. Her mother, the second wife of Sir Leslie, was formerly married as Mrs. Herbert Duckworth. Virginia was their third child--Vanessa b. 1879, Thoby b. 1880, Virginia, b. 1882, Adrian b. 1883.
1891 February	The Hyde Park Gate News begins publication.
April	Sir Leslie Stephen gives up editorship of D.N.B.
1895 5 May	Julia Stephen dies. Virginia has first breakdown that summer.
1897 3 January	Virginia begins to keep a regular diary until 1 January, 1898.

[1]The sources for this chronology are: John Lehmann's Virginia Woolf and Her World and Quentin Bells, Virginia Woolf: A Biography, Vol. I and II. Bell's chronology is the most complete. I have included only those dates and events pertinent to my topic.

1904
22 February — Sir Leslie Stephen dies. Virginia settles with her sister and two brothers in Bloomsbury, a section of London. (This was the first of many moves Virginia made throughout her life. The rest are not given here.)

10 May — Virginia has her second serious breakdown.

16 December — Virginia's first publication, an unsigned review, in The Guardian.

1905/6
Autumn and
Winter — All of the Stephen children live at Gordon Square. Virginia is writing reviews and teaching at Morley College.

1906
September — The Stephen children visit Greece. November 20, Thoby dies in London of typhoid fever contracted in Greece. November 22, Vanessa agrees to marry Clive Bell.

1907
7 February — Vanessa and Clive marry.

October — Virginia begins work on Melymbrosia. After five years and some seven versions this was to become The Voyage Out.

1908
4 February — Julian Bell born to Vanessa and Clive.

1909
17 February — Lytton Strachey (later famour for his Eminent Victorians and Queen Victoria) proposes to

Virginia, but the engagement is cancelled shortly after.

1910 November-January — First post-Impressionist exhibition ("Manet and the post-Impressionists") organized by Roger Fry.

1912 7 May — Leonard Woolf resigns from the Colonial service and on 29 May Virginia agrees to marry him.

10 August — Virginia and Leonard get married.

1913 — Most of this year Virginia is ill and depressed and in September she attempts suicide.

1914 — Virginia's health is much improved.

1915 1 January — Virginia begins her diary again.

18 February — Virginia has a mental breakdown. April and May are her worst months of madness. By June there begins a gradual and steady improvement in her health.

1915 26 March — The Voyage Out published by Dickworth. It is conventional in form, but the climax is too long in preparation.

1917 January — Virginia writing for The Times Literary Supplement.

12 March — More than 100,000 words of Night and Day written.

July — The Hogarth Press is established. Their first publication is: Two Stories ("Three Jews and The Mark on the Wall") by L. and V. Woolf. The press published a number of important works by other writers including: Katherine Mansifld's Prelude and T. S. Eliot's Poems.

1918
21 November — Night and Day completed.

1919
12 May — "Kew Gardens" published by Hogarth.

20 October — Night and Day published.

1920
September — Virginia is writing Jacob's Room.

1921
March — Monday or Tuesday published. It contains "Kew Gardens" and seven other sketches.

4 November — Last words of Jacob's Room written.

1922
27 October — Jacob's Room published. It gives one a portrait of Jacob built of fragmentary moments and the hinted testimony of relatives and friends.

1923 August-September — Virginia working on the first version of *Freshwater* (a play) and on *The Hours* (*Mrs. Dalloway*).

1924 8 October — *Mrs. Dalloway* finished.

1925 25 April — *The Common Reader*--first series--published. It is a collection of critical essays.

14 May — *Mrs. Dalloway* published.

30 October — "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" published.

1926 16 March — Some 40,000 words of *To The Lighthouse* written.

29 April — First part of *Lighthouse* completed.

1927 January — *Lighthouse* completed and published 5 May.

5 October — Virginia begins writing *Orlando* as a joke.

1928 17 March — *Orlando* completed and published 11 October. It deals with time and personality through English literary history. Orlando starts as a young nobleman and ends as a modern man. It is modeled on Vita Sackville-West and is a tribute to Virginia's friend.

1929 24 October — *A Room of One's Own* is published. It was based upon two papers read to the Arts Society

at Newnham and the Odtaa at Girton in October 1928.

1930
29 May — First draft of *The Waves* completed.

1931
7 February — Second draft of *The Waves* completed.

19 July — Virginia finishes retyping *The Waves* and gives it to Leonard to read.

30 July — *Flush* begun.

8 October — *The Waves* published.

1932
21 January — Lytton Strachey dies. Leonard and Virginia tour Greece with some friends. In July "Letter to a Young Poet" is published. It was written ostensibly to John Lehmann.

13 October — The Common Reader--second series--published. By October Virginia has begun thinking through *The Pargiters* (*The Years*).

1933
5 October — *Flush* published. It is the story of the Brownings from the point of view of Mrs. Browning's pet dog.

1934
9 September — Death of Roger Fry.

30 September — First draft of *The Years* completed.

15 November — Virginia starts to rewrite *The Years*.

1935
18 January — *Freshwater* is performed by family and friends in Vanessa's studio. This year and the next Virginia is writing and rewriting *The Years* under great mental strain.

1937
15 March — *The Years* is published. It deals with three generations of an upper-class English family, the Pargiters. It deals with the changing relationships between women and men, women and women, and women and society.

12 October — Virginia completes *Three Guineas*.

1938
2 June — *Three Guineas* is published. It is a polemic which argues against male privilege, male prejudice, and what male domination has done to the world. It does not have the wit that *A Room of One's Own* has.

1940
2 March — The Manuscript of *Roger Fry: A Biography* is completed. It is published on 25 July.

1941
26 February — *Between The Acts* is completed. In this novel Woolf creates a microcosm that is representative of the world, the artist, the English, and all men. It is a fragmentary world. The action takes place on a summer

day. The characters are an English country family.

28 March — Virginia Woolf drowns herself in the River Ouse. She was hearing voices and she feared she would lose her mind and become a burden to her husband.

1942 — The Death of the Moth and other Essays published. It is a collection of critical reflections.

1944 — A Haunted House and Other Short Stories published. It is a reissue of Monday or Tuesday.

1947 — The Moment and other Essays published. It is a collection of critical essays.

1950 — The Captain's Deathbed and other Essays published. It is a collection of critical essays.

1954 — A Writer's Diary published. Leonard Woolf edited material from her diaries that dealth directly with her writing.

1956 — Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey: Letters published.

1958 — Granite and Rainbow published. It is a collection of critical essays.

1965 — Contemporary Writers published. It is a collection of critical/personal sketches.

1967 Collected Essays (4 vols.) published.

1973 Mrs. Dalloway's Party published (part of Mrs. Dalloway).

1975 The Letters of Virginia Woolf Vol. I: 1888-1912 published.

1976 Freshwater published.
Moments of Being: Unpublished Autobiographical Writings published.
The Letters of Virginia Woolf Vol. II: 1912-1922 published.
Virginia Woolf: The Waves: The Two Holograph Drafts published; transcribed by J. W. Graham.

1977 The Diary of Virginia Woolf Vol. I: 1915-1919 published.
Books and Portraits published. It contains 48 articles on writers, writing, and casual topics.
The Pargiters: The Novel-Essay Portion of The Years published.
The Letters of Virginia Woolf Vol. III: 1923-1928.

1978 The Diary of Virginia Woolf Vol. II: 1920-1924.

The Letters of Virginia Woolf Vol. IV: 1929-1931.

1979 _The Letters of Virginia Woolf_ Vol. V: 1932-1935.

1980 _The Diary of Virginia Woolf_ Vol. III: 1925-1930.