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ABSTRACT

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This study of three novels by Virginia Woolf—*Mrs. Dalloway, To the Lighthouse,* and *The Waves*—examines the various narrative techniques Woolf employs to construct her concept of character in the modernist novel, and also considers her related assumptions about the multiple dimensions of identity. As Woolf questions whether life and reality are "very solid or very shifting," she generates a series of framing devices—such as mirrors, portraits, dinner parties, and narratives—that acknowledge a solid, visible, and structured reality within the frame amidst a shifting, invisible, and unstructured reality outside it. Woolf's attention to the operation of the frame as simultaneously facing inward and outward enables her to umbrella this contradistinction of elements in her expression of identity. This analysis of Woolf's orchestration of multiple framed perspectives and images evidences her visionary contributions to studies in narrative and human character.

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Introduction

> The looking-glass whitened its pool upon the wall. The real flower on the window-sill was attended by a phantom flower. Yet the phantom was part of the flower, for when a bud broke free the paler flower in the glass opened a bud too.
>
> Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*

This study of three novels by Virginia Woolf—*Mrs. Dalloway, To the Lighthouse,* and *The Waves*—examines the various narrative techniques Woolf employs to construct her concept of character in the modernist novel, and also considers her related assumptions about the multiple dimensions of identity. As Woolf questions whether life and reality are "very solid or very shifting," she generates a series of framing devices—such as mirrors, portraits, dinner parties, and narratives—that acknowledge a solid, visible, and structured reality within the frame amidst a shifting, invisible, and unstructured reality outside it. Woolf's attention to the operation of the frame as simultaneously facing inward and outward enables her to umbrella this contradistinction of elements in her expression of identity. This analysis of Woolf's orchestration of multiple framed perspectives and images evidences her visionary contributions to studies in narrative and human character.

In "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" (1924), Virginia Woolf contends that "men and women write novels because they are lured on to create some character which has thus imposed itself upon them" (319). Using the fictitious Mrs. Brown as an example of how Edwardians (Bennett, Wells, Galsworthy) and Georgians (Forster, Lawrence, Strachey, Joyce, Eliot) approach the question of character with opposing conventions, Woolf directly challenges Arnold Bennett, who declares—in reference to Woolf and the young Georgians—that "we have no young novelists of first-rate importance at the present moment, because they are unable to create characters that are real, true, and convincing" (319). Bennett's concept of a "real" character adheres to traditional realism and its attempt to duplicate the real-world appearances of characters and settings. Woolf's

visionary approach to constructing "real" character is most evident in her own depiction of Mrs. Brown, in which Woolf focuses on the social construction and psychological activity of the character. Woolf envisions imaginary scenes of Mrs. Brown's private life based on her observations of Mrs. Brown's public mannerisms: "I thought of her in a seaside house, among queer ornaments: sea-urchins, models of ships in glass cases. Her husband's medals were on the mantelpiece. She popped in and out of the room, perching on the edges of chairs, picking meals out of saucers, indulging in long, silent stares" (323-24). As she demonstrates in her own account of Mrs. Brown's character, Woolf asserts that the most requisite criterion for creating a "real" character was "to steep oneself in her atmosphere" (324); this approach favors a portrait of the character's social and psychological attachments with the world rather than Bennett's portrayal of the character's physical appearance and material surroundings.

In addition to re-visioning the Edwardian construction of "real" character, Woolf contends that "it is to express character—not to preach doctrines, sing songs, or celebrate the glories of the British Empire, that the form of the novel, so clumsy, verbose, and undramatic, so rich, elastic, and alive, has been evolved" (324); accordingly, the shapes of Woolf's novels evolve and adapt to the necessities of the character portraits, which includes her balance of the interior with the exterior. She constructs and reconstructs her characters' identities in scene after scene, so that we observe the characters from multiple viewpoints as the narrative shifts from internal monologue to dialogue and from present to past. Woolf considers her characters as "unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality" (Freire 84) and in order to reflect upon their continual process of *becoming,*[1] her novels become a record of "lived-experience" as she tracks the movement of several characters' consciousness. This results in her deployment of a free and indirect style.

My reading of Woolf's character portraits is analogous to the nature of poetic language, which consists of words tied into poetic expressions by invisible threads.[2] Meaning arises out of conceptual bridges between words, statements, or events in a narrative, because language itself—

with its imperfect system of signification—does not transport the infinite assemblage of human experience. Wolfgang Iser writes that communication in literature "is a process set in motion and regulated not by a given code but by a mutually restrictive and magnifying interaction between the explicit and the implicit, between revelation and concealment" (168). As sentences contain visible words that invisibly signify conceptual meanings, the text communicates a complex message to the reader through a set of determinate points with strategic gaps that stimulate the reader's response to a "much deeper emotion" unexpressed in the words themselves. Identity is also expressed in those conceptual spaces beyond the visible frames of the body: the portrait, the mirror, or the narrative. Therefore, equally important to what a frame selects and encloses are those infinite spaces outside the frame that represent what it has been forced to exclude.

As Woolf grapples with how to integrate into a narrative structure the "incessant shower of innumerable atoms" ("Modern" 105) that represent the reality of life, she discovers that "this, the essential thing, has moved off, or on, and refuses to be contained any longer in such ill-fitting vestments as we provide" ("Modern" 105). When she asserts that "in or about December, 1910, human character changed" ("Mr. Bennett" 320)—and therefore required new tools for its adequate expression—she is responding to the impact of the modern city. During the height of modernism, literature not only converged upon the spatial perspective of the subject, but also became increasingly apprehensive about the uncanny, phantasmagorical contents of the interior.[3] The living room, memories, and illusions of private individuals are phantasmagorical in that they become increasingly mystical and obscure to others as individuals retreat into seclusion. The amplification of the internal landscape of modern literature altered the way reality is conceived. The nature of reality in Virginia Woolf's novels, we might argue, is determined by consciousness as it performs "intentional" acts on the world external to the mind, as Husserl's phenomenology confirms. Simultaneously, the existence of each character is determined by the social realm in which "being-for-self" depends upon an existence as "being-for-others." This Hegelian dialectic is set in motion as the reader confronts ambivalences in the characters' subject-object

relationships that consist of both the unveiled and obscured life. The essence or object of identity that resides inside the mind of each character creates a web of ambivalence determined by a duality of spatial perspective.

Sigmund Freud, in his composition on aesthetics entitled "The Uncanny"—or the "*Unheimlich*"— provides a clear example of the complication that can arise from a dual conception of frames. He explicates the term *heimlich* to unveil its ambiguous nature as an antonym of itself and in doing so raises the issue of concealed consciousness. *Heimlich* may be translated as that which is familiar and "of the home" and derived from this definition is that which is mysterious (cloaked by the home), and therefore that which is hidden, mystical, unconscious, obscure, and finally, unfamiliar. "Thus," concludes Freud, "*heimlich* is a word the meaning of which develops in the direction of ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, *unheimlich*" (934). A *heimlich* object, characterized by enclosures or barriers—such as the walls of residence, the skin of bodies, or in a nonmaterial sense, the intimacy of a circle of people—may be interpreted in terms of the spatial location of the perceiving subject. Therefore, the descriptive term *heimlich* contains two possible meanings that vary according to the perceiver's spatial relation to the object. In terms of the frame metaphor, the entity that is enclosed must be understood in relation to that which is excluded. The frame faces both inward and outward; likewise, the concept of *heimlich* functions reversibly when the perception of the subject is considered.

In Woolf's portraiture of characters, she explores the myriad possibilities of perspective based on space. A public life of anonymity deepens psychological character; as a result, human character becomes exclusively familiar to the individual, but as it is increasingly enclosed with borders, it becomes illusory to others. This metropolitan separation between private and public spheres swells beyond physical space into the mythical space of individuals, who increasingly germinate private identities opposite the public realm.[4] In response to this amplification of illusory borderlands between self and other, modernist authors traversed the consciousness of

their characters, generated stream-of-consciousness techniques, and located these characters in the context of the urban crowd. Whereas Walter Benjamin asserts that these boundaries are illusory, Woolf believes in their material reality and tangibly reveals this conflict. She does this, for example, between the interior and the exterior in *Mrs. Dalloway* when she interweaves consciousness with dialogue, allowing the release of the suppressed antagonisms and misunderstandings in relationships between characters. Woolf employs metaphors of London crowds, dinner parties, and oceanic waves as her horizontal palettes for bringing together multiple elements of character and perspective. Her levels of narration, on the other hand, travel vertically in the depths of her characters, from the subconscious impressions up to spoken dialogue between two characters. It is at this juncture that her characters intermingle, experiencing the gaps between mind and mind. Woolf also carries her narration into the opposite descent, presenting a view of the other from the outside in a mirror image.

Woolf defines reality in one way as "the common life which is the real life and not of the little separate lives which we live as individuals" (113). Woolf's characters, in a sense, also exist as fragments of separate lives and unities of the common life, which she makes most evident in *The Waves* as six characters commune to the point that they become unable to separate one life from another in the novel's container. Woolf's composition of this "common life" presents an element of instability; by revealing the inner life of one character, she necessarily obscures that interiority from the angle of the external character, emphasizing the relevance of angles of perception in understanding character, but also problematizing human relationships. Ultimately, Woolf defines the self not only by the internal, but also by the external; that which was thought to be hidden in the mind of one character is manifestly expressed by the infinite composite of external life, which includes other characters. It is the definition of "identity" itself that causes this dialectic between the internal and the external as it depends upon recognizing both difference and sameness:

> *Identity* is constructed relationally through difference from the other; identification with a group based on gender, race, or sexuality, for example, depends mostly on binary systems of 'us' versus 'them' where difference from the other defines the group to which one belongs. Conversely, *identity* also suggests sameness, as in the word identical; an identity affirms some form of commonality, some shared ground. (Friedman 15)

The artistic process of sculpting the multiple dimensions of the novel to achieve a specific vision of character closely resembles the tasks of cubist painters. Jack F. Steward notes that in cubist painting the "retinal image was split into a multiplicity of views, as what was *seen* was replaced by what was *known* or *found*" (66). Bennett's detailed accounts of the appearances and settings of his characters contain qualities that the reader can construct from visually observing the scene of the novel itself—his approach can be reduced to the description of a still painting—what is *seen*.[5] Any selection of text may be situated analogous to a framed painting: while both enclose a set of circumstances to either isolate a story of events or capture a still image, in doing so they engage in a process of selection that inevitably practices the exclusion of contextual elements.[6] Identity as constructed via subject-object relations also depends on temporal dimensions. Wendy Steiner writes:

> temporal sequence is implicit in the subject, because what is present on the canvas cannot be present in a single direct perception of this subject, but only through the superimposition of past views of it onto the present. The subject is thus presented as a synthesis of a number of temporally distinct perceptions. Such a treatment is conceptual; it shows that the perception of an object is colored by previous knowledge about it. (141)

The portrait metaphor consists of both external painted portraits and internal mental images. Tony Tanner, in his introduction to Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice,* writes that "what constitutes a person's 'real character' is one of the concerns of the book: the phrase occurs more than once,

usually with the added idea that it is something that can be 'exposed' (and thus, by the same token, concealed)" (380). Austen, and likewise Woolf, enacts a process of character identification that demonstrates the supremacy of subjective acts in the creation of an objective portrait (as opposed to the essence of the object evoking response in the subject). This approach to Austen's character development anticipates the concerns of modernism as it places priority on subject-object relations, concealed-revealed identities, and open-closed angles of perception.

The process of identity formation can also be viewed through the trope of the mirror, which parallels the portrait metaphor. Self-image largely resides in the mind based on the constantly changing memory of ourselves; looking in a mirror calls into question our current mental image, subtly causing us to revise that image in order to fuse both inner and outer images. Woolf represents identity as an indeterminate quality that undergoes continual assembly and alteration as physical appearances give way to an experiential—and therefore conceptualized—understanding of identity. Woolf's representation of the self-perceptions and social contexts of the individual indicate a concern with knowledge that is acquired over time and space, invoking memory and multiple views of consciousness. Identity relies upon the self's relation to the other, as the phantom flower in the mirror is part of the real flower. Bennett suggests that only the "flower" is real, whereas Woolf invokes an interconnected reality between the flower and its reflection. The mirror substitutes the role of the gazer, the subject, the other.

In "The Lady's Looking-Glass to Dress Herself By, or The Art of Charming" (1697),[7] Aphra Behn amusingly writes—in the guise of a mirror—about a woman who "dares not speak or smile, lest she shou'd put her face out of that order she had set it in her Glass, when she last look'd on herself" (5). This commentary on the vain woman illustrates the difficult relationship between outward appearance and internal self-image: a gaze in the mirror records external appearance for the duration of the reflection; when removed from the mirror the self-image of one's external appearance becomes unstable as it is subject to alteration. Woolf conveys this contrast between stasis and movement in her short story "The Looking-Glass":

> But, outside, the looking-glass reflected the hall table, the sunflowers, the garden path so accurately and so fixedly that they seemed held there in their reality unescapably. It was a strange contrast—all changing here, all stillness there. One could not help looking from one to the other. Meanwhile, since all the doors and windows were open in the heat, there was a perpetual sighing and ceasing sound, the voice of the transient and the perishing, it seemed, coming and going like human breath, while in the looking-glass things had ceased to breathe and lay still in the trance of immortality. (88)

The mirror collects and organizes reality into a frame and suggests a perception of reality that resembles the portrait. R. T. Chapman comments on this passage, noting that life is "removed from the flux and caught within the frame, static, metamorphosed into glass" and that the mirror "performs the function of formalizing the flux of experience into significant pattern, of imposing order upon the ceaselessly changing" (336). Woolf's use of the mirror and other frame metaphors in her fiction reflects her struggle to convey the movement of life within the narrative frame and her conception of life across eternity; in her diary she asks:

> Now is life very solid or very shifting? I am haunted by two contradictions. This has gone on forever; will last forever; goes down to the bottom of the world—this moment I stand on. Also it is transitory, flying, diaphanous. I shall pass like a cloud on the waves. Perhaps it may be that though we change, one flying after another, so quick, so quick, yet we are somehow successive and continuous we human beings, and show the light through. But what is the light. (*AWD* 138)

The question of whether life is "very solid or very shifting" lingers throughout her works as she comes to integrate the effect of both movements through narrative methods and tropes such as frames.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, and *The Waves*, Woolf strategically devises narrative methods to balance dualities between interiors/exteriors, private/public,

psychological/social, and stasis/movement. She sets *Mrs. Dalloway* within the span of a single day as she traces the minutiae of Clarissa's consciousness and frames her within the social contexts of the anonymous crowd and the structured party. In *To the Lighthouse,* she pillars a fleeting decade by one day in the life and one day in the death of Mrs. Ramsay and frames her by the artist Lily Briscoe who works to enter Mrs. Ramsay's soul and to capture her within the space on her canvas. In *The Waves*, Woolf traces the life of Bernard by encircling him with the stories of his friends from birth to death, all of which is recounted by individual soliloquies.

Chapter 1

Clarissa's Party: A Collective Mist in *Mrs. Dalloway*

> It ended in a transcendental theory which, with her horror of death, allowed her to believe [. . .] that since our apparitions, the part of us which appears, are so momentary compared with the other, the unseen part of us, which spreads wide, the unseen might survive, be recovered somehow attached to this person or that, or even haunting certain places after death...perhaps—perhaps.
>
> —Clarissa Dalloway in *Mrs. Dalloway*

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf stretches the various dimensions of identity in her portrait of Clarissa; she penetrates the skin's surface to reveal the movement of Clarissa's consciousness and breaks out of her skin to record her attachments with other characters. Her control of spatial perspectives also takes into consideration the depth of time; each infinite atom of time contains the weight of history and the knowledge of incessant change. As Woolf confines the span of the novel to the length of one day, she sets out to record the minute passage of time in the individual mind and the individual as a historical being. Though she delves deeply into the psychological nature of Clarissa, including memories that superimpose themselves on the present events of the novel, Woolf does not isolate the novel to a study of Clarissa's consciousness solely. She places her within a social context, consisting both of the London crowd and the dinner party she is to throw in the evening. Instead of investing those moments with more of Clarissa's "moments of being" or "non-being," she infuses them with the perspectives of the other characters. Therefore, the frame that would contain Clarissa is stretched by its temporal and historical depth and is scattered by its communal contribution of perspectives.

Woolf assembles a kaleidoscope of Clarissa's persona through exposure of her thought patterns and the perspectives of her companions. A physical description of Clarissa does not allow us to gain full comprehension of her identity. Woolf produces only minute details of

Clarissa's outward appearance, and even those details reverberate beyond the skin's surface (both facing inward and outward).[8] We know that Clarissa, according to her neighbor Scrope Purvis, has "a touch of the bird about her, of the jay, blue-green, light, vivacious, though she was over fifty, and grown very white since her illness" (4). Her figure, therefore, is light and her complexion is pale; moreover, Woolf employs the metaphor of the bird to describe Clarissa as vivacious in character. Clarissa produces an image of her body by noticing the differences between herself and the female companions she envies; she wishes she "could have looked even differently" (10) and notes how she does not possess the "dark," "slow and stately," and "rather large" (10) figure of Lady Bexborough. Clarissa describes herself as having "a narrow pea-stick figure; a ridiculous little face, beaked like a bird's" (10), which reveals her own negative and subjective assessment of herself; we do not get a detached narrator's objective portrayal, as Bennett and the other realist novels would advocate. To further belie the significance of a so-called realist portrait, Woolf's Clarissa imagines herself as "invisible, unseen; unknown" (11), thus negating the very relevance of an objective physical presence.

Clarissa expresses that "somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being part, she was positive, of the trees at home; of the house there, ugly, rambling all to bits and pieces as it was; part of people she had never met; being laid out like a mist between the people she knew best" (9). To draw a portrait of Clarissa or any other character might thus involve the reconstitution of the "ebb and flow of things" that occurs over the passage of time and this "mist" that spreads out lightly over an entire social context. The "mist" operates as a significant metaphorical figure in the novel for understanding the diffuse nature of identity for Woolf. In the *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, "mist" is defined concretely as a "natural phenomenon consisting of a diffuse cloud of fine water droplets suspended in the atmosphere on or near the ground so as to limit visibility" and the term envelopes "such droplets viewed collectively as a substance or medium." The image represents how Clarissa's identity is dispersed over the city, but it also signifies a way of describing that

dispersion collectively. This point is crucial to understanding Woolf's narratives as tools for framing atomized life. The *OED* also provides a figurative definition of the term as "Any of various immaterial things conceived as obscuring a person's mental vision or outlook, or as veiling the real character or blurring the outlines of a thing." Here again we can draw significant conclusions based on Woolf's image of the mist to describe Clarissa's character: by spreading her out "between the people she knew best," the "real character" and "outline" of Clarissa's identity becomes obscured. For Bennett, this obfuscation of a concrete reality would prove problematic, whereas for Woolf it provides a solution. Being "spread out" like a mist would seem to blur Clarissa's character from the eyes of each individual perspective; however, in the art of the novel, Woolf gathers the diffuse elements of her identity, as much as a mist can possibly be contained, into the narrative frame. Therefore, instead of isolating the day to only Clarissa, she is surrounded by her friends in the context of the crowd and the dinner party.

The question of identity was evoked during modernism when the rise of urban spaces assembled heterogeneous peoples into public spaces. In such a crowd, individuals assumed anonymous identities, exhibiting and witnessing only external appearances as they also developed consciousness of the illusion their own body casts onto others. The modern city resulted in the "promiscuous mingling of classes in close proximity on the street" (Wilson 29), which blurred the boundaries between individuals in terms of their inscribed social station. In *Mrs. Dalloway,* Woolf references this mingling of classes when the motor car chauffeuring royalty passes through the streets of London, and the narrator remarks, "But there could be no doubt that greatness was seated within; greatness was passing, hidden, down Bond Street, removed only by a hand's-breadth from ordinary people who might now, for the first and last time, be within speaking distance of the majesty of England" (16). An individual's identity was both constructed and disassembled by the new complex social environment that thrust their being into the urban labyrinth. According to Woolf, one was no longer merely "this or that"; one became interconnected with all classes of individuals encountered in the urban *crowd*, culminating in a

disorder that "created uncertainty, disorientation and alarm. Popular literature was filled with tales of encounters between the respectable and the rough" (Wilson 29). These "encounters" resulted in a collapsing of boundaries between the classes that were traditionally perceived as *natural* so that at times "respectable women were mistaken for prostitutes, with alarming consequences such as arrest and detention" (Wilson 30).

Woolf illustrates these previously shocking crossings in her unions of disparate characters through collective experiences; this occurs when multiple characters decipher the letters of the skywriter in *Mrs. Dalloway*, or anticipate the arrival of the train at its destination in *The Waves*. Clarissa Dalloway's party is a microcosm of the crowd in its gathering of discordant characters, who, as Woolf shows throughout the novel, nevertheless and unknowingly intersected in the communal experiences of the city; they hear Big Ben strike, witness the passage of royalty, or hear a motorcar backfire. In illustrating this phenomenon, Woolf conveys the interconnectivity of all peoples in the city. The communal experience of the city is significant in that the narrator "is provided with the ability to move from one stream of consciousness to another, by having the characters meet in the same places (London streets, a public park), perceive the same sounds, be present at the same incidents (the Prince of Wales's car passing by, the airplane flying overhead, etc.)" (Ricoeur 104). Clarissa's experience overlaps with her counterpart Septimus Warren Smith via these narrative techniques. *Mrs. Dalloway* is distinct for its layering of physical social realms over the course of Clarissa's day, from her morning passage with the crowds of London to her evening gathering with friends at her party. Her social context is further magnified by characters' regressions into their pasts. The way that Woolf presents a "cubed" portrait of Clarissa is through the perspectives of many observers rather than one single narrator revolving around the object. Each angle is uniquely inhabited and assists in the creation of a social community with which the object or person interacts. The person in the portrait in this case is not merely fragmented by the perceiver, but rather the individual interacts with others' views of her. This is an act of reciprocity that functions to form or shape identity.

Feminist phenomenologist Debra Bergoffen demonstrates the complex and necessary presence of the Other in the individual's world identity:

> The world, Husserl reminds us, is always experienced by us from some place or other. As we can never be in more than one place at once, and as there is no privileged place, we each need the perspective of the other (the view from the other side) to complement and fill out the meaning of the world as seen from our particular place. [. . .] The other's experiences of the world are imbedded in and necessary to mine. (Bergoffen 58)

This world-view perspective is idealistic and assumes that the self and the other will join forces and become "co-authors" of the world. However, Bergoffen argues that the opposite is typically true in a modern hierarchical society: "given current historical conditions, the body is gendered (and sexed?) according to the categories of patriarchy—categories which pervert the meanings of desire and subjectivity and which undermine the conditions of the possibility of reciprocity" (Bergoffen 61). Thus, the patriarchal ordering of society naturally declines reciprocity as Husserl imagines it as a fulfillment of perception, of a 'cube,' for example. Patriarchy readily divides humanity into two social classes of which one is the perceiving subject and the other is the perceived object. Furthermore, class distinctions and hierarchies—products of the patriarchal system—further exacerbate the inability for reciprocity.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, the characters enact a phenomenal world in which all the characters act both as perceiving subjects—with their consciousness exposed—but also as embodied subjects who are perceived by others as objects in their world. As she looks at her reflection in the mirror, Clarissa Dalloway thinks that she "had tried to be the same always, never showing a sign of all the other sides of her—faults, jealousies, vanities, suspicions" (37). Clarissa acknowledges the fragments that make up her own identity and how she obscures these myriad unseen sides of herself (which Woolf's narrator simultaneously reveals). Clarissa Dalloway is emblematic of the conflicts that can arise from the gendered perceiving subject; other men

(including her husband Richard and her lost soul mate Peter Walsh) perceive her as a woman who fulfills her role as a hostess of the party—in which she fulfills a gendered social function and is also perceived as a trifling hostess, or in other words, an object of their worlds. Clarissa reflects on their criticisms of her parties, considering how Peter might have thought she "was simply a snob in short" and how Richard probably thought she "was childish." Clarissa internally rejects her imagined notions of their criticisms and silently declares: "What she liked was simply life" (121).

In the modern city, a sense of the internal life and invisible bonds between people increases. Peter Walsh reflects on the imaginary connections he forges between himself and a young lady on the street; he "started after her to follow this woman, this excitement, which seemed even with its back turned to shed on him a light which connected them, which singled him out" (53). This connection arises as a product of the intermingling of strangers in the city.

> And it was smashed to atoms—his fun, for it was half made up, as he knew very well; invented, this escapade with the girl; made up, as one makes up the better part of life, he thought—making oneself up; making her up; creating exquisite amusement, and something more. But odd it was, and quite true; all this one could never share—it smashed to atoms. (54)

As he states that "one makes up the better part of life," he expresses the deep interiority of individuals; after industrialization and the war, life became increasingly conceptual, as Septimus's visions of his deceased comrade Evans are imagined. The novel intends to record internal life. However, Peter Walsh notes that "all this one could never share"; the incessant atoms of life are so compulsive, so constant, so deep, that it's impossible to share one's life experiences without actually living that life. The impossibility Woolf faces is how to represent life if it all smashes to atoms.

Woolf attempts to break each individual moment to expose its atoms, "turning it round, slowly, in the light" (*Dalloway* 79); any single moment is many-layered and supplies connective

tissue between the successive moments. She writes that her recorded memories of childhood "are misleading, because the things one does not remember are as important; perhaps they are more important. [. . .] Unfortunately, one only remembers what is exceptional" ("Sketch" 69). In trying to relate the story of her youth, she confronts those moments of *non-being* that function materially and inevitably to join moments of *being*. Peter Walsh reflects upon every moment of life, "every drop of it," and considers that a "whole lifetime was too short to bring out, now that one had acquired the power, the full flavour; to extract every ounce of pleasure, every shade of meaning; which both were so much more solid than they used to be, so much less personal" (*Dalloway* 79). Even the conscious, lived moments cannot be recorded—as the novel itself attempts to capture the atoms of one day; therefore, it is significant that Woolf does not isolate the day to Clarissa only, but rather, casts her out in a social context.

Clarissa reflects upon the power of time as she attempts to savor each moment of her aging life, but finds that even a still moment is full of with myriad dimensions:

> She was not old yet. She had just broken into her fifty-second year. Months and months of it were still untouched. June, July, August! Each still remained almost whole, and, as if to catch the falling drop, Clarissa (crossing to the dressing-table) plunged into the very heart of the moment, transfixed it, there—the moment of this June morning on which was the pressure of all the other mornings. (36-37)

Clarissa looks ahead to the future months as whole fragments of time that will successively contribute to the progression of her life experiences. In the present, however, time passes in drops or atoms that may be contained, and as she attempts to concentrate on each passing moment, she realizes the magnitude of any single moment and how the past is invoked in the present through the "pressure" of all previous mornings. Clarissa wishes to capture moments of the day so often forgotten, neglected, unseen; these are "moments of non-being." Woolf writes in "A Sketch of the Past" that each day contains "much more non-being than being" and that a "great part of every day is not lived consciously"; moreover, she suggests that the "real novelist can somehow convey

both sorts of being" (70). Clarissa, in her seizure of the "very heart of the moment," expresses a desire to reduce or capture moments of non-being. A large component of the cubist project is to expose the intricate steps of seeing that have become automated and invisible; Woolf likewise desires to grab hold of those processes of non-being and make them visible.

The experimental forms in cubist painting similarly evolved in response to efforts to capture the process of seeing in terms of what is *known* rather than what is *perceived*, the beginning of which consists in fragmenting the visible object into its successive temporal dimensions. These multiple dimensions are gathered into one perceptual glance on the canvas, so that in the process of constructing cubist portraits "what the eye sees is continually restructured according to what the mind knows" (Steward 72). That is, the mind engages in a structural system of comparisons, recognizing a shape on a canvas by its difference from stored shapes in the mind. The artist transforms our perceptual experience of objects by infusing our conceptual knowledge into a continual re-patterning of the object on the canvas or in the novel. Woolf explores cubism's philosophical realm in her assembly of character profiles that contain the depth of temporal psychology and the span of multiple perspectives. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf constructs a portrait of Clarissa from her "plunges" into her past with Peter Walsh and from the palette of social gatherings in the novel, namely the London crowd and Clarissa's party.

A *cube*, like all multi-dimensional objects or qualities, possesses a collective reality in the mind, but cannot be directly perceived in its entirety; rather, it relies on a temporal record constructed by memory. Maurice Merleau-Ponty describes the act of seeing a cube to illustrate the discordance between the visible world and the known world:

> From the point of view of my body I never see as equal the six sides of the cube, even if it is made of glass, and yet the word 'cube' has a meaning; the cube itself, the cube in reality, beyond its sensible appearances, has *its* six equal sides. As I move round it, I see the front face, hitherto a square, change its shape, then disappear, while the other sides come into view and one by one become squares.

> But the successive stages of this experience are for me merely the opportunity of conceiving the whole cube with its six equal and simultaneous faces, the intelligible structure which provides the explanation of it. (203-204)

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological model extends immediately to the theoretical properties of cubist painting and draws upon the work of David Hume;[9] in practice, Pablo Picasso's work is "instinctively patterned on an epistemology not unlike Hume's; we assume that a profile has another eye because of memory—we remember that every time we have observed a one-eyed profile in the past, the person has turned to us and disclosed a second eye" (Fitz 229). There is a strong disjunction between what we see and what we know, which cubism seeks to expose by splitting up appearances "to show convex and concave, frontal and lateral surfaces of an object simultaneously" (Steward 72), so that in one still moment the canvas reflects an evolving consciousness. The objective of cubism from a phenomenological perspective is not merely to isolate or emphasize temporal and perspectival fragments of the cube or object, but also to establish the cinematic process by which our perception of each face of the cube translates into a conceptual knowledge of the whole cube.

Picasso's cubist manipulations of time and space to re-create our experience of reality provide a theoretical setting for the study of his literary contemporaries. Analytical Cubism (1910-1912),[10] in particular, consisted of a monochromatic, intensive fragmentation of objects on the canvas layered in cubes. Gertrude Stein replicates the *techne* of Analytical Cubism by breaking whole essences into their successive parts; for example, she interrupts the flow of meaning in sentences with the sound and texture of individual words themselves, drawing attention to the fragments. Gertrude Stein notes that during the period of 1912-1917, there were actually "less cubes in cubism"; she writes that "Picasso commenced his attempt to express not things felt, not things remembered, not established in relations, but things which are there, really everything a human being can know at each moment of his existence and not an assembling of all his experiences" ("Picasso" 51-52). It was during this time period that Picasso's paintings

redefined cubism with the elimination of multiple cubes to release purely geometric works of 'flat surfaces,' or one-sided cubes. Stein interprets Picasso's work as a construction of reality out of the perceived and visible world, eliminating what is remembered or collected through the assembling of experiences over time. According to Stein, his later stages of cubism demonstrate an exercise in the isolation and framing of reality, favoring viewed-experience over lived-experience.

Gertrude Stein's relationship to cubism is best expressed by herself,[11] in her own analysis of the work of Picasso, where she writes that: "the souls of people do not interest him, that is to say for him the reality of life is in the head, the face and the body and this is for him so important, so persistent, so complete that it is not at all necessary to think of any other thing and the soul is another thing" ("Picasso" 21). Here we may interpret "soul" as the essence of a human being, the aura, the essence, the impression that an individual presses on the artist with his or her movements and mannerisms. Thus, in cubist painting, the impression of the Whole, or the Soul, is negated in order that reality can be constructed in terms of geometric forms, which is how Picasso *sees* reality in an isolable moment, unassuming of how we expect objects or individuals to appear, based on temporal memory.

Picasso, according to Stein, evolves from cubism to flat surfaces. Picasso's struggle with cubism was the *implied* third dimension not directly seen and experienced in one still moment; that moment must be remembered and reconstructed to enact the painting process. The movement to flat surfaces recognizes that the unseen sides of objects should not be remembered; they should be directly experienced. Stein draws upon her interpretation of Picasso's project as the process of isolating the still atoms of the visible world into her own writing. As her poem "Susie Asado" illustrates, Stein enacts cubist writing in her play upon words that serve as a "portrait" constructed from sounds:

> Susie Asado which is a told tray sure.
> A lean on the shoe this means slips slips hers.
> When the ancient light grey is clean it is yellow, it is a silver seller.
> This is a please this is a please there are the saids to jelly.
> These are the wets these say the sets to leave a crown to Incy. (259)

Although we cannot avoid making limited associations with the individual words (*ancient*, *clean*, *silver*), nevertheless, Stein prevents us from performing automatic interpretations of the combined words by interrupting the thread of meaning-making.[12] Her expressions do not immediately represent concepts beyond the sensory world as she favors visible fragments of words over invisible unities of meaning.[13] Cubism for Stein is the obliteration of time, space and memory, a negation of the lived-experience that forms the consciousness capable of visualizing all the sides of a cube in the mind but not with the eyes. In terms of writing, Stein negates our memory of meaning-making sentences that has conditioned our literate world. Stein writes that when Picasso drew the human form, "the features seen separately existed separately" (38)—that is to say that the *eyes* are a reality in themselves and should be noted as such in their composition. Picasso redefines representation with each individual *nose* cultivated into an individual work of art. Stein likewise arranges language to challenge our traditional patterns of reading so that we pay attention to the material existence of words. With her displacement of syntax, she makes the line: "Susie Asado which is a told tray sure" *sound* like a sentence, but there is nothing in our experience that prepares us to understand a "told tray sure."

Woolf replicates these methods of cubism in her use of the "party" to assemble characters; that is, the artist removes the visible element, word, or character from its "invisible" context (invisible because we're so accustomed to it).[14]

> Every time she gave a party she had this feeling of being something not herself, and that every one was unreal in one way; much more real in another. It was, she thought, partly their clothes, partly being taken out of their ordinary ways, partly the background, it was possible to say things you couldn't say anyhow else, things that needed an effort; possible to go much deeper. (171)

Clarissa speaks of the literary trope of the party, as a way for turning the ordinary into something new. Thus we can understand Woolf's project as using the party as a way for getting deeper into

the insides of her character and getting to know her characters, because we know how they interact in both deep and casual ways with one another: we are told that, "She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible, unseen; unknown; there being no more marrying, no more having of children now, but only this astonishing and rather solemn progress with the rest of them, up Bond Street, this being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa any more; this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway" (10-11). The normalcy of her life casts her as totally integrated with society. She is bodiless, an invisible center around which society revolves. To be "seen" or "known" requires the art of the novel.

Art critic John Adkins Richardson interprets cubism in a way that rejects Stein's concept of fragmenting wholes and favors a phenomenological approach to understanding how fragments *become* wholes. He challenges the notion that cubistic space is "dependent upon ideally geometric solids which are then fragmented by the shifting viewpoint of a moving observer" (133) and offers the alternative that Picasso and Braque in particular "do not portray fragments of single objects; rather, they create pictures from discontinuous fragments and elements of marks" (134). This theoretical perspective more closely resembles Woolf's work; she does not fragment her characters to disperse the individual into atoms, but rather she visibly accentuates these innately attached elements and bridges them in order to construct a unified identity that cannot be perceived in one single moment, an entity composed of elements that stretch temporal and spatial limitations. Septimus Warren Smith remarks that "leaves were alive; trees were alive. And the leaves being connected by millions of fibres with his own body, there on the seat, fanned it up and down; when the branch stretched he, too, made that statement" (*Dalloway* 22). This image of leaves as separate elements on a tree visibly connected by branches, aptly illustrates Woolf's rhizomatic[15] understanding of parts and their interconnected relationship to the whole.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Septimus is the character most closely tied to the creative process of the novel as he directly engages in modernist modes of seeing: "And there the motor car stood, with drawn blinds, and upon them a curious pattern like a tree, Septimus thought, and this gradual

drawing together of everything to one centre before his eyes, as if some horror had come almost to the surface and was about to burst into flames, terrified him" (15). Septimus's depth perception of the landscape before his eyes surfaces as if onto a canvas, converging onto one atemporal point. This process of seeing alludes directly to the redefinition of pictorial space in Analytical Cubism: "The centuries-old tradition of deep perspective is replaced by a shallow space in which there is little distance between figure and background. The eye is not led back into an imaginary distance, but is held on the painting's surface" (MacLeod 200). The irony is that Septimus's near-sighted field of vision presents to him a supra-reality that characterizes him as mentally unstable, whereas faith in an "imaginary distance" is the mark of sanity.

Woolf also invokes the presence of memory in the figure of Septimus, whose past experience of the war is superimposed onto the present as he thinks about "how there is no death" (25), no death of time because of the perpetual hauntings of his memory. As such, he frequently imagines the presence of his deceased wartime comrade Evans: "A voice spoke from behind the screen. Evans was speaking. The dead were with him" (98). Paul Ricoeur comments upon the temporal dimension of Woolf's novel and its impact on characters' identities:

> By giving a temporal depth to the narrative, the entanglement of the narrated present with the remembered past confers a psychological depth on the characters without, however, giving them a stable identity, so discordant are the glimpses the characters have of one another and of themselves. (104)

Identity is not a stable quality in Woolf's novels, but rather, plays out in a continual state of *becoming*. Part of that *becoming* consists of the repeated plunges into the past and the continually adapting present. In terms of cubism, what we see in our present identities changes according to what we know from our experience. Characters constantly adjust their sense of their own personality, while the reader becomes acquainted with the process of that developing identity, rather than any sense of a fixed or permanent identity.

Judith Oster writes that characters who engage in their mirrored representations are "acutely conscious of a non-unitary self"; these are characters who "confront their own fragmented subjectivities, and are only too well aware of the various, often conflicting, elements that are destabilizing, even as they are constructing, their identities" (61). Woolf frequently presents her characters in fragments using the narrative—itself a frame—to piece together identities. Oster briefly notes a mirror scene in *Mrs. Dalloway* when Clarissa looks at herself in a mirror, composing herself into 'one centre, one diamond' for public use, at the same time that she feels her private self to be fragmented and changing according to the moment she is in or the people she is with.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, "consciousness itself is a mirror that reflects multiple versions of the self, layered one upon another" (Stewart 72). This concept of continually restructuring an object according to what the mind knows resembles Oster's notion of the mirror, in which the character gains a new image and stores it for future use. As she looks at her reflection in the mirror, Clarissa Dalloway thinks:

> How many million times she had seen her face, and always with the same imperceptible contraction! She pursed her lips when she looked in the glass. It was to give her face point. That was her self—pointed; darted; definite. That was her self when some effort, some call on her to be her self, drew the parts together, she alone knew how different how incompatible and composed so for the world only into one centre, one diamond, one woman who sat in her drawing-room and made a meeting-point." (37)

Clarissa speaks of her self being dissembled into fragments, which she must reassemble into a whole for others to perceive; yet, Woolf simultaneously reveals these multiple "unseen" parts of Clarissa's inner life. Clarissa felt that "half the time she did things not simply, not for themselves; but to make people think this or that: perfect idiocy she knew...for no one was ever for a second taken in. Oh if she could have had her life over again! She thought, stepping on to the pavement,

could have looked even differently" (10). The act of gazing in the mirror and hoping to look differently only has relevance in the Self's acknowledgement of the Other. Portraits and mirrors function as props that simulate the Other's eyes.

J. Hillis Miller emphasizes Woolf's intricate exploration of the "nuances of relationship between mind and mind" (177). Beyond spoken speech, Woolf shapes the relationships between her characters by the inner thoughts and feelings they experience toward one another. Ricoeur writes that the narrative is delayed by "ample excursions into the past, which constitute so many events in thought, interpolated in long sequences, between the brief spurts of action" (103). This narrative technique is phenomenological in its employment of memory as a device for constructing character; it is the knowledge of Clarissa's past with Peter Walsh that allows us to assess her current relationship with both him and Richard.

In bestowing a psychological depth on her characters, Woolf re-emphasizes the vast landscape of the individual mind, so vast that the present interaction between characters barely pierces the surface, while the narrator brews a persistent sliding of psychology beneath this surface. Ricoeur writes, "the fits of memory, the calculations by which each character attempts to guess the conjectures the others are making about his or her appearance, thoughts, secrets—these form a series of loops that gives its specific distension to the narrated time's extension" (104). This type of exchange between characters is evident in the meeting between Clarissa and Peter upon his return from India. The disconnection between Peter and Clarissa is noted in Woolf's narrative style that interweaves the internal and external thoughts and communication of both characters, for the "art of fiction here consists in weaving together the world of action and that of introspection, of mixing together the sense of everydayness and that of the inner self" (Ricoeur 104).

When Peter arrives at Clarissa's home, she is mending her green dress in preparation for the party she is hosting that evening. In their conversation, the gap between thought and speech—demonstrated by the disparity between four words of dialogue and fourteen words of conscious

thoughts—evidences the distance between these two people. Peter's verbal words don't align with his thoughts about her—he thinks about how she's grown older and then thinks he shouldn't say anything to her about it. Peter, the reader, and the narrator know this fact, but Clarissa, with whom he is interacting directly, does not. He tries to mask his inner embarrassment about being there with her by pulling out his pen-knife, an object of distraction and aggression.[16] The narrative shifts to Clarissa's point of view and communicates her thoughts:

> Exactly the same, thought Clarissa; the same queer look; the same check suit; a little out of the straight his face is, a little thinner, dryer, perhaps, but he looks awfully well, and just the same.
>
> "How heavenly it is to see you again!" she exclaimed. He had his knife out. That's so like him, she thought.
>
> He had only reached town last night, he said; would have to go down into the country at once; and how was everything, how was everybody—Richard? Elizabeth?
>
> "And what's all this?" he said, tilting his pen-knife towards her green dress.
>
> He's very well dressed, thought Clarissa; yet he always criticizes *me*. (40-41)

Clarissa silently assesses her first critical impressions of Peter, but more significantly, her thoughts contain language that juxtaposes the present with the past: "Exactly the same," "That's so like him," "yet he always criticizes *me*." Her "portrait" of Peter contains temporal dimensions based on her previous experiences with him and the language she employs conceptualizes his personality, connecting the disparate external elements of his appearance, the check suit and the pen-knife. The reader's visual picture of Peter is colored by Clarissa's previous experiences with him—the superimposition of the past onto the present.

In addition to the concept that a cubist portrait is not the result of a moving observer, but the result of connecting discontinuous fragments, one can consider Woolf's literary trope of the London crowd as a way of connecting viewpoints, rather than fragmenting them. Clarissa, toward

the end of the novel, expresses her dissatisfaction of "not knowing people; not being known" (152), a theory that illuminates Woolf's own preoccupation with the seen/unseen aspects of individuals. This dissatisfaction—which is inevitable if we locate this knowledge in the obscured interior perceptions of individuals—disrupts not only the conscious faculty that enables us to *know* other people, but also the mutual *recognition* necessary to existence. Clarissa's theoretical resolution to this dilemma is her realization that identities can be found, not "here, here, here" within the body, "but everywhere" in the external objects of the world, in the people and places that "completed them." Thus, there is an interplay between the necessity of the crowd to understand character and the trope's impact on the narrative, enabling the activation of other perspectival minds.

Woolf notes in "A Sketch of the Past" that "one's life is not confined to one's body and what one says or does; one is living all the time in relation to certain background rods or conceptions" (72). The tunneling process—which she describes as that digging into the consciousness of her characters and seeing the caves connect deep in their consciousness—is noted by the connection between Septimus and Clarissa; it represents the interconnection of all humanity. The social milieu of Clarissa is included in the portrait, which means that the frame includes the world that resides outside of Clarissa. The subject's assessment of objects is colored by previous memory and judgment of the object or individual. The novelist must select from infinite depths of time and expanses of space; this selection process is subjective in and of itself. Woolf tries to invoke the presence of the past to replicate the motion of knowledge, the process of becoming.

Chapter 2

Lily Briscoe's Painting: The Empty Steps in *To the Lighthouse*

> And to everybody there was always this sense of unlimited resources, she supposed; one after another, she, Lily, Augustus Carmichael, must feel, our apparitions, the things you know us by, are simply childish. Beneath it is all dark, it is all spreading, it is unfathomably deep; but now and again we rise to the surface and that is what you see us by.
>
> —Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*

"One wanted fifty pairs of eyes to see with, she reflected. Fifty pairs of eyes were not enough to get round that one woman with, she thought" (198). In the aftermath of Mrs. Ramsay's death in *To the Lighthouse*, Lily Briscoe muses that in order to penetrate the essence and identity of Mrs. Ramsay, one set of eyes would need to "steal through keyholes and surround her where she sat knitting, talking, sitting silent in the window alone" (198) and capture a successive external portrait of Mrs. Ramsay in all her settings. Another pair would pass into Mrs. Ramsay's consciousness to see what "stirred and trembled in her mind" and unveil responses to questions of perception: "What did the hedge mean to her, what did the garden mean to her, what did it mean to her when a wave broke?" (198). Yet to fully embrace Mrs. Ramsay's being, even these "fifty pairs of eyes" are insufficient, thinks Lily, as she romanticizes the "chambers of the mind and heart" of Mrs. Ramsay, imagining them as "treasures in the tombs of kings, tablets bearing sacred inscriptions, which if one could spell them out, would teach one everything" (51).

Virginia Woolf, in her coordination of narrative perspectives on multiple levels, ventures to construct "fifty pairs of eyes" in her portrait of Mrs. Ramsay, including the omniscient eyes of the narrator, the external eyes of the other characters, and the internal eyes of the character herself. It is through this interspatial technique that Woolf unfolds the identity of her characters under optimal surveillance. Ann Banfield describes this method in terms of an "infinite number of possible perspectives" that constitute Woolf's universe and "like London at night, out of a

multitude of rooms and houses, it is punctuated by points of light, private worlds" (109). Although Woolf enacts this privilege of traversing the spatial and temporal boundaries of her characters, she also acknowledges that "fifty pairs of eyes" cannot satisfy the breadth and depth of any identity. This shortcoming—evident in the all-seeing, all-knowing omniscient narrator's occasional and unorthodox lapses in knowledge about the characters—indicates Woolf's rejection of identity as static, whole, and determinate. Lily, without access to more than one perspective, wonders early in the novel how "did one know one thing or another thing about people, sealed as they were?" (51); yet, even "unsealed" in the eyes of the narrator identity is slippery, as Lily herself eventually discovers and finally wonders "how many shapes one person might wear" (195).

This concept of the multiplicity of perspectives separated by the skins of bodies (or the walls of private rooms) is juxtaposed with the desire for aesthetic unity in the novel. While Lily Briscoe and Virginia Woolf labor over Mrs. Ramsay's character in the novel—one seeking knowledge of her identity, the other creating and unleashing it—a parallel aesthetic world unfolds. Lily and Woolf as "artists" both contest the question of unity, or the merging of elements in their projects, as an "awkward space" (84) in the middle of Lily's painting and the temporally complex interlude in the middle of Woolf's novel. The denouement of these projects results in the artists' acceptance of a unity shaped by relations rather than by oneness. Lily's quest for "oneness" with Mrs. Ramsay as well as her search for "oneness" in her painting become empty attempts to achieve some invisible, or nonexistent, center. The novel similarly develops patterns of unity through a series of relations between characters and aesthetic elements, with the center of the novel functioning itself as a fleeting link between the two massive endpoints in time, suggesting the absence of a unified center not only in art, but in human interactions and identity constructions.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf illustrates primarily through dialogic interchanges between characters the vast interior world contained by an individual beyond that which can be verbally

expressed in an external social world. In contrast, *To the Lighthouse* is marked by Woolf's assignment of characters as gazers, so that the act of seeing takes precedence over the act of speaking. Woolf specifically positions Lily Briscoe to work out the issue, not of the spatial distance of inner and outer worlds as in *Mrs. Dalloway*, but of the visual and temporal gaps in her experience of another character. It follows that the narrative construction of *To the Lighthouse* consists of various intersecting planes of relationships, both aesthetic and interpersonal, structured on the compositions of Lily's painting and Woolf's narrative, and in interrogation of Lily's interpersonal relationships and Woolf's intersubjective approach to identity formation. This study of Woolf's synchronization of these relationships seeks to illuminate her conception of identity as a plural, diachronic, and perceptual entity that questions the boundaries of frames.

In his magnum opus *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature,* Erich Auerbach unravels Woolf's modernist approach to the representation of character in *To the Lighthouse* in his explication of a scene which consists of Mrs. Ramsay measuring James's leg to approximate the length of the stocking she is knitting for the Lighthouse keeper's son. The internal action of this scene records the thoughts primarily of Mrs. Ramsay, but also briefly shifts to Mr. Bankes, James, a Swiss maid, and what Auerbach describes as the "nameless ones" (536). He affirms that in *To the Lighthouse* "we are given not merely one person whose consciousness (that is, the impressions it receives) is rendered, but many persons, with frequent shifts from one to the other" (536). Auerbach extracts from his close analysis of this single passage a more general theory on the essential elements of Woolf's narrative technique as he positions Mrs. Ramsay as an objective reality that the narrative form attempts to define.

> She is, to be sure, an enigma and such she basically remains, but she is as it were encircled by the content of all the various consciousnesses directed upon her (including her own); there is an attempt to approach her from many sides as closely as human possibilities of perception and expression can succeed in doing. (536)

The novel is mimetic in its creation of Mrs. Ramsay's objective reality, but its construction is based on the non-mimetic agglomeration of subjective impressions. Woolf experiments in modes of seeing as she employs multiple frames of reference in constructing a portrait of Mrs. Ramsay's identity. Identity itself cannot be represented from one perspective, since it depends on its construction by others, and it cannot be represented in one moment, since it is mutable. Consequently, one individual's visible and direct experience of another person is challenged by these conditions. The modernist novel, however, may unleash objective realities as products of intersubjectivity in its creation of a godlike universe, intangibly suspended over a room of people, like the image of the "mist" in *Mrs. Dalloway.*

Woolf is employing free indirect style,[17] a narrative structure that ultimately empowers a character to define another. Also known as "free indirect discourse," this form of third-person narration, as defined by John Bender, "absorbs the narrator within an impersonal, apparently unmediated representation that creates the illusion of entry into the consciousness of fictional characters" (177). In James Joyce's *Ulysses,* free indirect style is marked by shifts in tense and person, oftentimes within the same sentence; the shift from third to first person and from past to present tense in this example marks the transition from third-person narration to first-person narration: "On the doorstep he felt in his hip pocket for the latchkey. Not there. In the trousers I left off. Must get it. Potato I have" (46). Here it is Leopold Bloom who assumes control of the narrative, but other characters including Stephen Dedalus also weave in and out of narrative control. Jane Austen's implementation of free indirect style is more transparent than Joyce's and had a larger influence on Woolf. In *Pride and Prejudice,* for example, the reader's perception of Mr. Darcy is navigated by Elizabeth Bennett's control of the narrative perspective. As Elizabeth is exposed to various unfolding elements of Mr. Darcy's character, she adjusts her initial critical portrait of him to a more flattering one; simultaneously, the reader undergoes a conceptual reassessment of Mr. Darcy through Elizabeth's eyes and therefore experiences human relations and identity formations in a process of growth and learning. Bender's definition of free indirect

style mirrors Austen's use: "fictional consciousness is experienced as actuality through the convention of transparency, epitomized by the device of free indirect discourse, which presents thought as if it were directly accessible" (203). The process of unfolding or becoming is exposed via this narrative style.

Woolf, in her adoption of free indirect style, directly invades the psychological nature of her characters and presents multiple consciousnesses in a single novel presenting a far more "communal"[18] contribution to individuals than Austen in terms of narrative style. Woolf constructs a portrait of an individual through multiple subjectivities, so that one character's perspective contends with the other without direct mediation from the authorial narrator; Bender comments that free indirect style "creates the illusion that the unvoiced mental life of fictional personages exists as unmediated presence" (211). Woolf also invades the consciousness of the individual being depicted, so that there is ongoing tension and indeterminacy in the identity of her characters. The narrative perspective rejects stasis as the novel itself grows through the accrual of knowledge and experience, like the characters do themselves, so that the novel reflects lived-experience.

Ann Banfield characterizes Woolf's novel as a Leibizian monadology, an atomized universe—not an "unbroken whole"—in which the "table is not one table, but many" (108). Mrs. Ramsay herself is the product of Woolf's interplay of atoms, or monads, and to understand her is to "see" the composite universe that identifies her. Woolf sculpts her play of aesthetics, narrative perspectives, human relations, and character identities according to this concept of atomization. Her frequent implementation of dinner-party scenes as a scheme for gathering her characters into one time and place where their subjectivities may collide is most illustrative of the technique. In "The Window" chapter of *To the Lighthouse* Woolf prefaces the dining-room scene with the sound of a gong, beckoning the household guests to descend for dinner, requiring that

> those scattered about, in attics, in bedrooms, on little perches of their own, reading, writing, putting the last smooth to their hair, or fastening dresses, must

> leave all that, and the little odds and ends on their washing-tables and dressing-tables, and the novels on the bed-tables, and the diaries which were so private, and assemble in the dining-room for dinner. (82)

Each character represents one private universe, which Woolf signifies through the sum collocation of each body in a separate room. Banfield writes that the "lights of human habitations" in Woolf's novels "indicate here and there occupied perspectives" and that these myriad "points of space and time, of 'night and day,' events, sense-data, crowd the atomist's vision, all characteristically plural" (109). As the characters abandon their private rooms, they leave behind a now darkened, unoccupied space, the "dark side [of the mind] that comes uppermost in solitude," and carry with themselves the "light side that shows in company" ("How to Read" 3). They leave behind uninhabited spaces—a trace of themselves—that forms a part of them as much as their social appearance. Dark and light shades and psychological and social realms form identity, which includes the inside of the frame as well as the outside. Who, and how, one *looks* at the "painting" is as relevant as the painting itself. At the dinner table, all bodies visibly intersect with one another in surface interactions, their bodies acting as traveling rooms, the dark interior, even darker when witnessed from the outside. The narrator, or atomist, enters into each character's angle, the "plates making white circles" (*Lighthouse* 83) on the dinner table signifying the multiple vantage points adjoined to the table.

When all persons have descended to the dining room, an agitated Mrs. Ramsay reflects that "Nothing seems to have merged. They all sat separate. And the whole of the effort of merging and flowing and creating rested on her" (83). This dividedness descends from their separation in their rooms, with the figure of the "room" functioning as "both the perspective and what houses it, dividing it from other perspectives and giving what is shapeless a form, like a mollusk shell enclosing 'something alive in the centre'" (Banfield 111). This Foucauldian notion of what Banfield phrases as "giving what is shapeless a form" (111), further allocates the characters into categorical slots or frames rather than considering the conceptual space that

travels beyond the body over time. When Mrs. Ramsay's guests convene at the table, their psychic space or field of perception remains obscured, visible only to the perceiver and narrator. Throughout the course of the dinner, Woolf orchestrates a narration representative of this double-sided enclosure, both entering the perspective of each dinner guest and viewing the guest from the outside.

Banfield describes this property of perspectives in terms of spatial boundaries, which she interprets in two ways: "as a surface whose borders separate a portion from the surrounding space, its surface a mirror, or, alternatively, as a container enclosing an interior perceptible only from within, but invisible from without—a kind of 'black box'" (110), which plays upon the figure of the frame. Though Woolf's narrator slips in and out of almost all the guests at the dining table, the shifts between Mrs. Ramsay and Lily are most relevant to this discussion of invisible unities and problematic relations in the novel. To begin with, as Mrs. Ramsay resignedly acknowledges that it is her duty to commence dinner conversation—or no one will—finally, ignited by her pity for Mr. Bankes, "she began all this business, as a sailor not without weariness sees the wind fill his sail and yet hardly wants to be off again and thinks how, had the ship sunk, he would have whirled round and round and found rest on the floor of the sea" (84).

Woolf then shifts to Lily's inner perspective of Mrs. Ramsay, regressing back one point in time to when Mrs. Ramsay is only on the verge of speaking. Lily perceives Mrs. Ramsay's weariness and imagines her "drifting into that strange no-man's land where to follow people is impossible and yet their going inflicts such a chill on those who watch them that they always try at least to follow them with their eyes as one follows a fading ship until the sails have sunk beneath the horizon" (84). The narration then catches up in time and records Lily's observation of Mrs. Ramsay's move to engage Mr. Bankes, which she imagines as if "the ship had turned and the sun had struck its sails again" (84), amusing herself with wondering why Mrs. Ramsay pities him.

There is no external indication that Mrs. Ramsay speaks out of pity or with weariness, nor why a sailboat analogy should be employed from both of the women's perspectives. It is this

overarching narrator who links the experiences of both women, encroaching upon them both thematically and aesthetically. In content, both frames of reference select the atom of thought that Mrs. Ramsay speaks to Mr. Bankes specifically "out of pity." More intrusive is the aesthetic invocation of the sailor analogy to characterize *both* women's perceptions of *Mrs. Ramsay's* sentiments. Therefore, although the narration shifts from one frame to the other, Woolf invades and shapes their lives as the storyteller. It is she who isolates which moments in their experience will expose a similitude of their minds (after all, in both women's minds sundries of thoughts must flow even in that fleeting interval of time between Mrs. Ramsay's contemplation of conversation and her act of speaking to Mr. Bankes), and in doing so, Woolf detects (or fabricates) a point of psychical contact between the two characters. These concurrences transpire more frequently in *To the Lighthouse* than *Mrs. Dalloway*, a novel marked more notably by the disjunctions between characters' minds than by their conjunctions (or Woolf's craft of uniting them).

Woolf creates invisible unities out of visible relationships in the novel; therefore, it is not surprising that she also finds ways to forge bonds between characters by highlighting their parallel lines of thought, both known and unknown to themselves. The narrator in the above example exposes a coincidence unknown to Lily and Mrs. Ramsay. Several times in the novel Lily experiences what she believes to be known parallels with other men, for example with Mr. Tansley and Mr. Carmichael. During the same dinner party, Lily senses that Mr. Tansley, her main antagonist, feels an urgency to assert his intellect in the dinner conversation; he needs for someone to ask him his opinion. "Sitting opposite him, could she not see, as in an X-ray photograph, the ribs and thigh bones of the young man's desire to impress himself, lying dark in the mist of his flesh—that thin mist which convention had laid over his burning desire to break into the conversation?" (90-91). Lily perpetually questions herself what lies beneath Mrs. Ramsay's flesh with no success, but here she easily trespasses Mr. Tansley's fleshy boundaries

and "sees" his desire, which she locates in the corporeal "mist of his flesh" rather than the dark chambers of the mind.

She later imagines that there is more than one way of knowing people, one of which was "to know the outline, not the detail, to sit in one's garden and look at the slopes of a hill running down into the distant heather" (195). The outline, what manifests itself in the fleshy exterior of the body, is the way in which she knew Mr. Carmichael and Mr. Tansley.[19] At the dining table, though Lily expressed an understanding of Mr. Tansley's desire to be spoken to, she later withdraws her "knowledge" of him.

> She had done the usual trick—been nice. She would never know him. He would never know her. Human relations were all like that, she thought, and the worst (if it had not been for Mr. Bankes) were between men and women. Inevitably these were extremely insincere she thought. (92)

"Knowledge," then, of another person, constitutes more in this novel than simply transcending the barriers of the body, and accessing activities of the mind. Lily had called it an intimacy that was "nothing that could be written in any language known to men." That is, conscious thoughts shared between two people, which are rendered in the novel through language, falls short of an intimacy acquired through sensations of the body, and so Lily leans upon Mrs. Ramsay's knees "close as she could get, smiling to think that Mrs. Ramsay would never know the reason of that pressure" (51).

Lily's certainty about her estimation of these men in the novel varies starkly from her estimation of Mrs. Ramsay, about whom she experiences waves of ambiguity. At the dining table, though Lily unknowingly ascertains Mrs. Ramsay's pity for Mr. Bankes, a few lines later, she questions this impression of Mrs. Ramsay, thinking that "it was one of those misjudgments of hers that seemed to be instinctive and to arise from some need of her own rather than of other people's. He is not in the least pitiable. He has his work" (84). She questions her judgments that are based only on the expressions of Mrs. Ramsay's body or "outline" because she is seeking

oneness with her, trying to know her in another way, which is the impenetrable inner core of the soul, the "black box" as Banfield described it. Lily grapples with Mrs. Ramsay's identity, not only to understand her, but to be her, to forge such an intense union through love, a union she does not desire with the men of the novel.

> What art was there, known to love or cunning, by which one pressed through into those secret chambers? What device for becoming, like waters poured into one jar, inextricably the same, one with the object one adored? Could the body achieve, or the mind, subtly mingling in the intricate passages of the brain? or the heart? Could loving, as people called it, make her and Mrs. Ramsay one? (51)

Lily's goal toward oneness runs simultaneously with grasping Mrs. Ramsay's identity[20]. This goal is problematized by Woolf's representation of the self as non-unitary.

Self-image largely resides in the mind based on the constantly changing memory of ourselves; looking in a mirror calls into question our current mental image, subtly causing us to revise that image in order to fuse both inner and outer images. Oster writes, "Typically there is some discrepancy between the actual, surface external mirror image that any onlooker could see and some sort of interior, mental self—whether wished-for, or felt, or despised—which prompts—or results from—the questions: who and what am I? which is the real me?" (59). In an early scene of the novel, Mrs. Ramsay speaks severely to her daughters about their criticism of Charles Tansley. At that moment, she looks in the mirror and sees herself as her children possibly did, with "her hair grey, her cheek sunk, at fifty, she thought, possibly she might have managed things better—her husband; money; his books" (6). In seeing this reflection of herself, juxtaposing her mental self-image with the image reflected to others, she realizes that her daughters "could sport with infidel ideas which they had brewed for themselves of a life different from hers; in Paris, perhaps; a wilder life; not always taking care of some man or other" (6-7). However, she maintains her own mental self-image thinking that "for her own part she would never for a single second regret her decision, evade difficulties, or slur over duties" (6).

Mrs. Ramsay's discomfort with her growing consciousness of the gap between herself and the youth surrounding her, causes her to avoid her reflection in the mirror, that is, her confrontation with the way others see her. When her children Jasper and Rose assist her in dressing for dinner and selecting her jewels, Mrs. Ramsay experiences this tension. "Which looked best against her black dress? Which did indeed, said Mrs. Ramsay absent-mindedly, looking at her neck and shoulders (but avoiding her face) in the glass" (80). Upon discovering that Minta Doyle, one of those "golden-reddish girls, with something flying, something a little wild and harum-scarum about them" (99), becomes engaged to Paul Rayley, she again feels the pressure of her age: "But indeed she was not jealous, only, now and then, when she made herself look in her glass, a little resentful that she had grown old, perhaps, by her own fault." (99)

Mrs. Ramsay reenters her mental self-image when she is alone in the evening:

> All the being and the doing, expansive, glittering, vocal, evaporated; and one shrunk, with a sense of solemnity, to being oneself, a wedge-shaped core of darkness, something invisible to others. Although she continued to knit, and sat upright, it was thus that she felt herself; and this self having shed its attachments was free for the strangest adventures. (62)

She identifies herself as an invisible "wedge-shaped core of darkness," which resembles the "triangular purple shape" (52) that Lily uses to uneasily depict Mrs. Ramsay in her painting, for at that early point in the novel, she was still unsure as to how to "see" Mrs. Ramsay, hence, her "invisibility." However, it is in this state that Mrs. Ramsay feels like "herself"; it is the "black-box" that she believes is visible to herself only. Significantly, she also perceives this "self" as having "shed its attachments." In so many other ways, Woolf configures identity in its relationship to other characters, its "attachments" to the world, and as something that does not exist in itself. Being "invisible to others" and even externally invisible to herself, and relying only on her mental self-image, Mrs. Ramsay has a more stable and unitary vision of her self-identity.

Mrs. Ramsay ambiguously affirms her preference for depths over surfaces when she thinks that "our apparitions, the things you know us by, are simply childish. Beneath it is all dark, it is all spreading, it is unfathomably deep; but now and again we rise to the surface and that is what you see us by" (62). It is this rising to the surface that complicates the inner/outer duality. Mrs. Ramsay contemplates the rising of herself to the surface as she gazes into the strokes of light of the Lighthouse:

> It was odd, she thought, how if one was alone, one leant to inanimate things; trees, streams, flowers; felt they expressed one; felt they became one; felt they knew one, in a sense were one; felt an irrational tenderness thus (she looked at that long steady light) as for oneself. There rose, and she looked and looked with her needles suspended, there curled up off the floor of the mind, rose from the lake of one's being, a mist, a bride to meet her lover. (64-65)

The last phrase is significant to the main social tension in the novel, which is the issue of marriage. Mrs. Ramsay herself emits an image of the "Angel in the House" as mother and wife, imaged in memorable scenes with her son James either reading him a fairytale or knitting a brown stocking. Lily, a middle-aged, unmarried artist, affixes herself as a gazer out on the lawn capturing Mrs. Ramsay and James in her landscape painting. The two women lie at opposite extremes, neither extraordinarily content with her life. But it is Mrs. Ramsay who works to convince Lily of her necessity to marry (Mr. Bankes, for example), suggesting that "unity" with another person is achieved via matrimonial unions; an individual can continue to be "complete" in a matrimonial relationship. Mrs. Ramsay, in the passage above, envisions the bride's inner self rising to the surface as she unites herself with a lover, suggesting that via love a woman's inner workings may express themselves on the surface. This assertion recalls Lily's earlier musings, asking "Could loving, as people called it, make her and Mrs. Ramsay one? for it was not knowledge but unity that she desired" (51).

Lily confronts the issue of marriage (or relations) and unities particularly in the symbolic aspects of her art. While she is painting on the lawn, her potential lover Mr. Bankes catches a glimpse of this painting and interrogates her on its structural logic: "What did she wish to indicate by the triangular purple shape, 'just there'? he asked" (52). His position as male—though he is less critical than Charles Tansley and his mantra that "Women can't paint, women can't write" (48)—calls into question the authority of her aesthetic principles. Her response to Mr. Bankes surprises him, in part because she reduces the sacred mother-child image to a dark, indistinguishable shape:

> It was Mrs. Ramsay reading to James, she said. She knew his objection—that no one could tell it for a human shape. But she had made no attempt at likeness, she said. For what reason had she introduced them then? he asked. Why indeed?—except that if there, in that corner, it was bright, here, in this, she felt the need of darkness. (52)

Two issues are thus raised in this exchange on her painting: one, the issue of compositional unity and two, the issue of representation. Both concepts are unfamiliar to Mr. Bankes who says that his knowledge of aesthetics is biased toward a painting in his drawing room of "the cherry trees in blossom on the banks of the Kennet," and so he questions Lily's prioritization of "the relations of masses, of lights and shadows" (53). Moreover, his stance is biased by the status and economics attributed to his painting of the cherry trees, "which painters had praised, and valued at a higher price than he had given for it" (53). When Mr. Bankes asks out of interest for Lily to elaborate on her own theory of painting, her eyes dim and she submits herself to the scene in front of them in a subdued, absent-minded manner. It becomes clear she is still struggling with her vision.

As with *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf's techniques in *To the Lighthouse* can be cast in terms of cubist aesthetics. Art critic Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, a contemporary of Woolf and the cubist painters, contributed to the movement's theoretical development in "Rise of Cubism," published in a series on modern art. Lily's geometric depiction of Mrs. Ramsay and James resembles Picasso's preference for spatial relationships and abstraction of forms from a human shape, rather

than exact likeness, which "made it possible to 'represent' the form of objects and their position in space instead of attempting to imitate them through illusionistic means" (Kahnweiler 11). Lily's art, in fact, evades a mimetic reality in deference to the relations of forms. For Picasso, this disruption of reality allows that "the rhythmisation necessary for the coordination of the individual parts into the unity of the work of art can take place without producing disturbing distortions, since the object in effect is no longer 'present' in the painting, that is, since it does not yet have the least resemblance to actuality" (Kahnweiler 12). Lily's challenge is to convert a balance of relations into a Whole, which removing the object of representation assists in doing. Her ensuing conception of the painting, however, attempts to avoid this theory of relations (analogous to her avoidance of marital relations). In the first chapter, Lily Briscoe searches for alternatives to resolve the problem of oneness: "Yes, I shall put the tree further in the middle; then I shall avoid that awkward space. That's what I shall do. That's what has been puzzling me" (84).

Literary critic Thomas G. Matro focuses directly on Lily's struggle with the search for unity in his essay "Only Relations: Vision and Achievement in *To the Lighthouse*." He writes:

> In search of essences, of oneness, Lily will in fact find only relations, virtual juxtapositions or contradictions, and when these relations formally appear on her canvas or in the similarly structured novel, they reflect the manner of perceiving and responding that Lily, though an artist, shares from the beginning not only with Mrs. Ramsay but also with the other main characters of the novel. (212)

Matro considers that Lily knows the solution to the awkward space in her painting involves connecting the two masses, but she resists it in her "lingering desire for a different kind of unity, for a wholeness that overcomes or transcends entities" (216). Lily ultimately finds unity in her painting by drawing a line down the center of her painting, where she had alternatively considered placing a cluster of branches, a tree, or a purple wedge representing Mrs. Ramsay and James on the steps. None of these alternatives is agreeable to her, for she thinks that any

connection or establishment of relations disrupts unity rather than creates it, and this thinking drives her perception of marriage as an unfulfilling unity.

She arrives at her final vision in the concluding lines of the novel: "She looked at the steps; they were empty; she looked at her canvas; it was blurred. With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision" (208-09). There is a strong signal in these lines that points to an aesthetics beyond Matro's theory of relations: the empty steps. In "The Window"—the chapter that signifies Mrs. Ramsay's living presence, that which is perceptual and within the frame of the "window"—Mrs. Ramsay and James occupied the space on the steps and it was in this middle part of the painting that was cause for Lily's complications in "seeing." When Lily finally achieves her "vision" in her painting in "The Lighthouse" chapter, it comes as a result of Mrs. Ramsay's absence and is motivated by Lily's memory of her. The function of memory has a strong aesthetic import in modern art. Charles Baudelaire writes in "The Painter of Modern Life," in reference to Constantin Guys' painting, that "all good and true draughtsmen draw from the image imprinted on their brains, and not from nature. [. . .] In this way a struggle is launched between the will to see all and forget nothing and the faculty of memory, which has formed the habit of a lively absorption of general colour and of silhouette, the arabesque of contour" (16). In creating from memory, the artist in fact gathers together a series of impressions of the model as it moves and changes expression in order to convey a sense of time onto the synchronic canvas. The physical presence of the model eventually becomes a distraction for the artist, writes Baudelaire, "its multiplicity of details disconcerts and as it were paralyses their principal faculty" (16). Lily is equally disconcerted when Mrs. Ramsay, the "model," is present in her field of vision.

In her essay "Life and the Novelist" (1927)—published the same year as *To the Lighthouse*—Woolf writes on this subject of the relationship between observation of human life and the recreation of it. The reproduction of life as the product of impressions received is perhaps

the most mimetic on the surface, but it does not penetrate the essence of life. In her personification of "life," Woolf writes:

> Stridently, clamorously, life is forever pleading that she is the proper end of fiction and that the more he sees of her and catches of her the better his book will be. She does not add, however, that she is grossly impure; and that the side she flaunts uppermost is often, for the novelist, of no value whatever. Appearance and movement are the lures she trails to entice him after her, as if these were her essence, and by catching them he gained his goal. ("Life" 135)

Woolf claims that many of the errors committed in fiction writing—especially realist novels, such as those by Arnold Bennett—have involved this obsession with recording the minute details of a visible human life. On the other hand, she also does not approve of the artist secluded in her studio pretending to write of life, when she is actually rarely exposed to it. Woolf proposes a mixture of the two processes, one that begins with direct observation and ends in internal reflection on the event. She thus differentiates between the act of seeing with the eyes and that of seeing with the mind; one records external impressions while the other may capture the accumulative essences.

The ideal artist observes life and then returns to his studio and allows the perceived images to become absorbed. It is through this process that the memory of the observance produces the more vivid account of human life.

> He must expose himself to life; he must risk the danger of being led away and tricked by her deceitfulness; he must seize her treasure from her and let her trash run to waste. But at a certain moment he must leave the company and withdraw, alone, to that mysterious room where his body is hardened and fashioned into permanence by processes which, if they elude the critic, hold for him so profound a fascination. ("Life" 136)

It is when the artist retreats to his solitary room that life is "curbed; it is killed. It is mixed with this, stiffened with that, brought into contrast with something else" ("Life" 131), so that when the final product is released, the surface elements of the visible experience have all but dissipated and all that remains is the "substance upon which our rush of indiscriminating emotion was founded" ("Life" 132).

Mrs. Ramsay functions as a figurative model for the painting in that parallel to Lily's work is Lily's longing for an intimate connection with her, a transgression of temporal and spatial boundaries that brings her in touch with the character of Mrs. Ramsay's soul, her identity. Baudelaire likens the process of painting as an "intense effort of memory that evokes and calls back to life—a memory that says to everything, 'Arise Lazarus'" (17). Both Lily Briscoe the artist and Virginia Woolf the novelist transport the reader through a series of visible and invisible experiences of Mrs. Ramsay in the novel. The novel structurally contains Mrs. Ramsay's living, physical presence, viewed by Lily, in "The Window" and is mirrored by her dead, physical absence in "The Lighthouse." It is not until Mrs. Ramsay is absent in the novel that her identity is realized through the recollections of the other characters, especially Lily and Mr. Ramsay. Woolf achieves a full portrait of her character in isolating two parallel days of her "life" through her presence and the memory of her, and it is this memory that achieves this rebirth of her "essence."

Mrs. Ramsay's death is noted in "Time Passes" through an image of absence, with Mr. Ramsay, "stumbling along a passage one dark morning, stretched his arms out, but Mrs. Ramsay having died rather suddenly the night before, his arms, though stretched out, remained empty" (128). The negation of her physical presence outlines the remaining traces of her spiritual presence symbolically in his arms. Lily's contemplation of Mrs. Ramsay's identity questions: "How did she differ? What was the spirit in her, the essential thing, by which, had you found a crumpled glove in the corner of a sofa, you would have known it, from its twisted finger, hers indisputably?" (49). The essence she seeks lies in this "crumpled glove," which signifies the absence of her flesh, of her visible presence, and what remains are the traces or imprints of Mrs.

Ramsay's character. This notion of absence conjoins the theory of relations that surrounds an invisible center. Lily's desire for "fifty pairs of eyes" must be adjusted to acknowledge that, on the one hand, many of these "eyes" are internal visions of Mrs. Ramsay, and on the other hand, these eyes are always surrounding Mrs. Ramsay but never depending upon one positivist, synchronic point, so that the final portrait of Mrs. Ramsay is based on a multiplicity that resides beyond time and space and therefore in a cumulative mental image from which Mrs. Ramsay is physically absent.

Chapter 3

Bernard's Autobiography: A Many-Petalled Flower in *The Waves*

> Our friends—how distant, how mute, how seldom visited and little known. And I, too, am dim to my friends and unknown; a phantom, sometimes seen, often not. Life is a dream surely. Our flame, the will-o'-the-wisp that dances in a few eyes is soon to be blown out and all will fade.
>
> —Bernard in *The Waves*

Virginia Woolf's deployment of various static framing devices—such as bodies, portraits, mirrors, and rooms—counterposes her use of atemporal narrative devices, including memory, stream-of-consciousness, and internal time versus clock time, which generates an illusion of life as both "very solid" and "very shifting." Woolf notes that this contradistinction was her objective while writing *The Waves*: "Why admit anything to literature that is not poetry—by which I mean saturated? Is that not my grudge against novelists? that they select nothing? The poets succeeding by simplifying: practically everything is left out. I want to put practically everything in: yet to saturate" (*AWD* 136). She intends to "saturate" individual atoms of time, while capturing the "incessant shower of innumerable atoms" ("Modern" 106); that is, she recognizes the depth of a single static moment, while embracing the endless succession of those moments that can hardly be contained. Moments of non-being assume as much importance for her as moments of being.

The absence or presence of the "body" in *The Waves* operates as a structural tool for separating and categorizing the six characters and their identities; for example, Rhoda has "no body as the others have" (22) and therefore no sense of Self, whereas Jinny can "imagine nothing beyond the circle cast by [her] body" (128-29) and therefore no sense of the Soul. During childhood, Woolf traces the six characters' subject formation as they develop a realization of their skin-lined bodies; for example, during his sponge bath Bernard feels "bright arrows of sensation" as he is "covered with warm flesh" (26). As they slide into their individual frames, they learn to identify themselves by their relations to and differences from one another; Bernard says, "my

being only glitters when all its facets are exposed to many people" (186). Woolf complicates this structural model of identity formation by imbuing it with change over time; Bernard says, "I am made and remade continually. Different people draw different words from me. Thus there is not one person but fifty people whom I want to sit beside tonight" (134). Woolf reinforces the sliding of the eternal Soul across the temporary nature of the corporeal frame, which she images with the figure of Louis, who has "lived a thousand lives already" (127).

As in the previous two novels, Woolf also experiments with narrative in *The Waves* in order to express character. She specifically confronts life-writing, or biography, as indicated by the tracing of the six "characters" from birth to death; however, in order to represent a lifetime, she produces multiple frames with three concomitant passages of time[21]: the single day of the interludes (sun up to sun down), the lifetime of the characters (birth to death), and the eternity of the waves (or the monumental time of reproduction[22]). While Woolf is forced to "bracket" context in order to tell a story, she also invents an illusion of the infinite with this pyramidal construction of time. The uniqueness of the narrative structure of this novel is that it is formed by the successive and collective soliloquies of the six characters—Bernard, Neville, Louis, Susan, Jinny, and Rhoda—which are separated by scenic interludes. The interludes themselves may be interpreted as framed canvases within the narrative; Jack Stewart writes that this "need to balance consciousness with nature, and to interconnect six selves, increased Woolf's tendency to see her form in spatial perspective. Subjective impressions had to be embodied, shaped, grouped, and projected like 'statues against the sky'" (88). This notion of "balance" resembles Lily Briscoe's struggle with her painting in *To the Lighthouse*. In order to represent the life of an individual, Woolf also endeavors to balance the deep caves of psychology with the panoptic spectrum of sociology. The soliloquies themselves capture the almost subconscious effects of the characters' minds and if we read the novel as the autobiography[23] of the dominant character Bernard, we might see that Woolf is capturing his social context by framing him among the lives and minds of his five closest friends. The dilemma of what it means to know someone, or, in fiction writing, to

express the life of a character to the reader, pervades Woolf's works; she "insists that in biography and autobiography there must be a relation between the obscure areas of personality—the 'soul'—and forces like class and social pressures; otherwise 'how futile life-writing becomes'" (Lee 6).

This reading of the novel as an autobiography becomes clear if we return to Clarissa's theory, toward the end of *Mrs. Dalloway*, that expresses her dissatisfaction of "not knowing people; not being known" (152); we find her realization that identities can be found, not "here, here, here" within the body, but everywhere: "So that to know her, or any one, one must seek out the people who completed them; even the places. Odd affinities she had with people she had never spoken to, some woman in the street, some man behind a counter—even trees, or barns" (153). Bernard himself similarly states, "in order to make you understand, to give you my life, I must tell you a story—and there are so many, and so many—stories of childhood, stories of school, love, marriage, death, and so on; and none of them are true" (238). Both "theories" imply that the life of an individual necessarily includes social contacts and situations. Thus, if we look back on the narration of *The Waves* as a form of autobiography, we may consider that Woolf endeavors to formulate and communicate the life and identity of "Bernard" through the "people and places that completed [him]," as she places him in the context of his closest friends and stories of his social life.

Moreover, Bernard equally expresses Clarissa's dissatisfaction: "Our friends, how seldom visited, how little known—it is true; and yet, when I meet an unknown person, and try to break off, here at this table, what I call 'my life,' it is not one life that I look back upon; 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" (276). Bernard, to a greater degree than Clarissa, packages his life, his self, his subjectivity directly in the context of his world, his 'other' friends, his objectivity. While writing *The Waves,* Woolf notes, "And what is my own position towards the inner and the outer? I think a kind of ease and dash are good;—yes: I think even externality is good; some combination of them ought to be possible" (*AWD* 136). In *The Waves,* Woolf clearly

emphasizes the function of interiority through the soliloquies that voice individual consciousness, but she also demonstrates that identity depends in large part on the individual's external relationships with the world. Woolf initially structures the characters into clearly defined spaces of identity that suggest their impermeability; however, Woolf disrupts these boundaries and enacts an alternative intersubjective reality.

Bernard operates as the storyteller in the novel and is aware of the challenge of capturing a "life" within a narrative, though he tries among his friends. Neville talks about how everyone is a character in Bernard's stories: "Let him burble, on, telling us stories, while we lie recumbent. Let him describe what we have all seen so that it becomes a sequence. Bernard says there is always a story. I am a story. Louis is a story" (37). The narrative itself is shaped by the soliloquies of all six characters, but ends with Bernard's final commentary as he sees himself merging with the lives of his friends, by which he means his life is inseparable from theirs because his identity is shaped by his reactions to the objects of his world. His responses to his friends and his growing awareness of his differences from his friends are the material for the formation of his identity. When they are in the absence of one another or one of them has died, they continue to feel each other's presence. For this reason one of the major themes in this novel, as in the other novels I have discussed, is the relationship between that momentary apparition of the body (as in the painting or the mirrored reflection) and that timeless existence of the Soul, which for Woolf is not an abstract religious concept, but a true product of the friction of bodies over time, like the friction between words that string into conceptual sentences. The dilemma for Woolf, then, is the tension between the need to frame the world or a person in her narrative, and the desire to avoid the inevitable exclusion of all those moments impossible by definition to include.

Bernard acknowledges the reductive process of storytelling, which inevitably abstracts life out of context: "But why impose my arbitrary design? Why stress this and shape that and twist up little figures like the toys men sell in trays in the street? Why select this, out of all that,—

one detail?" (188). His comments suggest on the one hand that the author must "bracket" the heterogeneous context of infinite time and space that one individual life embodies, and on the other hand, that this angle of vision, this process of selection and exclusion, is entirely and arbitrarily determined by the author and inevitably results in a reductive frame over the space allotted to a novel. He describes his "globe of life" as a cauldron and says that "Whatever sentence I extract whole and entire from this cauldron is only a string of six little fish that let themselves be caught while a million others leap and sizzle, making the cauldron bubble like boiling silver, and slip through my fingers" (256). The "string of six little fish" representing the six main characters in the novel suggest the process of selection that results in an ordering of the world—a continuous string as opposed to the others that "leap and sizzle."

Neville again mentions Bernard's stories later: "We are all phrases in Bernard's story, things he writes down in his notebook under A or under B. He tells our story with extraordinary understanding, except of what we most feel. For he does not need us. He is never at our mercy" (70). This statement serves as a frame for the novel in that all the other characters are simply stories of characters that Bernard tells. He does not, as Neville states, express what they "most feel." The problem, as Bernard acknowledges, is that of entering the private spaces of other people. "But stories that follow people into their private rooms are difficult. I cannot go on with this story. I twiddle a piece of string; I turn over four or five coins in my trouser pocket" (51). He acknowledges that one can only know the exteriors of people, how they are in public, social places. The private room is unattainable. If novelists accept this theory, then their fiction would be limited to the factual external descriptions of their characters that would resemble the realism of Arnold Bennett's novels. As Woolf and other modernists challenge this dilemma with their experiments in the internal lives of their characters, a critical conflict is unveiled.

When he is in the restaurant with the others, Bernard differentiates between the facts about people he describes in his stories and conjecture, thus recalling the difference between Bennett's concept of the "real" in character profiling and Woolf's. Bernard says,

> Who and what are these unknown people? I ask. I could make a dozen stories of what he said, of what she said—I can see a dozen pictures. But what are stories? [. . .] There are facts, as, for example: 'The handsome young man in the grey suit, whose reserve contrasted so strangely with the loquacity of the others, now brushed the crumbs from his waistcoat and, with a characteristic gesture at once commanding and benign, made a sign to the waiter, who came instantly and returned a moment later with the bill discreetly folded upon a plate.' That is the truth; that is the fact, but beyond it all is darkness and conjecture. (144-45)

The narrative frame paints only an external, observational perspective on life when it strives for factual representation. However, as Peter Walsh expresses in *Mrs. Dalloway*, "one makes up the better part of life" (54) so that the greater "reality" of our lives is internal and imagined. Woolf also commentates on the role of "facts" in her short story "The Lady in the Looking-Glass":

> As for facts, it was a fact that she was a spinster; that she was rich; that she had bought this house and collected with her own hands [. . .] the rugs, the chairs, the cabinets which now lived their nocturnal life before one's eyes. Sometimes it seemed as if they knew more about her than we, who sat on them, wrote at them, and trod of them so carefully, were allowed to know. (89)

R. T. Chapman notes that "Facts are bare, they need to be clothed. The 'things [Isabella] talks about at dinner' represent merely the social persona, no more the truth than Bennett's 'fabric of things.' There is a deeper layer of truth than this" (335). In *The Waves,* Woolf simultaneously generates the social persona of Bernard alongside his psychological development, as she does with the main characters in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse.* The instability of her project resides in the unavoidable quandary that no one human being can experience the internal psyche of another, yet as the narrative artist Woolf can construct a world in which she unveils the interworkings of human relationships from a cavernous viewpoint.

The conjunctions and disjunctions between characters in *The Waves* are mirrored by theoretical concerns about language. Bernard says, had he been born "not knowing that one word follows another I might have been who knows, perhaps anything. As it is, finding sequences everywhere, I cannot bear the pressure of solitude. When I cannot see words curling like rings of smoke around me I am in darkness—I am nothing" (132). Rhoda's experience with language and narrative is the opposite from Bernard; she sees words as "figures" without meanings, such as when she stares at the blackboard in the beginning of the novel and says, "I cannot write. I see only figures. [. . .] The figures mean nothing now. Meaning has gone. [. . .] I begin to draw a figure and the world is looped in it, and I myself am outside the loop" (21). Not only do the figures have no meaning, but she finds herself in a solitary journey outside the "loop" that the other five friends have found themselves in, as she falls out of sequence. As these examples show, for Woolf sequences imply a unity among characters whereas those who are unable to account for the passage of time like Rhoda find themselves in solitude. Rhoda notes that "I cannot make one moment merge in the next. To me they are all violent, all separate; and if I fall under the shock of the leap of the moment you will be on me, tearing me to pieces. I have no end in view. I do not know how to run minute to minute and hour to hour, solving them by some natural force until they make the whole and indivisible mass that you call life" (130). She perceives reality in the way that Gertrude Stein does, freezing time to its sensory attributes rather than relying on conceptual memory.[24]

Likewise, by focusing on one moment in time, the here and now, we ignore all the history that is built up in that here and now, most of which is contained in the *mind* of the character. Any moment, any detail must be contextualized. It is important to note what kind of reality is located in the mind of an individual—it is through this mind that we exercise memory and futurity, in which we are able to transcend the present moment, recall past relationships and responses to objects in the world. Woolf, by presenting each individual through the subconscious mind and soliloquies of all six "characters," endeavors to present a world that contains so much more than

what an external narrative voice could offer. Louis in particular signifies the relevance of history as he reflects on his thousand past lives that have now become one in this temporary frame of a body.

The eternal life is harnessed by the body, yet conscious existence depends upon the structural formation of bodies; Jinny says, "Life comes; life goes; we make life. So you say. But we who live in the body see with the body's imagination things in outline" (176). The structural nature of subject formation, according to Woolf's novel, considers that the boundless Soul, or undistinguishable mass, is temporarily and arbitrarily linked to the body's frame and develops an "identity" based on its differences from other bodies. This process of formation may be read in terms of Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic structuralism. He likewise invokes a wave metaphor to illustrate the arbitrary linguistic divisions of sound-images and concepts: "Visualize the air in contact with a sheet of water; if the atmospheric pressure changes, the surface of the water will be broken up into a series of divisions, waves; the waves resemble the union or coupling of thought with phonic substance" (967). Saussure imagines a static wave in a synchronic linguistic system; Woolf, on the other hand, envisages an eternal wave of life, diachronic, and post-structural.[25] *The Waves* is marked by both a linear time of the lifetime of the six characters and the monumental time of this eternally occurring reproduction of life and rushing of waves, "the eternal renewal, the incessant rise and fall and fall and rise again" (297).

The Saussurean formation of subject and object relations is most evident in the prelude to *The Waves*, which begins: "The sun had not yet risen. The sea was indistinguishable from the sky, except that the sea was slightly creased as if a cloth had wrinkles in it" (7). This symbolic language suggests the maternal gestation of the characters who have not yet "risen" to life (and who will enter childhood in the first chapter). The "indistinguishable" barriers between sea and sky point to Saussure's concept of unarranged masses, free from binary oppositions, such as we might perceive the six characters of the novel in their mothers' wombs, free from subject-object oppositions. The infants have not yet suffered the severing of their body from the mother that

launches them into the world, confined by the space, the outline of their body, destined to form into a self-identity. The prelude continues: "Gradually as the sky whitened a dark line lay on the horizon dividing the sea from the sky and the grey cloth became barred with thick strokes moving, one after another, beneath the surface, following each other, pursuing each other, perpetually" (7). Now the painful parturition of the infants takes place, separating baby from womb, symbolized by the forming of the waves; as waves, the infants become detached subject-objects that nevertheless roll into to one another constantly changing in an eternal cycle. The forming of the waves in the prelude to the novel symbolizes the structuring of bodies separated by time and space, subject and object, establishing the psychological and physical boundaries between the six characters, who grow more distinct as the "bars deepen themselves between the waves" (296).

Bernard affirms this analogy of the original mother-child bond in his reflection that: "we suffered terribly as we became separate bodies" (241). They separate from their mothers' bodies, but they also separate from one another in terms of a structural identity formation. Throughout the novel, all of the voices acquire distinct personalities in their discoveries of each other as "different" from themselves. Bernard asserts his identity with a negation of the other identities, he says: "I am myself, not Neville" (240). Neville, likewise, refers back to the analogy of the mother-child bond suggested in the prelude in his desire to obliterate his "self" and his differences from other people; he says: "We are in that passive and exhausted frame of mind when we only wish to rejoin the body of our mother from whom we have been severed" (233). He, like Bernard, refers to this separation and identity construction as a painful process, a severing. Woolf progresses this interconnectivity further in *The Waves* to suggest that identity formation comes about in the Self's reception of the Other. However, she does not radicalize this point with crossings of individuals from dramatically different classes; rather, the main six characters share similar social standings, most notably in their common attendance at the girls and boys boarding schools. Their "internal" identities reside in the subconscious—where the imprint of society on

the individual can be found—and as such, the soliloquies reflect their subconscious impulses and responses to objects and people. The imprints run so deep that once the characters have established their identities—in terms from their *differences from* one another—they discover that they are unable to detach the self as an entity independent of the world and each other, and in fact their identities become based on their *relations to* one another.[26]

Bernard begins to realize that he is not a sole individual in the world; rather, he is made up of the pieces of the people with whom he comes into contact: "then it becomes clear that I am not one and simple, but complex and many. Bernard in public, bubbles; in private, is secretive. That is what they do not understand, for they are now undoubtedly discussing me, saying I escape them, am evasive. They do not understand that I have to effect different transitions; have to cover the entrances and exits of several different men who alternately act their parts as Bernard" (76). He seems to suggest that he is *actually* composed of different men, who may be Louis and Neville, who are not really separate characters, but different aspects of Bernard. However, I see Louis and Neville as separate characters in the life of Bernard, who contribute to the constellation that surrounds Bernard's character. Neville demonstrates the developing inextricable nature of their identities in his comments as he describes Bernard's imminent entrance into his realm of perception:

> How curiously one is changed by the addition, even at a distance, of a friend. How useful an office one's friends perform when they recall us. Yet how painful to be recalled, to be mitigated, to have one's self adulterated, mixed up, become part of another. As he approaches I become not myself but Neville mixed with somebody—with whom?—with Bernard? Yes, it is Bernard, and it is to Bernard that I shall put the question, Who am I. (83)

Neville lucidly expresses how one's character is transformed by the company in which it is held. 'Neville' can never be 'Neville' alone, except when he is conscious of only his body and his present. But once accompanied by another friend, he becomes a person who also contains the

relationship with Bernard. Physical presence, however, becomes unnecessary as Neville realizes that he can conjure Bernard up in his mind and become once again 'Neville + Bernard' when he departs.

Critic Harvena Richter defines Woolf's approach to narrative voice as an "angle of vision," which she characterizes as the "physical or psychological position or angle from which an object is viewed. Not only is the reader placed behind the prescription lens of the character, he also sees what the character sees from the position of his body or from his state of mind at the time" (83). The unique angle of vision that Woolf employs situates the reader in the character's physical location, such as on Bond Street when Big Ben strikes, and telescopes through those eyes. Furthermore, Richter writes, "it must be remembered that the connection between subject and object, the viewer and the viewed, is invariably one of emotion, and that a particular angle conveys a particular atmosphere with its cluster of emotional meanings" (85). The significance of "angle of vision" is unraveled in *The Waves* when the six characters reunite to send Percival off to India. Bernard remarks:

> We have come together [. . .] to make one thing [. . .] seen by many eyes simultaneously. There is a red carnation in that vase. A single flower as we sat here waiting, but now a seven-sided flower, many petalled, red, puce, purple-shaded, stiff with silver-tinted leaves—a whole flower to which every eye brings its own contribution. (127)

The red carnation, a symbol of the group's unity of desire for Percival, exists as a single unit binding them together the way Bernard suggests any group of people, even strangers, are united when they share a common goal, such as arriving to the train station or stepping out of the elevator (or as the crowds of *Mrs. Dalloway* collectively anticipate the lettering of the skywriter). When Percival arrives, the flower becomes seven-sided. The goal of each of the six has been achieved, Percival has arrived, and among the seven of them, they transform the object with their seven different angles of perception or desires. Later, when Percival dies in India, Bernard says

the seven-sided carnation becomes six-sided, "made of six lives" (229). The multiplicity of the carnation loses one angle because one perceiver is absent. With the loss of Percival, the flower does not return to the shape of a single flower because the group of six has lost a common goal or desire, and so they emerge from Percival's death with six differing perspectives.

On another occasion, Bernard adds that not only is the object determined by the subject, but that is also acts as a concrete measure of mutable perspectives:

> I was saying there was a willow tree. Its shower of falling branches, its creased and crooked bark had the effect of what remains outside our illusions yet cannot stay them, is changed by them for the moment, yet shows through stable, still, and with a sternness that our lives lack. Hence the comment it makes; the standard it supplies, and the reason why, as we flow and change, it seems to measure. (251)[27]

The external world of objects serves to measure the differing perceptions of the viewers. Then Bernard recalls when he first formed his perception of the willow tree: "But I, pausing, looked at the tree, and as I looked in autumn at the fiery and yellow branches, some sediment formed; I formed; a drop fell; I fell—that is from some completed experience I had emerged" (253). Neville says, "But without Percival there is no solidity. We are silhouettes, hollow phantoms moving mistily without a background" (122). Objects are defined by the perceiver, just as the perceiver is defined by his response to the object. Bernard understands his own existence through his relationships with other people, both visible and invisible "strings" that link him to others. He is Hegelian in his realization of the self: The subject, as Husserl states, cannot be detached from its objects. One critic comments that "More often than otherwise, within the conscious world of Mrs. Woolf's novels, persons do not have fixed and consistent boundaries. Instead, their minds and consciousness and, at times, even themselves as entire beings are confluent with the external world and influence it in ways empirical thought holds to be impossible" (Love 35).

Identities depend on a system of differences for their development, and though subject and object may appear to be as inseparable as indistinguishable, Maurice Merleau-Ponty discounts this possibility based on the necessity of differences: "The visible about us seems to rest in itself. It is as though our vision were formed in the heart of the visible, or as though there were between it and us an intimacy as close as between the sea and the strand. And yet it is not possible that we blend into it, nor that it passes into us, for then the vision would vanish at the moment of formation, by disappearance of the seer or of the visible" (130-31). Thus, Merleau-Ponty suggests that even though an intimacy between subject and object appears to merge them, such as in the mother-child bond, if such a blending were to culminate either the seer or the seen would dissolve. In *The Waves,* the characters frequently articulate a sense of blending with each other and at those times they do indeed express a sense of being bodiless or faceless. Bernard says: "As silence falls I am dissolved utterly and become featureless and scarcely to be distinguished from another" (224). This means that in order to establish separate identities, there must be a sense of a physical barrier between individuals, and therefore the body serves as an apt outline for structuring identities into continuous subject-object relationships.

The inner/outer boundary of identity that Woolf introduces in *Mrs. Dalloway* as impenetrable evolves into an arbitrary boundary in *The Waves* as each body grows through a process of identity inscription. Judith Butler writes about the body and social identity as an arbitrarily determined boundary and about how gender identity is similarly inscribed onto the body:

> What constitutes through division the 'inner' and 'outer' worlds of the subject is a border and boundary tenuously maintained for the purposes of social regulation and control. [. . .] For inner and outer worlds to remain utterly distinct, the entire surface of the body would have to achieve an impossible impermeability. This sealing of its surfaces would constitute the seamless boundary of the subject; but

> this enclosure would invariably be exploded by precisely that excremental filth that it fears. (2495)

An impermeability of the body, like Lehan's discussion of the impermeability of the modern city, suggests a stronger fissure between interior and exterior than is evident in the interpersonal relationships in *Mrs. Dalloway*. However, the concept of the deregulated crowd admits the intercrossing of boundaries in that subjects respond and become connected to the other people in the crowd. Woolf moves from the crowd and the 'party' to the trope of the 'waves' in her subsequent novel to further emphasize both the arbitrariness of wave (subject) formation and the fluid interconnectivity between individuals as 'waves'.

Judith Butler discusses how identity is located in the external social realm and on the body: "the soul is a surface signification that contests and displaces the inner/outer distinction itself, a figure of interior psychic space inscribed *on* the body as a social signification that perpetually renounces itself as such" (2496). Butler is building on Michel Foucault's concept of the soul as the product of the power/knowledge nexus that regulates the body; the soul "exists, it has a reality, it is produced permanently around, on, within the body by the functioning of a power that is exercised on those punished" (29). Butler notes, however, that as a "figure of interior psyche," the soul as an external inscription on the body diffuses inner/outer distinctions. Woolf also suggests that identity is inscribed on the body; it resides in a subject-object nexus similar to that of Husserlian phenomenology. Woolf explicates the dilemma of certainty and uncertainty in terms of the inner lives of her characters, that is, the subjective response of her characters to the objective world.

Their identities follow a pattern of negations in a poststructural model, which also reveals another phenomenon of the novel: the characters have no positive sense of themselves, that is, they do not exist as independent subjects, and they are defined only by their differences from and conceptions of each other. This type of identity construction is evident in Julia Kristeva's notion of the 'abject', as described by Judith Butler:

> The 'abject' designates that which has been expelled from the body, discharged as excrement, literally rendered 'Other.' This appears as an expulsion of alien elements, but the alien is effectively established through this expulsion. The construction of the 'not-me' as the abject establishes the boundaries of the body which are also the first contours of the subject. (2494)

Butler revisits the poststructural concept of creating the Other by suggesting that there is no alternative to subject formation than to continually create Others. Bernard understands his own existence by his relationships with other people, both visible and invisible "strings" that link him to others: "To be myself (I note) I need the illumination of other people's eyes, and therefore cannot be entirely sure what is my self" (116); yet, because he depends upon others to know himself, he realizes that he cannot define his self independent of any other existence. As Bernard evaluates the formation of his identity, he begins to realize that he is not a sole individual in the world; rather, he is made up of the pieces of the people with whom he comes into contact.

Thus, at the end of Bernard's final monologue, he is diffused into a universal subject: "For this is not one life; nor do I always know if I am man or woman, Bernard or Neville, Louis, Susan, Jinny or Rhoda—so strange is the contact of one with another" (281). This universal voice that speaks in the narrative transcends spatial and temporal distinctions, which are always arbitrary or socially determined. Any life that is one is also many: "And now I ask, 'Who am I?' I have been talking of Bernard, Neville, Jinny, Susan, Rhoda and Louis. Am I all of them? Am I one and distinct? [. . .] This difference we make so much of, this identity we so feverishly cherish, was overcome" (288-89). The distinction between subject and object is obliterated. This remaining voice frees Bernard, Neville, Louis, Jinny, and Rhoda from the rigid and solitary lifetime to which they were sentenced.[28]

To return to her theory of "knowing people," we see that Clarissa Dalloway ends her musings "in a transcendental theory which, with her horror of death, allowed her to believe [. . .] that since our apparitions, the part of us which appears, are so momentary compared with the

other, the unseen part of us, which spreads wide, the unseen might survive, be recovered somehow attached to this person or that, or even haunting certain places after death...perhaps—perhaps" (152-53).[29] Bernard also expresses himself as a momentary phantom, or apparition: "Our friends—how distant, how mute, how seldom visited and little known. And I, too, am dim to my friends and unknown; a phantom, sometimes seen, often not. Life is a dream surely. Our flame, the will-o'-the-wisp that dances in a few eyes is soon to be blown out and all will fade" (275).

Notes

[1] Paulo Freire describes the process of *becoming* in terms of systems of education in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1993). He writes that a system of education that engages in "problem posing" acknowledges humans as historical beings; it "bases itself on creativity and stimulates true reflection and action upon reality" (84).

[2] Wolfgang Iser provides a model for understanding literary language in his essay "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach," in which he depicts the writer in active engagement with the reader's imagination through the strategic gaps in the text that function like stars; these "'stars' in a literary text are fixed; the lines that join them are variable" (287).

[3] Critic Walter Benjamin coined the term "phantasmagorias of the interior" in response to the deepening fissures between home/work, private/public, and interior/exterior galvanized by the growth in urban centers. In reference to urban workers in modernist Paris, he writes: "The private individual, who in the office has to deal with realities, needs the domestic interior to sustain him in his illusions. [. . .] From this derive the phantasmagorias of the interior—which, for the private individual, represents the universe. In the interior, he brings together remote locales and memories of the past. His living room is a box in the theater of the world" (19).

[4] Richard Lehan, in his study of the "inward turn" in literature, notes that: "As [Charles] Baudelaire demonstrated and Walter Benjamin noted, the uncanny—the mysterious and eerie—is born out of heterogeneous crowds, which is really to say that it is born out of the city: out of the stranger who steps from the crowd, out of the familiar becoming strange. [. . .] As Freud saw in 'The Uncanny' (1919), the uncanny is 'something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light'. When the city gives up its secrets, we enter the realm of the uncanny. [. . .] As the modern city became more impenetrable, the hidden as something hostile and 'unhomely' (*Unheimlichkeit*) informed the literary text" (74).

[5] Bennett's descriptions invoke sensory responses to character and setting, which may extend beyond the visual to other establishments of mood through smell, sound, or touch. His approach is meaningful with respect to how it transports the reader to a new imagined reality, or to faraway places, much like a travel documentary would. As modern technologies replaced novel writing, the novel itself needed to construct new ways of presenting reality that could not be easily replaced by a film, for example.

[6] Douglas Murray addresses the process by which characters assess the world in terms of the device used by nineteenth-century tourists in exploration of picturesque landscapes: the Claude glass. In technical terms, the "camera or glass focuses toward and on certain features—and disregards and ignores others. And the resulting images assist the traveler in controlling and possessing—at least momentarily—the countryside" (Murray 2). He extends this metaphor to the viewpoints of characters in Austen's *Mansfield Park*, noting that "most characters in the novel are perennially engaged in a process that recalls the device: they are on the prowl for pleasing visual experiences, and they tend to achieve these experiences by framing and exclusion" (2). When Austen's characters participate in this process of framing and exclusion, they provide a selective outlook on the events of the novel. When Austen uses free indirect style to allow a character to

guide the narrative of the novel, the reader must be aware that all the characters and events of the novels are being framed within this "Claude glass."

[7] In this short story by Aphra Behn, Damon presents a mirror to his intended lover Iris that he says will reflect her unparalleled beauty. The major part of the narrative is spoken by the mirror itself, which profiles each aspect of Iris from her hair and eyes to her wit and modesty. When the mirror has finished, Damon declares his love and declares himself free from the charge of excessive Flattery.

[8] Skin operates as both a container and a repellant. The body functions as a delimiting enclosure like a picture frame or a book—but, if like a frame or a book the barrier also functions in reverse to exclude its surroundings, then we might ask what the relationship between the body and its discharged exterior elements is. In her discussion of James Joyce's *Ulysses,* Maud Ellman writes that skin has a double-sided function, for it faces inwards, "enveloping the contents of the body and registering its sensations, needs, and drives"; and it faces outward, "shielding the interior but also filtering exchange between the body and the world" (55). Leopold Bloom's skin, she writes, "registers impressions from the outside world while embedding each new message into the connective tissue of his memory" (56). Joyce, however, obscures the skin's boundaries of depths and surfaces by invoking the trope of skin disease: "boils, pustules, warts, and pimples represent the depths erupting on the surface—the inside on the outside of the flesh—and violating the interiority of subjectivity" (Ellman 61).

[9] The most oft-repeated example of Hume's philosophy is his explanation of the billiard table. When one ball hits another ball, it *causes* the other ball to move. Our experience tells us that the effect of the moved ball has been caused by this reaction; however, we cannot directly perceive cause and effect; we must store the successive temporal dimensions in our minds. Therefore, we have no direct empirical proof of a "cause and effect" relationship; we must trust our conceptual faculty.

[10] The beginnings of cubism trace back to Picasso's *Les demoiselles d'Avignon* in 1907; Analytical Cubism—which consisted of a monochromatic, intensive fragmentation of objects presented in layered cubes—lasted from 1910 to 1912. Synthetic Cubism is marked by its reincorporation of color and the superimposition of text or objects onto the canvas and lasted from 1912-1914. The final stage, from 1914-1916, consisted of what Gertrude Stein called flat surfaces.

[11] Stein's analysis of cubism's theoretical aspects are focused on a single period in cubism—contrasting definitions of cubism are due in part to the evolving nature of the movement's strategies. "Stein's selection of important periods is interesting to us because it sheds light on her own work. It is my feeling that this cubist-flatness struggle which Stein saw as being so important to Picasso is present in her own work and is one key to her sometimes puzzling style" (Fitz 230).

[12] In Stein's *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, Toklas says to Stein: "But do you never read french, I as well as many other people asked her. No, she replied, you see I feel with my eyes and it does not make any difference to me what language I hear, I don't hear a language, I hear tones of voice and rhythms, but with my eyes I see words and sentences and there is for me only one language and that is English" (Stein 70). Stein's relationship with words is purely aesthetic; she detaches signification from particular signs, which leaves her with an abstract style of writing comparable to abstract art. However, when she extends her medium to combine sounds in ways

that create signification, she is able to compose "portraits" of her subjects that adhere to both analytical and synthetic cubism.

[13] Nancy Gray counters this application of cubist writing to Stein's use of language as "things in themselves" by questioning literary cubism in terms that I would describe as phenomenological: "When then is language as a 'real thing,' an 'intellectual re-creation'? Language is a thing which is also not a thing. Written down it is there on the page and yet invisible; we learn to read through it to something else. As for reality, we have seen how slippery that is, how the intellectual traditions of Western culture have been aimed at naming it and fixing it in place for all time as a universal plumb line by which to know that we do exist and are not only named and defined but nameable and definable" (Gray 44). This approach to language reflects Wolfgang Iser's phenomenology of reading, which examines the relationship between language and reality by considering how the progressive weaving of individual words results in a meaning more powerful when coalesced. Thus, there is a phenomenological process in the language sign system that transmits the reality of the writer into the mind of the reader. Stein challenges this very phenomenology by presenting words in ways that resist interpretation into something other than just words.

[14] Literary critic Jack F. Steward notes that in September 1924, as she was finishing *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf wrote in her diary a reference to cubism: "All this confirms me in thinking that we're splinters & mosaics; not, as they used to hold, immaculate, monolithic, consistent wholes" (67). Her expression of people as "splinters & mosaics" demonstrates her solidarity with cubism and conception of individuals as pieces.

[15] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari introduce their concept of the "rhizome" in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, which they characterize as "reducible neither to the One nor the multiple" (1605) and is "composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion" (1605).

[16] Megan M. McCue's essay "Confronting Modernity: Virginia Woolf and Walter Benjamin" elaborates upon this severance of human connections in her exploration of how modern urban culture encouraged barriers between individuals by way of its obsessions with spectacles, objects, and commodities. She demonstrates how during the height of modernism, the new culture of commodity often influenced individuals to develop relationships with their possessions that went beyond the utilitarian aspects of objects. Individuals search for "meaning in relation to a world of objects rather than people" (McCue 312). This sense of alienation often damaged the formation of human relationships, resulting in "a world in which human connection is almost impossible" (McCue 310). Thus, during Clarissa and Peter's awkward reunion, Peter tries to avoid dealing directly with his nervousness around Clarissa by fiddling with his pocket-knife, a personal possession, and a symbol for cutting off their connection. Clarissa also avoids direct confrontation with Peter when he asks about her husband Richard. She turns to her scissors when she conceals the truth about Richard lunching with Lady Bruton by saying he's at a Committee. This type of a relationship, connecting through "person-object-person," is characteristic of the dilemmas of modernism.

[17] When Austen uses free indirect style to allow a character to guide the narrative of the novel, the reader must be aware that all the characters and events of the novels are being framed within this biased perspective. D. A. Miller writes that Austen's free direct style "comes as near to a character's psychic and linguistic reality as it can get without collapsing into it, and the character does as much of the work of narration as she may without acquiring its authority" (59).

Elizabeth—and not Jane, Mr. Darcy, or an objective narrator—determines the events and subjectivities of *Pride and Prejudice*, and it is Elizabeth's growth in perception that marks the novel's distinct preoccupation with lived social experience.

[18] Austen employs free indirect style to inhabit the mind of one of her characters and trace the events of the novel through one central lens. Frances Fergusen considers that the "brilliance of her deployment of free indirect style is that it recognizes what we might want to think of as a communal contribution to individuals" (158).

[19] In a later scene with Mr. Carmichael, Lily similarly associates parallel thinking with the male body, as they both speculate on Mr. Ramsay's landing at the lighthouse. "He stood by her on the edge of the lawn, swaying a little in his bulk and said, shading his eyes with his hand: 'They will have landed,' and she felt that she had been right. They had not needed to speak. They had been thinking the same things and he had answered her without her asking him anything" (208). She finds him "swaying a little in his bulk" as though she's conscious of him in two parts, one sliding inside the other.

[20] See Martha C. Nussbaum's "The Window: Knowledge of Other Minds in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*" for further discussion on Lily's desire for connection with Mrs. Ramsay.

[21] "Framed by a 'luminous halo' of space-time, successive moments of existence merge into abstract motifs of color, sound, and shape. Unity comes from interrelation of planes within the virtual space of the novel" (Stewart 89).

[22] Julia Kristeva writes in "Women's Time" of the influence of female reproduction on women's conception of time: "As for time, female subjectivity would seem to provide a specific measure that essentially retains *repetition* and *eternity* from among the multiple modalities of time known through the history of civilizations. On the one hand, there are cycles, gestation, the eternal recurrence of a biological rhythm which conforms to that of nature and imposes a temporality whose stereotyping may shock. [. . .] On the other hand, and perhaps as a consequence, there is the massive presence of a monumental temporality, without cleavage or escape, which has so little to do with linear time (which passes) that the very word 'temporality' hardly fits" (191). Instead of an infinite and linear stream of life, Woolf demonstrates a cyclical notion of life that is captured in frames, like the reproductive cycle that captures souls in bodies.

[23] While composing *The Waves*, Woolf considers that she is "not trying to tell a story. Yet perhaps it might be done in that way. A mind thinking. [. . .] Autobiography it might be called" (*AWD* 140). Some critics have read the novel as a biography of one character with six facets. For instance, Jill Morris writes, "these characters, in spite of the fact that they are developed as distinct personalities, are, even in the book, parts of the same person; Bernard, one of the six, who sums up their lives at the end of the novel, says that he is the others. [. . .] *The Waves* is just as much a biography of one person as *Orlando* is" (74). Stewart likewise writes: "The sixfold flow of consciousness becomes the wavelike rhythm of One Mind that flows through all things. [. . .] A less exalted way of putting this would be that each self is a facet of the author's being, formally represented as a reflecting plane, or wave, enclosed within a unified space" (90). After the publication of *The Waves*, Woolf curiously writes: "Odd, that they (*The Times*) should praise my characters when I meant to have none" (170).

[24] "The parallels between grammatical moods and Woolf's construction of reality are straightforward. The indicative signals the myth of the concrete world wherein one can theoretically construct a sense of self, while the subjunctive signals a refusal of this myth and acknowledges that the sense of self is rootless, grounded only in relationships and transient images" (Vandivere 224).

[25] Vandivere illustrates the function of the wave image in the linguistic construction of the self in the novel: "linguistic flux and instability often coincide with moments when characters work to define themselves in language. In other words, 'wavering' configurations of language betoken 'wavering' ontological constructions, especially constructions of the self" (222).

[26] Freud provides a psychoanalytic perspective on this intersubjectivity, writing in "The Uncanny" that: "the phenomenon of the 'double', which appears in every shape and in every degree of development....is marked by the fact that the subject identifies himself with someone else, so that he is in doubt as to which his self is, or substitutes the extraneous self for his own. In other words, there is a doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self. And finally there is the constant recurrence of the same thing—the repetition of the same features or character-traits or vicissitudes" (940). As the novel progresses, it becomes clear that the characters become aware of their "interchanging of the self" with others.

[27] Earlier in the novel, Rhoda makes a similar comment about how other characters change the material existence of things (because they depend on the subjective). She refers to Miss Lambert, a schoolteacher during the girls' education at a boarding school: "When Miss Lambert passes [. . .] everything changes and becomes luminous. Jinny leaps higher too when Miss Lambert passes. Suppose that she saw that daisy, it would change. Wherever she goes, things are changed under her eyes; and yet when she has passed is not the thing the same again?" (45).

[28] Woolf scholar Jean Guiguet also notes the infinity of identity in Woolf's novels: "For one who will not admit that we are confined within our own bodies and within the moment, and who accepts a feeling that everything outside the self, animate and inanimate, somehow contributes to what one is, it is logical to conclude that through our own participation in the being of others, our life does not end with our death; its substance remains mingled in the texture of other lives; our departure does not remove it thence, and thus does not exempt us from the discretion with which each of us, following personal criteria, traces the manifold circles spreading from the most secret part of his being to the most public of his faces" (54).

[29] Septimus likewise imagines a sparrow singing "how there is no death" (25) when he is interrupted by memories of Evans from the war.

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