

VIRGINIA WOOLF'S SHORT FICTION: A STUDY OF ITS RELATION
TO THE STORY GENRE; AND AN EXPLICATION
OF THE KNOWN STORY CANON

by

David Roger Tallentire

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Department of English

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver 8, Canada

Date April 15, 1968

ABSTRACT

The short stories of Virginia Woolf have never received serious scrutiny, critics determinedly maintaining that the novels contain the heart of the matter and that the stories are merely preparatory exercises. Mrs. Woolf, however, provides sufficient evidence that she was "on the track of real discoveries" in the stories, an opinion supported by her Bloomsbury mentors Roger Fry and Lytton Strachey. A careful analysis of her twenty-one known stories suggests that they are indeed important (not merely peripheral to the novels and criticism) and are successful in developing specific techniques and themes germane to her total canon. One of the reasons why the stories have never been taken seriously, of course, is that they simply are not stories by any conventional definition--but are nonetheless "short fiction" of interest and significance.

The stories derive from three distinctly separate chronological periods. The earliest group (1917-1921) was published in Monday or Tuesday and included two stories available only in that volume, now out of print. (To enable a complete assessment, I have made these stories available as appendices II and III of this thesis, and included Virginia Woolf's lone children's story as appendix IV since it too is of the early period). This phase of creation utilized one primary technique--that of evolving an apparently

random stream of impressions from a usually inanimate and tiny focussing object, and was generally optimistic about the "adorable world." The second phase of her short fiction (those stories appearing in magazines between 1927 and 1938) illustrates a progression in both technical virtuosity and in personal discipline: the fictional universe is now peopled, and the randomness of the early sketches has given way to a more selective exploitation of the thoughts inspired by motivating situations. But vacillation is here evident in the author's mood, and while optimism at times burns as brightly as before, these stories as often presage Mrs. Woolf's abnegation of life. The third group, posthumously published by Leonard Woolf in 1944 without his wife's imprimatur (and recognizably "only in the stage beyond that of her first sketch"), still reveals a desire in the author to pursue her original objective suggested in "A Haunted House"--the unlayering of facts to bare the "buried treasure" truth, using imagination as her only tool.

In one respect, and one only, the critics who have neglected these stories are correct: the pieces are often too loosely knit, too undisciplined, and too often leave the impression of a magpie's nest rather than one "with twigs and straws placed neatly together." In this the stories are

obviously inferior to the novels. But by neglecting the stories the critics have missed a mine of information: herein lies an "artist's sketchbook," which, like A Writer's Diary, provides a major avenue into the mind of one of the most remarkable writers of our age.

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KEY TO SYMBOLS IN THE THESIS PROPER

MOW	The Mark on the Wall
KG	Kew Gardens
UN	An Unwritten Novel
SO	Solid Objects
HH	A Haunted House
MoT	Monday or Tuesday
SQ	The String Quartet
TND	The New Dress
MoB	Moments of Being
LiLG	The Lady in the Looking-Glass
SP	The Shooting Party
DaJ	The Duchess and the Jeweller
LaL	Lappin and Lapinova
TMWL	The Man Who Loved His Kind
TS	The Searchlight
TL	The Legacy
TaA	Together and Apart
ASU	A Summing Up

CHAPTER I

THE SHORT STORY GENRE AND VIRGINIA WOOLF

But what are stories. Toys I twist,
bubbles I blow, one ring passes
through another and sometimes I
begin to doubt if there are stories.
--Bernard in The Waves

The short story, as we have come to know it, is an amorphous entity. Despite the many attempts to define and categorize the genre no one has ever succeeded in bounding it and Virginia Woolf's short fiction in particular defies prescriptive analysis. However, it is necessary to begin any explication of "stories" with a working definition of the medium to be mined if a conclusion is to be reached. It is too easy though in our technically oriented world to over-specify, to quest beyond the knowable, unable, in Keats' phrase, to rest in "mysteries, doubts and uncertainties without an irritable reaching after facts". It is hoped that this thesis will escape the pitfall of over-prescription, while achieving a useful critical synthesis of the Woolfian canon.

The short story, as Hugh Kenner points out in Studies in Change¹ sprang from oral tradition--"a tale is a thing told; tale and tell are nearly the same word."² By the same, perhaps dubious, etymological argument, he describes

the roots of story, as "nearly the same word as history: a methodical record, something with system to it."³ However, exactly what constitutes the short story's system is, as we shall see, far from simple.

In the early part of this century, before writers like Virginia Woolf had obfuscated the issue, critics were in the habit of thinking that the story had evolved from Poe and Maupassant with a definite, predictable structure. Esenwein's "seven characteristics" of the short story will do to represent this definitive approach popular in the 1920's. He claimed that the story is always marked by:

"1) a single predominant character; 2) a single pre-eminent incident; 3) imagination; 4) plot; 5) compression; 6) organization; and 7) unity of impression."⁴

At first glance this seems precise and encompassing but on reflection it is obvious that these aspects of the story do not allow for the magic of such "pieces" (since they cannot be "stories") as "A Haunted House" which has no characters in the 'real' sense, no definite incident, no relatable plot, and certainly the impression left upon readers polled by this author is diverse. Nor can one, in evaluating Virginia Woolf's stories, answer in the required affirmative to H.T. Baker's list of questions designed to cull the real story from imposters. Baker's "Practical Manual

of Short Story Writing" rejects stories which cannot answer these test questions with a resounding yes: "do the opening paragraphs clearly indicate the nature of the story? . . . and is there a genuine climax".⁵ How does Virginia Woolf fare with such criteria? Surely "Monday or Tuesday" can hardly even be said to have a tangible beginning, let alone a climax, and even at the "end" of the fragment one would be hard-pressed to "clearly indicate the nature of the story."

Yet critics and laymen alike persist in tying the story down, in making it fit the restrictions they insist it work beneath. Sir Hugh Walpole voices this conventional view of the old guard most emphatically when he states:

A story should be a story: a record of things happening, full of incident and accident, swift movement, unexpected development, leading through suspense to a climax and a satisfying denouement.⁶

In recent years, however, critics have been forced to admit that such prescriptions of the story genre cannot define many experimental vignettes recognized as effective literature. If these "stories" work, yet cannot be cast into any existing mold, surely the molds are wrong. Henry James perhaps expresses the sanest viewpoint in urging readers to forswear the urge to classify, and to accept the author's offering, unlabelled though it might be. What he

says of the novel is no less true of the short story: "a novel is a novel, as a pudding is a pudding, and . . . our only business with it could be to swallow it whole."⁷ James, then, subjugating his critical tenets, is urging us to be more inclined to trust our own senses as to what constitutes merit and to be less dependent on outmoded templates against which to compare tentative short stories. His voice is the much needed proponent of common sense: "the only obligation to which in advance we may hold [fiction] is that it be interesting."⁸

I have here extended James' views on the novel to the short story as the quotations apply readily to all prose fiction. This, of course, is not to say that the novel and the story are identical but only that both can function beyond their conventional definitions. Or, in other words, we should continually expect the story and the novel to explore new concepts in literature--as the name of the latter genre suggests--or fiction will become static. But to change tack for a moment, the novel and the story have enough in common to warrant a cursory examination of the two forms, especially with regard to a writer who excelled in both genres, notwithstanding critics who assert that "the stories of Virginia Woolf . . . are beside the novels, negligible."⁹ It might be stated here that this attitude,

by no means atypical, prompted this thesis since Mrs. Woolf's stories are by no means negligible. It would be true to say that they are heavily influenced by the Russian story-tellers and Katherine Mansfield, but they also reveal evidence that their author was evolving a story form of her own.

Since the Russians played a large part in forming Virginia Woolf's story tenets, and her Diary¹⁰ in 1940 records the continuing appeal they had for her, it is advisable to look briefly at their influence. In Tolstoi, Virginia Woolf found

Always the same reality--like touching an exposed electric wire. Even so imperfectly conveyed--his [Tolstoi's] rugged short cut mind--to me the most, not sympathetic, but inspiring, rousing: genius in the raw¹¹

A "short cut mind" describes that of Virginia Woolf too, since idea-association underlies most of the stories.

Mrs. Woolf sees Russian fiction to be "composed purely and wholly of the stuff of the soul Out of Shakespeare there is no more exciting reading."¹² There is much of the Russian "soul" in Virginia Woolf's fiction too: she sees each human being as "the vessel of this perplexed liquid, this cloudy, yeasty, precious stuff, the soul"¹³ and one thinks at once of all the Virginia Woolf stories and novels in which a "precious treasure" is sought; a treasure ephemeral

and hazy like the soul. The Russians also pointed the way to the suicide motif in the later story period ("The Legacy") since Tolstoi's dominant message to Virginia Woolf is that "there is always at the centre of all the brilliant and flashing petals of the flower this scorpion, 'Why live?'".¹⁴ Then too, what she said of the novels of Turgenev became true of her own stories: "They are so short and yet they hold so much. The emotion is so intense and yet so calm. The form is in one sense so perfect, in another so broken."¹⁵

Virginia Woolf was, of course, much better acquainted with the Russians than the average reader, since between 1921 and 1923 she collaborated with S.S. Koteliansky on translation of Russian works. One such project that also reveals her interest in the psychological insights of the Russian novelists is Stavrogin's Confession by Dostoevsky, a book that contains "a psychoanalytic study of the author by Sigmund Freud".¹⁶

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine the influence of Katherine Mansfield (herself admittedly influenced by the Russians) but In a German Pension (1911) Bliss (1920) The Garden Party (1922) and The Dove's Nest (1923)--all major collections--exhibit many techniques utilized by Mrs. Woolf. The most convenient source for the reader wishing to examine the above volumes is the Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield. One brief example from Bliss that might serve to indicate a relationship between the two

women is the opening of "The Man Without a Temperament" in which a gentleman stands aloof from the inanities of two American women, "his glance travell[ing] coolly, deliberately,"¹⁷ over them. In Virginia Woolf's "The Man Who Loved His Kind" we have a similar title and situation--Prickett Ellis also stands apart from "idle, chattering, overdressed" (TMWL, 110) party-goers.

But let us return for a moment to the novel and the short story as related art forms. It is not the intention of this work to provide yet another definition of the two genres--in fact I seek to avoid further restrictions--but a few statements by a recent critic need commentary. Frank O'Connor claims that "the novel is bound to be a process of identification between the reader and the principal character,"¹⁸ whereas the story need not be. O'Connor later seems rather vague in distinguishing between the novel and the story, insisting that the former reveals the "classical concept of civilized society"¹⁹ while the story is some sort of bastard son of the novel: "the short story remains by its very nature remote from the community--romantic, individualistic, and intransigent."²⁰

But, despite the ephemeral nature of this distinction, it seems that this is as close as one can come in distinguishing between the genres in such an artist as Virginia Woolf. Her novels do catch civilized society in certain classic attitudes, yet the stories reveal only glimpses of this society. Of course the story's physical limitations

help ~~make~~ this so, and "it is no longer necessary to describe; it is enough to suggest."²¹

Before proposing any theory about the conception and intent of Mrs. Woolf's short stories, it is probably advisable to examine the progression in the novels (in a very cursory fashion) to provide some basis for comparison. If, for instance, as Joan Bennett tells us, "after Night and Day [1919] the novels of Virginia Woolf cease to tell stories"²² we might well ask what then happens to the stories at this date. It would be foolish to insist that any evolutionary pattern found in the novels be arbitrarily imposed upon the conception of the stories (or vice versa) but since the stories and novels both sprang from the same years, some artistic processes and concerns must surely be similar. With this in mind, let us look at the novels in chronological order with a view to discovering any continuing trend that might illuminate the stories' conception.

The novel sequence that began realistically and conventionally with The Voyage Out and Night and Day rapidly developed into a progression from convention. The sequence became, in fact, a "voyage out" from realistic exposition--a voyage into the conscious and subconscious workings of the mind. The title of the next novel, Jacob's Room, can be seen as a synonym for "Jacob's Mind", a retreat readily available from all external and worldly pressures. Its successor, Mrs. Dalloway, carries us further into the

human psyche by presenting a woman fully at home in society (in fact she becomes the gregarious hostess of virtually every Woolfian party) but increasingly aware of the emptiness of her life. This novel, perhaps more than any other of Virginia Woolf's, hints at a despondency over the difficult art of living--and in its preoccupation with this theme presages the suicide of the author in 1941. "There was an emptiness about the heart of life; an attic room."²³ To escape the emptiness entails an escape from the body and all corporeal concerns--and as the pressures of the real world mount, and "shades of the prison house begin to close . . .", Mrs. Dalloway begins a retreat from the world that is more than a mental withdrawal. All of her sensing ganglia turn inward and she severs her ties with the real world. She renews her lease on virginity and denies her husband's entrenchment upon her individuality, upon her soul in fact.

So the room was an attic; the bed narrow; and lying there reading, for she slept badly, she could not dispel a virginity preserved through childbirth which clung to her like a sheet.²⁴

One can continue the "voyage" analogy into the next novel. To the Lighthouse concludes with an episode in which a father who has failed to communicate with his family throughout the novel belatedly attempts to achieve rapport

by fulfilling a promise made years before, to take his children "to the lighthouse". This journey seems more meaningful than the lighthouse itself (notwithstanding the various critical attempts to explicate the lighthouse's symbolism). Mrs. Woolf seems to be pointing out once again that the mind is sacrosanct, and attempts to infiltrate it will be doomed to failure. Because Mr. Ramsay fails to impinge upon his children's minds, his son and daughter remain distant and unsympathetic. The physical act of transporting the children to the lighthouse is insufficient penance for Mr. Ramsay's earlier spiritual isolation. Only Mrs. Ramsay, the heart and soul of the family, has the power of penetration into the mental "rooms" of her charges, and she dies midway through the novel--again inserting a hint of melancholia at the futility of life.

Orlando and The Waves, which followed, explored different avenues of technical virtuosity, but the characters within these works still concern themselves with the problems of existing in the real world when all of their minds cry out for a larger and more inhabitable universe. By Orlando, the escape from the body is almost complete, and the process suggested in Jacob's Room (of withdrawal from the world into a private room of the mind) and continued in Mrs. Dalloway (in which withdrawal involves denial of

previous physical involvement with the world) has become so fluid that Orlando has the ability to transcend barriers of time and gender at will. When we reach The Waves, the complete divorcing of bodily and mental processes has been reached. Bernard, Neville, Louis, Susan, Rhoda and Jinny do not exist as characters who eat, drink and fornicate (as, say, Tom Jones does) but rather the six are voices, attitudes, dramatic postures,--a fact that is attested to by the adaptability of The Waves to dramatic readings. Six voices are sufficient--six bodies superfluous.

This pattern of increasing isolation of mind from body is seemingly interrupted in The Years, a retrograde step in the novel cycle. The family chronicle of "The Pargiters" (the book's earliest appellation) harkens back to the format of The Voyage Out and Night and Day, though even in this work the concern with division of the self continues. Rose Pargiter frequently has ". . . the usual feeling of being two people at the same time,"²⁵ as does Miriam Parrish who ". . . seemed able to divide herself in two."²⁶ Granted, these "pluckings" might not indicate the dominant concern of the novel, but surely the frequency with which such references to division of the self occur precludes their being fortuitous.

In the last of Virginia Woolf's novels, Between the Acts, the growing despair of the author at the demands of life, and the need for at least a successful illusion of escape bursts from the pages. There can be little doubt that the author of Between the Acts is, to some extent, the author of the "pageant", and the anguish of Miss LaTrobe is Virginia Woolf's own: "This is death, death, death, she noted in the margin of her mind; when illusion fails."²⁷ Miss LaTrobe (and her creator) are trapped between the acts of life; existence has become Sartre's existential hell from which there is "no exit." Virginia Woolf herself speaks the line "I am the slave of my audience."²⁸ Melvin J. Friedson has also noted this voyage of Virginia Woolf toward pessimism in the novels. He sees ". . . the same sad discouragement . . . present [in Jacob's Room] as in The Voyage Out: self-discovery as a prelude to death. This theme runs through all of Virginia Woolf . . ."²⁹

What have we accomplished in this sprint through the nine novels, and what relevance to the stories have any such comments? Only this: an entirely different direction is taken in the stories than in the novels. The stories do not involve a generally increasing complexity in which the avenues of the mind replace the by-roads of Kensington; the stories do not become (as do the novels) progressively

more pessimistic; and most important, the stories are not preludes or exercises preparatory to the larger compositions, as the stories written simultaneously with (or immediately preceding) novels have few thematic similarities with their desk-mates, and often differ stylistically as well. However, before attempting to suggest the possible creative process whereby the stories evolved (or attempting to explicate the story canon), it is of paramount importance that a clear chronology be determined as far as is possible. As with many writers, the "first publication" date of each of Virginia Woolf's stories is not necessarily an accurate indication that that year (or even the preceding decade) was the time of conception of the piece. Neither the order of the stories in A Haunted House nor the date of magazine publication is in any way indicative of the composition date. For example, judging from what Leonard Woolf says, "The Mark on the Wall" was probably his wife's earliest story, it first receiving limited public attention in the 150 copy edition of Two Stories (1917);³⁰ yet it appears sixth in the collected stories which have no specific order if not one of chronology. Publication date as a criterion would likewise suggest that "Kew Gardens" was next written, yet this appears fifth in A Haunted House. The problem of dating and ordering Mrs. Woolf's stories is complicated by her own known

work habits as recorded by herself in the Diary, and by her husband in his biographies. We are told that Virginia Woolf composed her "sketches"³¹ not only as interludes between larger works of fiction or criticism (though the rejuvenating power of a turn to short fiction is acknowledged by the author) but as works important in their own right. That she regarded success in the short story genre as highly as success in the novels is attested to in her joy at hearing of Lytton Strachey's approval of "The String Quartet". The news ". . . flood[ed] every nerve with pleasure, so much so that [she] . . . walked over Hungerford Bridge twanging and vibrating."³² In a different mood, she laments the inability of a critic, in this instance an unintelligible reviewer in The Times, to recognize "that I'm after something interesting."³³

It would thus seem likely that Virginia Woolf was attempting to create a form and technique in her stories that would be every bit as significant as that of the novels. That she was, in fact, experimenting towards a "significant form" in her stories is also attested to in the Diary, ". . . and then there was Roger [Fry] who thinks I am on the track of real discoveries and certainly not a fake."³⁴

But to return to the problem of dating the stories and deciding upon a working chronology, Leonard Woolf has not

helped matters in his introduction to A Haunted House and Other Short Stories. He states that this volume contains ". . . six stories which appeared in magazines between 1922 and 1941; [including] . . . "Solid Objects".³⁵ yet "Solid Objects" appeared in The Athenaeum, 22 October, 1920.³⁶ Mr. Woolf has further complicated this study (and, incidentally, I feel has done his wife a great disservice) by omitting two stories from the canon because he was ". . . practically certain she would not have included [them]."³⁷ It is possible of course that his wife's wishes dictated this decision, but as the stories had reached publication and public attention in Monday or Tuesday, the deletion seems a pointless scruple. That "Blue and Green" is deficient as a story is unquestioned--it is in fact two separate "word paintings"--though it is not completely without "any dramatic framework"³⁸ as Guiguet suggests. However, the omission of "A Society" cannot be justified on any grounds, as this story reveals a satiric wit and mastery of dialogue unmatched by any of the remaining stories--or, in fact, the novels either. It might be argued that this story is therefore not really "Virginia Woolf", but rather an eulogy to some unknown writer that impressed Mrs. Woolf enough to tempt her to do a piece "in the style of . . ." as a literary pastime. This hardly seems likely

as "A Society" is not a slight exercise but the most developed (and longest) story in the canon. Whatever the reasons for this story's deletion, the loss is acute, as the scarcity of the only source to reach the public, (the 1000 copy edition of Monday or Tuesday, 1921) has caused the story to be virtually unknown even in academic circles. The difficulty I had in obtaining copies of the two fugitive pieces prompted me to include them as appendices to this thesis, in the hope that this one source would provide criticism of the entire story canon (which to my knowledge no one has yet attempted) and (when used with A Haunted House) provide easy access to all of the primary material of which I speak. Scholars might object to my explicating "Nurse Lugton's Golden Thimble" (this story is also appended) since a children's story should require little explanation. This slight sketch is significant, however, as will later be shown. A chronology postulated from Leonard Woolf's introductions to the stories (and his biographies); Virginia Woolf's own "clues" left scattered through the Diary; Guiguet's seminal study; and Kirkpatrick's excellent bibliography; is likewise appended.

Various critical methods have been adopted in grouping Virginia Woolf's stories, and most, it seems to me, have defects greater than any advantage gained by grouping. The most common critical practice is to arbitrarily divide the canon into "early" and "late" periods corresponding to the two story collections Monday or Tuesday and A Haunted House,

thus all stories before 1921 are "early" and all thereafter "late". This division is not particularly useful as stories similar in theme and technique can be found in both groups, and the active periods of story creativity as revealed by magazine publication dates, Mrs. Woolf's own comments in A Writer's Diary and her husband's biographies suggest a tripartite structure.

Jean Guiguet notes this in drawing attention to the fact that "the publication of the stories falls into three brief periods: 1917-1921, 1927-1929 and 1938-1940."³⁹ However, upon grouping the stories accordingly he is forced to abandon such a restrictive framework, and immediately and evasively changes tack in announcing that to adhere to this division would mean "neglecting [the stories'] autonomous character."⁴⁰ Guiguet then classifies "according to other criteria"⁴¹ despite his earlier avowal that the three periods "correspond too closely to the periods of exploration in Virginia Woolf's career for the coincidence to be a fortuitous one."⁴²

If one were to use A Haunted House and Leonard Woolf's introduction as a basis for a grouping he would again divide the canon into three: "stories or sketches which originally appeared in Monday or Tuesday, . . . [stories] which appeared in magazines, between 1922 [sic] and 1941; . . . [and the] five [hitherto] unpublished stories."⁴³ The defects in Mr.

Woolf's preface are noted below (and his grouping is less useful than the others) but it points the way to yet another method of division if one were so inclined to use it. Both Leonard and Virginia use the phrase "stories or sketches"⁴⁴ suggesting that a distinction exists between the two (or the second would be redundant). Would it not then be as useful to analyze according to a division between "stories" and "sketches"?

The purpose of these prefacing remarks is to point out again, as I did in the first section, that to insist upon a prescriptive mold into which to pummel the stories is both limiting (as Guiguet finds) and misleading. Clearly the only logical reason for grouping is to make comparisons, and I shall endeavor to adhere to this simple criterion.

The stories will be analyzed (as far as it is possible) in chronological order, as it is felt that some progression of thought can be traced throughout the twenty-one pieces comprising Virginia Woolf's known story canon. This means explicating roughly in the order given in A Haunted House, with a few notable exceptions. Leonard Woolf's presentation of the stories, as mentioned earlier is somewhat confusing, therefore, I have re-inserted the two stories he omitted in their original order, and repositioned "Solid Objects" where it rightly belongs, among Virginia Woolf's earliest stories. The decision to include "A Society" and "Blue and Green" at all might be construed as discourteous,

(Leonard Woolf having declared his wife's intention to omit them from A Haunted House) but the fact remains that they were published (with Mrs. Woolf's apparent blessing in 1921) whereas four of the last five stories presented by Leonard Woolf are not "finally revised"⁴⁵ and recognizably in need of "a great deal of work . . . before . . . publi[cation]."⁴⁶ It therefore seems only fair that if unpolished work is allowed to face critical opinion, published pieces (though later disinherited) should also.

It should be stressed at the outset that no attempt has been made to link systematically the stories with other fiction or criticism by Mrs. Woolf. I have taken the liberty of noting pertinent connections between some of the stories and novels, but the scope of this work precludes a rigorous foray into this interesting, but peripheral concern. Always, my cardinal goal has been to explicate these twenty-one pieces, though I have digressed on occasion where I felt it was justified.

To thus continue with a seeming digression is hardly the way to elicit approval from the reader, but Guiguet's thematic groupings of the stories, after abandoning the chronological, provide a useful starting point. "Kew Gardens", "Blue and Green", "A Haunted House", "Monday or Tuesday, and "The String Quartet", (one quarter of the stories) are described as

impressionistic studies . . . characterized by their lack of any dramatic framework and by their attempt to present, in a contiguity which creates continuity, the disparate elements of consciousness, made homogeneous by uniformity of tone and the absence of any precise reference to place or time.⁴⁷

His second group, "An Unwritten Novel," "Moments of Being," "The Shooting Party," and "The Lady in the Looking Glass" have a briefer connection: all reveal "the writer in search of 'Mrs. Brown,'"⁴⁸ and are simply left at that. "The New Dress," "The Man Who Loved His Kind," "Together and Apart," and "The Summing Up" comprise, for Guiguet, "the Mrs. Dalloway saga . . . [in which] the atmosphere of a social gathering is conducive to the theme . . . , the difficulty of communicating" ⁴⁹ "The Legacy" and "Lappin and Lapinova" are grouped together in a rather clumsy fashion on the basis of both being "abridged dramas of married life."⁵⁰ Suffice it to say that at least four other stories concern some facet of the marriage "drama" and the very nature of a short story presupposes abridgement. Similarly, Guiguet lumps together the remaining odds and ends into a group he hesitantly labels "incursions into less familiar fields,"⁵¹ though one is left in doubt as to which fields Mrs. Woolf's "incursions" have led her into in the four misfit stories, and what these fields are "less familiar" than.

The pattern I have chosen to follow is, as it seems must always be, a compromise (between the arrangements of

Guiguet and Leonard Woolf). In order to make any meaningful analysis of the stories certain parallel themes and techniques must be noted (hence the need to group similar works) but to retain one's perspective as to the evolution of Mrs. Woolf's art, the individual stories within these groups will be discussed chronologically. It is felt that this method can best explain the growth of certain recurrent themes, while providing the most convenient method of explication--that of discussing thematically and technically similar material in one related analysis.

NOTES

¹(New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1965), p. v.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴As quoted by Walter B. Pitkin, The Art and the Business of Story Writing (New York: MacMillan, 1923), p. 42.

⁵Harry T. Baker, The Contemporary Short Story (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1966), p. 253.

⁶As quoted by H.E. Bates, The Modern Short Story (London: Thomas Nelson, 1948), p. 15.

⁷The House of Fiction (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1957), p. 24.

⁸Ibid., p. 29.

⁹Joan Bennett, Virginia Woolf (Cambridge: Camb. U. Press, 1945), p. 42.

¹⁰A Writer's Diary (London: Hogarth, 1953), p. 329.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²"The Russian Point of View," The Common Reader, 1st Series (London: Hogarth, 1925), p. 226.

¹³Ibid., p. 228.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 231.

¹⁵"The Novels of Turgenev," The Captain's Death Bed (London: Hogarth, 1950), p. 54.

¹⁶F.M. Dostoevsky: Stavrogin's Confession, Trans. Virginia Woolf and S.S. Koteliansky. With a psychoanalytic study of the author by Sigmund Freud (New York: Lear Publishers, 1947).

¹⁷"The Man Without a Temperament," Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield (London: Constable and Company, 1945), p. 129.

¹⁸The Lonely Voice (New York: World Publishing, 1962), p. 17.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 21.

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹Bates, p. 24.

²²Virginia Woolf, Her Art as a Novelist (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1945), p. 42.

²³Virginia Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962), p. 45.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 46.

²⁵Virginia Woolf, The Years (London: Hogarth, 1937), p. 182.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 248.

²⁷Virginia Woolf, Between the Acts (London, Hogarth, 1941), p. 210.

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 248.

²⁹Stream of Consciousness: A Study in Literary Method (New Haven: Yale Univ., Press, 1955), p. 190.

³⁰Leonard Woolf, Beginning Again: An Autobiography of the Years 1911 to 1918 (London: Hogarth, 1964), pp. 235-7.

³¹Virginia Woolf, A Haunted House and Other Short Stories (London: Hogarth, 1962), p. 8.

³²Virginia Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 105.

³³Ibid., p. 31.

³⁴Ibid., p. 33.

³⁵Leonard Woolf, Introduction to A Haunted House, p. 8.

³⁶B.J. Kirkpatrick, A Bibliography of Virginia Woolf (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1957), p. 106.

³⁷A Haunted House, p. 8.

³⁸Jean Guiguet, Virginia Woolf and Her Works, Trans. J. Steward (London: Hogarth, 1965), p. 331.

³⁹Ibid., p. 330.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 331.

⁴¹Ibid. *idem*.

⁴²Ibid., p. 330.

⁴³A Haunted House and Other Short Stories, p. 8.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Guiguet, Virginia Woolf and Her Works, p. 331.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 332.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 336.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 338.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 341.

CHAPTER II

MICROCOSM TO MACROCOSM

Supplementing her longer journeys through the world of appearances and through the years, these stories each represent a brief excursion from which, in her unremitting quest for reality, Virginia Woolf brought back some slight quarry--slight indeed but revealing of the depths in which it was discovered.

--Jean Guiguet, Virginia Woolf and Her Works

E.M.W. Tillyard begins The Elizabethan World Picture with the observation that "the first pages of Virginia Woolf's Orlando are . . . typical [of the modern view of Elizabethan life]." ¹ He makes the remark disparagingly, implying that Mrs. Woolf provides a conventional, but untrue picture of an age that but few moderns fully understand (of course Tillyard is among these). If this is so, it is indeed curious that the habits of mind revealed by so many Elizabethans in his book coincide so closely with those of Virginia Woolf, so much so in fact that I propose to group the story canon according to Elizabethan characteristics that seem so appropriate to the work before us.

Tillyard notes that a prevalent Elizabethan idea was that of anthropocentricity, and that man in fact was a "microcosm" ²--an infinitely varied and complex creature composed of a smattering of each of the fundamental

elements comprising the universe or macrocosm. The only thing that distinguished man from the highest link in the chain of being--the angelic (and prevented his reaching this state)--was a deficiency in the amount of celestial power (reason) given him. What is important to this discussion, however, is the corollary to the idea; that reason (and indeed all intellectual endeavor) must progress from the small to the large if order and enlightenment are to be attained. Thus man, to understand the processes of life and his relation to the scheme of creation must begin by considering the inanimate realm which nurtures plants, which in turn feed animals, that provide for the needs of men, who serve the gods. That the Elizabethans did in fact order their cosmos from least to most is attested to in the Governor of Elyot referred to by Tillyard:

Behold also the order that God hath put generally in all his creatures, beginning at the most inferior or base and ascending upward.³ (My italics)

When we remember Virginia Woolf's remarks about the large common objects upon which novelists are fated to gaze: man and men; behind that Nature; and above them that power which for convenience and brevity we may call God⁴

it should be clear that the preceding thought process was

not foreign to her, and while this particular comment from The Common Reader does not suggest an ascending order in considering objects, the earliest stories certainly do. What is "The Mark on the Wall" if not a creation of a macrocosm from a tiny focal point in which the author sees the possibility of a fictional universe? If Virginia Woolf's mind was oriented towards modern practicality as Tillyard implies she would have bestirred herself to verify visually the mark as a snail at the outset (and thereby negated the situation's possibilities) but of course she didn't. She obviously felt it far more interesting to speculate and create her own world than to be bound to a tangible but commonplace universe. Of course, Mrs. Woolf knows that her world is a violation of the real one, and that she is merely indulging in fancy, but so did the Elizabethans. The Copernican theory of planetary motion was well known, but the Elizabethans preferred an amalgam of Platonic and Ptolemaic concepts and did not allow "Copernicus and Machiavelli to disturb the great outlines of their world picture."⁵

In support of my contention that Virginia Woolf was in many ways a latter-day Elizabethan, the reader is directed to the several essays in which Mrs. Woolf examines the Elizabethan world. She sees in Sir Philip Sydney's Arcadia "all the seeds of English fiction [lying] . . . latent"⁶ and wonders if modern fiction "will make its dwelling in . . .

psychology and the adventures of the soul [since this possibility is] present in the Arcadia.⁷ While reading Hakluyt in her essay entitled "The Elizabethan Lumber Room",⁸ Woolf's mind wanders to sea with the Elizabethan adventurers, and she returns frequently to tales of their exploits to refresh her own muse. After the labours of these novels and A Room of One's Own Virginia Woolf in 1929 noted her eagerness to return to the Elizabethans:

I am free to begin reading Elizabethans-- . . . This thought fills me with joy--no overstatement. To begin reading with a pen in my hand, discovering, pouncing, thinking of phrases, when the ground is new, remains one of my great excitements.⁹

The fact that Elizabethan voyages held a great fascination for Virginia Woolf, and that these adventures inspired her to recount her own, is easily seen in a comparison of the 1922¹⁰ essay "Reading"¹¹ with "The Elizabethan Lumber Room", the latter certainly drafted if not completed in 1922 also. "Reading" plucks five pages virtually unchanged from "The Elizabethan Lumber Room"--and the two essays should prove invaluable to any scholar interested in analyzing Virginia Woolf's method of revision. That "Reading" is the later essay is suggested by Mrs. Woolf's rewording of the historical account--which she probably would have extensively quoted only in the first draft. A typical passage from "The Elizabethan Lumber Room" reads:

The ships, says Froude, were no bigger than modern yachts. There in the river by Greenwich the fleet lay gathered "The Privy Council looked out of the windows of the court . . . the ships thereupon discharge their ordinance . . ."12

but its matching passage in "Reading" vitalizes the bare bones of history:

the ships, Froude says, were no bigger than a modern English yacht. As they shrink and assume the romantic proportions of the Elizabethan ship, so the sea runs enormously larger and freer and with bigger waves upon it than the sea of our time The little company gathers somewhere off Greenwich. The courtiers come running to the palace windows; the Privy Councillors press their faces to the panes. The guns are shot off in salute13

I have devoted what seems an unwarranted amount of space to these two essays, but their relevance to the stories is great. It was therefore necessary to establish their order of creation to make an important point: the first essay was principally a critical review; the second, an avenue into a particular adventure of the author--an evening moth hunt. Why does the author choose Hakluyt and Sir Thomas Browne to launch her own creative work? Simply because Elizabethans, like Browne, thought exactly like Virginia Woolf in creating their own realms of fancy. Sir Thomas says:

the world that I regard is myself; it is the microcosm of my own frame that I cast mine eye on: for the other I use it but like my globe, and turn it round sometimes for my recreation.14

Mrs. Woolf further acknowledges the power of the Elizabethans to activate her own creativity in "Notes on an Elizabethan play". She feels that Elizabethan drama "will not suffer itself to be read passively, but takes us and reads us"¹⁵ (my italics). This suggests that the writer becomes a book under the Elizabethan influence, with her mind on display. The same essay suggests that a mind so stimulated turns to its own thoughts, "to explore its own darkness, not the bright-lit-up surfaces of others".¹⁶ Hence, the Elizabethans might well be seen as a more important stimulus to Mrs. Woolf's mind than the apparently motivating factual observances in the stories.

It is significant too that the mark on the wall that inspired Virginia Woolf's first story and launched the rest should have been a snail. First, to consider life of a low order as a logical prerequisite to a consideration of man precisely fitted the Elizabethan pattern. Then too, the shell of a snail is symbolic of an increasing universe--a tiny mark at the center spirals out to infinity--which precisely describes the initial technique of the early stories. It is no accident that "Kew Gardens" while commencing with an "oval-shaped flower bed" (KG, 32)¹⁷ to set the scene should require light from "the shell of a snail with its brown circular veins" to carry the story's

development to the human passers-by. The Diary records yet another use of the gastropod mollusk in Virginia Woolf:

"But I had rather write in my own way of Four Passionate Snails than be, as K. [atherine] M. [ansfield] maintains, Jane Austen over again."¹⁸

Other early stories are remarkably similar. While the life of man is the underlying theme, seemingly irrelevant objects begin the thought processes which "swarm upon a new object, lifting it a little way, as ants carry a blade of straw" (MOW, 37). Thus in "Monday or Tuesday" the mind is activated by "the heron . . . shaking space easily from his wings" (MoT, 12) and in "Solid Objects" the tiny dot motif as visual focus is repeated. "The only thing that moved upon the vast semicircle of the beach was one black spot" (SO, 79).

So far I have suggested parallels between several stories to suggest that a dominant concern of most of the 1917-1921 stories was a speculation about life galvanized by a small (but far from unimportant) object. The stories using this technique include "The Mark on the Wall," "Kew Gardens," "Solid Objects," "Monday or Tuesday," and "Blue and Green." I have also included "A Haunted House" and "The String Quartet" among this group since (despite their technical departure from the "focal object leading to life" pattern) they are chronologically and thematically of the group. For example, while "A Haunted House" does not use the focal point technique, the "buried treasure" sought is not really different from the quests

for "life" in the other pieces. Nor does "The String Quartet" use a focusing agent directly, though the opening paragraph, in which the author notes that the various London conveyances "have been busy at it, weaving threads from one end of London to the other" (SQ, 27) suggests that the concert hall at which the quartet is about to play is the center of a giant spider's web--and therefore the reader's attention is effectively marshalled to this center.

THE MARK ON THE WALL

It is fairly safe to say that "The Mark on the Wall" was Virginia Woolf's first short story as it was this piece, along with her husband's "Three Jews" that launched the Hogarth Press¹⁹ in 1917. Unfortunately, though we know that Virginia Woolf kept a diary from 1915,²⁰ Leonard Woolf has seen fit to begin A Writer's Diary at 1918, so that source throws little light upon the genesis of his wife's first story. There are in fact only three indexed references to "The Mark on the Wall" in the Diary, and Virginia Woolf appears to be dissatisfied with the story in retrospect in 1919--" [I] read the Mark on the Wall and I found a good deal of fault with that."²¹ In 1920, however, she sees it in a more optimistic light--as a stepping stone to a new technique:

but conceive (?) Mark on the Wall, K.G. and Unwritten Novel taking hands and dancing in unity. What the unity shall be I have yet to discover; the theme is a blank to me; but I see immense possibilities in the form I hit upon more or less by chance two weeks ago.²²

Unfortunately, the Diary entry immediately preceding this is more than a month earlier and we have no clue as to what the accidentally discovered form might be. The date of course would suggest the beginning of the stream of consciousness technique that led to Jacob's Room. Guiguet thus is probably correct in saying that the earliest group of pieces

which includes at least four stories prior to the composition of Jacob's Room and three that are contemporary with it, represents unquestionably an exploratory path which was to lead to that novel.²³

It would seem, however, that he is quite wrong in not including "The Mark on the Wall" among this group (in fact this story does not appear in any of Guiguet's five groupings) since Virginia Woolf herself has implied a connection between her first story and her first non-conventional novel. Guiguet apparently has taken Mrs. Woolf seriously in her frivolous categorizing of "The Mark on the Wall" as "Criticism etc," yet no one has considered Orlando a biography despite the author's subtitle.

It is curious that Guiguet has not noted the possibilities of "The Mark on the Wall" since he has chosen as his fly-leaf epigraph a quotation revealing exactly what Virginia Woolf was attempting in her early stories--though the quotation purports to be critically oriented only. It reads: "Our criticism is only a bird's eye view of the pinnacle of an

iceberg. The rest under water", and surely this was always her fictional method--to begin with the visible, if tiny fact, and then to create the world of her imagination hitherto nine-tenths submerged. She says as much in her first story, "I want to sink deeper and deeper, away from the surface, with its hard separate facts" (MOW, 39).

The reader might object to my returning to the Elizabethans, but to me it is not merely fortuitous that the first image that the mark leads to is that of a "castle tower . . . and the cavalcade of red knights riding up the side of the black rock" (MOW, 37). It is the medieval social order with its estates of the realm and orders of chivalry that appealed so strongly to the Elizabethan mind (which I have more than once suggested typifies Virginia Woolf's). This interpretation is strengthened by the following line, ". . . rather to my relief the sight of the mark interrupted the fancy, for it is an old fancy, and automatic fancy, made as a child perhaps" (MOW, 37). It is true that fancy is usually considered synonymous with imagination but, as used in this context (an automatic fancy), the modern sense jars. However, the Elizabethan sense seems quite appropriate, as in that period a hierarchy of the brain was thought to exist in which reason ruled, served by the more automatic functions of "common sense, . . . fancy, and memory"²⁴ which in turn were fed by the five senses. Orlando gives an illustration of this

sense of fancy--(as simply "idea") in stating that the Elizabethans "had" no fancy that what we call "life" and "reality" are somehow connected with "ignorance and brutality".²⁵

The train of thought in "The Mark on the Wall" is not dramatic, nor does there seem to be an attempt to move towards a synthesis. In a graphic medium it would be free form--in the written it is a stream of consciousness equation of life. In different parts of the sketch (for such it is) we are told that life is . . . "an accidental affair . . . a scraping paring affair . . . being blown through the Tube at fifty miles an hour [and] . . . /shot out at the feet of God entirely naked" (MOW, 38-39). Thus this first piece contains the germ of despair at the disorder of life, "all so casual, all so haphazard" (MOW, 39) that was to become so evident in the later stories. It also suggests another Elizabethan habit of mind in the author, that of a desire for order in life so succinctly put by Shakespeare:

"Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,²⁶
Office, and custom, in all line of order."

Need we then really be surprised at Virginia Woolf's mental process when she "catch[es] hold of the first idea that passes" (MOW, 42) and finds it to be Shakespeare?

It is in this first story that another technique (to become a recurrent one) commences--that of comparing

the discovery and uncovering of life itself to the strip-ping-off of a flower's foliage to bare the heart within.

This image of course is central to "Kew Gardens" and a comparison of the first occurrence and its successor is revealing:

But after life. The slow pulling down of thick green stalks so that the cups of the flower, as it turns over, deluges one with purple and red light There will be nothing but spaces of light and dark, intersected by thick stalks . . . [and] rose-shaped blots of an indistinct colour--dim pinks and blues--which will, as time goes on, become more definite, become--I don't know what . . . (MOW, 42).

From the oval-shaped flower-bed there rose perhaps a hundred stalks spreading into heart-shaped or tongue-shaped leaves half-way up and unfurling at the tip red or blue or yellow petals marked with spots of colour . . . and from the red, blue or yellow gloom of the throat emerged a straight bar, rough with gold dust and slightly clubbed at the end Then the breeze stirred rather more briskly overhead and the colour was flashed into the air above, into the eyes of the men and women who walk in Kew Gardens in July (KG, 32).

In the first story the idea is there, but the technique is weak. The colours are confused and "indistinct" indeed--and the writer seemingly is at a loss to exploit the image created. Perhaps unconsciously anticipating "Kew Gardens" she concludes that the image will ". . . as time goes on become definite." The tapering into three elipsis marks suggests a fledgling technique but the technique had matured in the opening section of The Waves:

the light struck upon the trees in the garden, making one leaf transparent and then another The sun sharpened the walls of the house . . . but all within was dim and un-substantial. The birds sang their blank melody outside.²⁷

On the other hand, the "Kew Gardens" passage immediately suggests maturity of the image. The colours are the primary ones--and bright and sharp. And the author knows to what purpose the colours will be used--to "flash colour" onto the walkers in the garden. This shifts the scene, connects the life of the garden to that of the passers-by, and suggests that the men and women are part of the garden "not unlike . . . white and blue butterflies" (KG, 32), all in one deft stroke.

"The Mark on the Wall" also introduces another object with which Mrs. Woolf was to become increasingly concerned--the looking-glass. Its inclusion into her fiction might be due to the influence of Roger Fry who noted that:

a somewhat similar effect to that of the cinematograph [motion picture projector] can be obtained by watching a mirror in which a street scene is reflected. If we look at the street itself we are almost sure to adjust ourselves in some way to its actual existence. We recognize an acquaintance, and wonder why he looks so dejected this morning, or become interested in a new fashion of hats--the moment we do that the spell is broken, we are reacting to life itself in however slight a degree, but, in the mirror, it is easier to/abstract ourselves completely, and look upon the changing scene as a whole. It then, at once, takes on the visionary quality, and we become true spectators, not selecting what we will see, but seeing everything equally, and thereby we come to notice a number of appearances and relations of appearances, which would have escaped our notice before, owing to that perpetual economising by selection of what impressions we will assimilate, which in life we perform by unconscious processes."²⁸

In mathematical terms, rational (and restricting) life is a two-dimensional plane--the surface of the mirror in fact--and all of the truly interesting, and variable

aspects of life lie in front of or behind the limiting plane. It is this dimension, the "Z" axis, that is Virginia Woolf's domain, and her desire is always "to sink deeper and deeper, away from the surface, with its hard separate facts" (MOW, 42). The earliest stories all deal with speculation about the world beyond that of mere appearance, and what might be revealed if "the looking glass smashes, the image disappears" (MOW, 43). By the time Virginia Woolf writes To The Lighthouse, the mirror is explicitly smashed, and the image fragmented. That Virginia Woolf felt her analogy for life as a reflection in a mirror to be an important one among her techniques is attested to in her statement that all observation of other humans is simply "looking into the mirror . . . and the novelists in future will realize more and more the importance of these reflections" (MOW, 41). The general technique begun in "The Mark on the Wall" is explored with a specific human speculant in "The Lady in the Looking Glass," which bears the significant subtitle "A Reflection." We remember that Mabel Waring "had her first suspicion that something was wrong" (TND, 47) as a result of being handed a mirror, and that only the hardened Mrs. Manresa feels at ease when the pageant mirror is put before the audience in Between the Acts. On each occasion the implied desire of the author is to smash the offending glass which pretends that life is merely that which can be objectively verified.

The conclusion of "The Mark on the Wall" is the most revealing section, since it reveals Mrs. Woolf to have a purely speculative mind. It is noteworthy that her thoughts arising from the mark become the real world, and that the mark itself is forgotten. Only when the second speaker arrives does pragmatism return and the mark's rational identity emerge. Virginia Woolf, in the guise of narrator, would otherwise, presumably, have ended without confirming the mark to be a snail.

KEW GARDENS

Because "The Mark on the Wall" was "first classified under 'Criticism etc.',"²⁹ and indeed lacks most of the characteristics of the conventional story defined in the opening chapter, it might be fair to say that "Kew Gardens" is Virginia Woolf's first "story." For the first time, the human element is introduced, though the passing couples in the garden are not individualized at this stage of development, and the author notes that their motion is "not unlike that of the white and blue butterflies who crossed the turf in zig-zag flights from bed to bed" (KG, 32)--seemingly in acknowledgement that she is still more concerned with ordering the visual impressions of life than in portraying character.

This story, however, takes us into the minds of the garden-strollers, and incorporates an experimental symbolism. Simon, walking with his wife Eleanor and his children, muses upon a visit to Kew fifteen years previous with Lily, a woman he then loved. His proposal was then rejected, and now he has reassembled his life and love in Eleanor, presumably happily. All this is incidental but necessary background to the rather awkward symbolism of the proposal, during which a hovering dragonfly refuses to come to earth, and Lily's silver-buckled shoe twitches impatiently. A more experienced writer would not have felt the need to cudgel the reader with the bald explication "the whole of her seemed to be in her shoe. And my love, my desire, were in the dragonfly" (KG, 29). Had the scene been left as a sketch it would be charming, but the heavy layering of redundant paint ruins the canvas. A silver buckle on a twitching foot discouraging a dragonfly's approach is hardly a subtle symbol for an impatient enchantress spurning an impecunious lover.

Other aspects of the story are, seemingly, of a later phase and a more mature style. Eleanor's memories of the park, for instance, including a kiss from "an old grey-haired woman with a wart on her nose [which becomes] the mother of all [her] kisses all [her] life" (KG, 30), are far more

delicately constructed. This kiss anticipates that bestowed on Fanny Wilmot in "Moments of Being" and suggests that as early as 1919 Virginia Woolf was experimenting with a fictional method of catching moments of almost transcendental significance. Such moments are frequently manifested as kisses in Mrs. Woolf's stories, for the kiss is symbolic of the deepest and strongest communication possible. The kiss is not necessarily a product of or prelude to physical desire, and the kiss bestowed by Sally Seton on Mrs. Dalloway perhaps best illustrates the emotion engendered: "Sally stopped; picked a flower; kissed her on the lips. The whole world might have turned upside down!"³⁰

In a world in which communication is agonizing and destructive (cf: "The New Dress," "The Man Who Loved His Kind," "Lappin and Lapinova"), the kiss becomes the ultimate in silent eloquence.

"Kew Gardens" is also a significant work in that it represents the first attempt to achieve the form fully realized in The Waves. As in that novel, interludes of human activity are interspersed with scenes in which seemingly irrelevant objects are focussed upon. In The Waves the cyclic rhythm of sun and sea serves the double function of revealing the passage of time, and of providing a natural rhythm to complement the emotional cycles of the human protagonists. "Kew Gardens", to a much lesser extent

incorporates the same technique--human passers-by wrestle with their problems "between the acts" of a snail's dilemma: whether to climb over, go around or creep under an obstructing leaf.

"Kew Gardens" could also be dated as an early story from its lack of the cosmopolitan style exhibited in later work. Two women are described condescendingly as "of the lower middle class" who react predictably "like most people of their station" (KG, 36). The conversation attributed to these women is experimental, but awkward, consisting of random snatches of ungrammatical commonplaces in a pseudo-poetic guise:

"Nell, Bert, Lot, Cess, Phil, Pa, he says, I says, she says, I says, I says--"

"My Bert, Sis, Bill, Grandad, the old man, sugar
Sugar, flour, kippers, greens
Sugar, sugar, sugar" (KG, 36).

Similarly, at this stage of her development, Virginia Woolf was not yet expert in character manipulation, and the two elderly women are awkwardly shunted off stage with the suggestion "that they should find a seat and have their tea" (KG, 36).

The couple that follows in the wake of the departed ladies is developed with considerably more skill, and is fitted into the backdrop of nature that underscores the

story. "This time they were both young . . . in the prime of youth, the season before the smooth pink folds of the flower have burst their gummy case" (KG, 37) Similarly their dialogue is more concise, and more suggestive. "He" comments that it is lucky that it isn't Friday (lucky because they have escaped paying sixpence admission) which leads to the following exchange:

"What's sixpence anyway? Isn't it worth sixpence?"
 "What's 'it'--what do you mean by 'it'?"
 "O, anything--I mean--you know what I mean." (KG, 37)

This bit of dialogue skillfully explores a conversation-gulf and anticipates the theme of many of the later stories--how inadequate words are. The "it" is specifically "the gardens," or generally "life," but the writer leaves the choice to the reader. It is interesting that this dialogue about "life" (if we accept "life" to be an alternative antecedent of "it") takes place on a weekday--suggesting "Monday or Tuesday" and the very definition of life presented in the "Modern Fiction" essay of The Common Reader.

The words found so inadequate to convey so much are here made to fit the zoological environment as well:

words with short wings for their heavy body of meaning, inadequate to carry them far and thus alighting awkwardly upon the very common objects that surrounded them, and were to their inexperienced touch so massive. (KG, 37).

And, in the last paragraph, visual insights replace conversation: "both substance and colour dissolved in the green-blue atmosphere" repeats the "green blue vapour" appearing earlier in the same sentence and anticipates "Blue and Green". It is interesting that the colour becomes hyphenated, blended, diphthongized, in its second occurrence, suggesting the quintessence of all garden colours, just as the sketch "Blue and Green" suggests, in two brief exercises, the range of meaning two colours can embrace.

The story "Kew Gardens" has a sense of completeness; a cyclical, rounded pattern reassuring in comparison to those stories like "A Haunted House" or "A Summing Up" which leave us searching for a treasure, or deciding which of two views of life is the true one, if either. "Kew Gardens" begins with an image of a garden which, when compared with the conclusion, can be seen symbolically as human. The personification of the opening is apt to escape casual perusal until the conclusion is reached, when the equation of "garden" to "mouth" becomes obvious. We are left with the sound of "voices . . . wavering . . . as if they were flames lolling from the thick waxen bodies of candles" (KG, 39) which immediately refocuses attention upon the opening passage in which ". . . the oval-shaped flower-bed [with] tongue-shaped leaves . . . [and] yellow gloom of the throat" (KG, 32) stirs in the wind. The author is seemingly exploring another avenue of communication in suggesting that flowers

and gardens speak as readily to the human soul as do our fellows, and that, in fact, the sight of inanimate beauty is often the only basis for communication possible. Thus in "The Man Who Loved His Kind," Prickett Ellis and Miss O'Keefe, after coming to an impasse on the former's avowal that "he was afraid he did not understand beauty apart from human beings" (TMWL, 114), are forced, ironically, to turn to a source of non-human beauty: "so they glared into the empty garden where the lights were swaying . . ." in subconscious acknowledgement that only there can communication, albeit silent, be achieved.

SOLID OBJECTS

The reason behind Leonard Woolf's placing of "Solid Objects" tenth in A Haunted House has never been satisfactorily explained because it is, in both style and structure, definitely among the earliest stories. The similarity of its opening to that of "The Mark on the Wall" has already been noted, and the rest of the story likewise exploits the concern for real objects only as sources of speculation. This characteristic is, in fact, the dominant trait of the early stories, and a recurrent pattern can be traced in "The Mark on the Wall," "Solid Objects," "An Unwritten Novel" and "The Shooting Party," among others. In these stories, the "solid objects" initiating the process of free

association are, respectively, a snail, a piece of eroded glass, and two women in railroad carriages. In each case the mind of Virginia Woolf discards the pertinent reassuring connection with reality, her "plank in the sea" (MOW, 47) for the delights of introspective soliloquy.

It is ironic that John, the prospective parliamentarian of "Solid Objects", should turn from solidarity (his career as a 'solid' citizen in the respectable world) to the life of an itinerant rag-picker as a result of an increasing awareness of solid objects. This apparent inconsistency can readily be explained, however, in that it is not the objects themselves that fascinate the collector, but the speculation that the objects provide. It is interesting that Virginia Woolf implies approval of John's defection from ordered society (order similarly scorned as Whitaker's Table of Precedency in "The Mark on the Wall") in the dialogue between John and Charles where the former finds his reality in a piece of glass. Charles has been skimming bits of slate across the waves, and hence is disinterested in John's discovery since "he saw immediately it was not flat" (SO, 81) and therefore useless as a projectile. The narrow-minded attitude of Charles in dismissing all that is not immediately germane to his "strain

of thought" is completely foreign to the author's viewpoint, and Virginia Woolf subtly suggests that Charles is as wrongly dogmatic as medieval astronomers who rejected all theories of life that denied the flatness of the world. Thus Mrs. Woolf implies that while society (represented by Charles and those who give John up as a candidate and dinner-guest) will undoubtedly reject the unproductive rebel, life will not. This is made clear in the final scene between Charles and John, where the former attempts to discover why John willingly forsook a promising career:

"What was the truth of it, John?" asked Charles suddenly, turning and facing him. "What made you give it all up like that all in a second?" "I've not given it up," John replied" (SO, 85).

That Charles has "a queer sense that they were talking about different things" is not surprising, since of course they are: Charles means politics, and can see no farther than that narrow sphere of activity. John of course means he has never given up life, but in fact heightened his consciousness of it through collecting. For, as Virginia Woolf makes abundantly clear in nearly all of her stories, the objects themselves are not important but their connotations are everything. Or, in other words, Mrs. Woolf is urging us to forswear the modern trend of seeking security and stability, and return to the imaginative world of

childhood whereby we might see the world through fresh eyes. "It" significantly means exactly what it did in the parallel dialogue in "Kew Gardens."

"Solid Objects" deviates from other stories of its type in the Woolf canon in that it does not use an object first to focus speculation, and then to form an attitude, but rather the reverse. John's decision to quit the tangible world seems to have been made before he discovers the glass fragment as revealed by his exclamation "Politics be damned!" (SO, 80) and his fingers appear to be symbolically searching for a more fulfilling way of life in burrowing in the sand before the glass is encountered. The order of occurrence of the events is not as important, however, as the point of the story--that material success is not the hallmark of a successful life, and that society should not censure those who choose to live by other than commercial criteria. To Virginia Woolf and all sensualists like her,

life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end.³¹

Life is a wondrous collage of sights and impressions, and the full wonder of it is that so many disparate elements can cohabit our teeming planet. John, in comparing his lump of glass and star of china, shares the author's view. "He asked himself how the two [pieces] came to exist in the

same world, let alone to stand upon the same narrow strip of marble . . ." (SO, 83) and later is yet more amazed that a meteorite "evidently alien to the earth and [having] had its origin in one of the dead stars . . . [should stand] upon the same ledge with the lump of glass and the star-shaped china" (SO, 84).

It might be argued that the objects and events chosen by Virginia Woolf are trivial, but to do so denies the fundamental premise of her writing:

everything is the proper stuff of fiction, every feeling, every thought; every quality of brain and spirit is drawn upon; no perception comes amiss.³²

It is one of the facts of life that some of us cannot see life in this fashion. Like Charles, such people are put into a "horrible depression" [by] the disorderly appearance of [John's] room" (SO, 85), not realizing that what is muddle to one may be life itself to another. Charles' deficiency in failing to understand his friend's "defection" from the former's type of life is precisely the same deficiency exhibited by the combatants in "The Man Who Loved His Kind"--that of a lack of tolerance. It is especially significant that those who claim that "Solid Objects" is trivial reveal exactly the prejudice towards a different view of life that is revealed in the story, and, in essence, prove the validity of the story's premise.

A HAUNTED HOUSE

The piece that gives the title to the collected stories of Virginia Woolf is significant in more than this, as Leonard Woolf's placing it first might suggest. The story and the title summarize the author's response to life and literature: Mrs. Woolf was alternately in love with life and haunted by a fear that she would never grasp its treasure, and the sketch seems to epitomize her own quest. In most of the stories her spirit is abroad; the "ghostly couple" (HH, 9) of the title piece are manifested elsewhere as "mysterious figures" (UN, 26) and thoughts centered on these shades are seemingly always accompanied by extremes of mood. In "An Unwritten Novel" the mysterious figures uplift the author; "its you, unknown figures, you I adore; if I open my arms, it's you I embrace, you I draw to me--adorable world!" (UN, 26) but the "phantoms" of "The Mark on the Wall" bring the pessimistic feeling that life is restrictive in the wistful phrase "if freedom exists" (MOW, 44).

A search for an unnamed "treasure" (HH, 9) permeates "A Haunted House," and much of Virginia Woolf's short fiction. In "Monday or Tuesday" the object of the search is stated more definitely, "desiring truth, awaiting it" (MOT, 12), and in "An Unwritten Novel" the target is life itself, but symbolically it is "Drake's booty, gold and silver" befitting the "treasure" sought in "A Haunted House".

Of course the pursued abstraction lurking behind each of these stories is truth, or more precisely, the desire to distil truth from the many illusory facets of life. It has been pointed out that the story following "A Haunted House," and so similar to it ("Monday or Tuesday") received both its inspiration and title from the passage in "Modern Fiction" in which Virginia Woolf answers her own question, ~~to~~ "what is life," with this nebulous and oracular phrase. Her answer is the artist's non sequitur--that life is what we are and what surrounds us, and that we are no more able to escape its presence than we can fail to live without "Monday or Tuesday."

"A Haunted House" has an aura about it of "Chinese boxes all of wrought steel turning ceaselessly one within another" (KG, 39). It seems to possess, in riddle form, the key to all of the stories--and to point the way to other Woolfian fiction exploring the meaning of life, truth and reality. The story is a scant three pages, yet has all the richness and complexity of an extended ode. The plot is simple: a "ghostly couple", (presumably the spirits of previous tenants) search the house of a sleeping couple to find a "buried treasure". But, as we have now come to expect of Virginia Woolf, speculation again makes the story. What is the treasure that is variously and ambiguously described as "it:" (HH, 9) "their joy" (HH, 10) "our

treasure" (HH, 11) and in the last line of the story "the light in the heart"? It would seem to be plural or intangible since it was left in several places, upstairs, in the garden, "here . . . but here too!" (HH, 9)

The inspiration for "A Haunted House" was provided by the Woolf's Asham House--it seemingly had a ghostly couple.

The country people on the farm were convinced that it was haunted, that there was treasure buried in the cellar, and no one would stay the night in it. It is true that at night one often heard extraordinary noises both in the cellars and in the attic. It sounded as if two people were walking from room to room, opening and shutting doors, sighing, whispering.³³

Since so much of the story is therefore "factual reporting", it is probably pointless to rigorously explicate the symbolic meaning of the ghostly couple or the treasure, but one point about the use of treasure in the last line deserves mentioning.

The last line of the story, which has been considered the climax and explication of the treasure, is in reality little help since it is ambiguous. Confirmation of what is sought has not been affirmed. It is merely a question posed by the roused sleeper--"'Oh, is this your buried treasure? The light in the heart.'" (HH, 11) The italicized pronoun implies that the sleepers possess the same treasure once owned by the ghostly couple, but if "this" is also strongly accented the meaning changes somewhat, and implies that the awakened sleeper has identified what is sought.

The treasure imagery of Mrs. Dalloway is so central to the whole story canon that to turn briefly to this novel would seem in order. Clarissa Dalloway, like the inhabitants of the haunted house has an ineffable treasure bestowed upon her with Sally's kiss.

And she felt she had been given a present, wrapped up, and told not to look at it--a diamond, something/infininitely precious³⁴

Whether or not the sleepers' treasure is synonymous with Clarissa's is debatable, since "nothing [is] simply one thing"³⁵ but it would seem not unlikely that "the light in the heart" (HH, 11)--the treasure--is in fact the perception of truth. Mrs. Dalloway again supports this view in asking if Septimus Smith, "this young man who had killed himself--had . . . plunged holding his treasure?"³⁶ The answer is obviously yes; Septimus had perceived his truth and gone to join Evans in death.

The treasure that is "safe! safe! safe!" (HH, 10) in "A Haunted House"--the foundation of love and respect underlying all successful human unions and providing "the pulse of the house" (HH, 11)--is precisely the treasure that is lost by the Thorburns in "Lappin and Lapinova." This latter story can, indeed, be seen as the obverse side of the life of the ghostly couple under different circumstances--an analysis of a house haunted by a man's failure to respect the fantastic world necessary to his wife. As this story is of a later

period and style, however, I propose to deal with it in Chapter Three, but it is worthy of note that the trend begun in the early stories (failure to comprehend another's necessities) continues throughout the stories. Thus "Solid Objects" ends with the parting "for ever" of John and Charles due to the latter's failure to comprehend John's "pretty stones" (SO, 85) just as Ernest Thorburn's killing of the imaginary Lapinova causes "the end of that marriage." (LL, 78).

MONDAY OR TUESDAY

Only rarely will Virginia Woolf begin a story by focusing directly upon a human being, though the truth of human existence is always "understood" to be at the heart of the story, and "Monday or Tuesday" is no exception. In it the author uses her favorite device--and one increasingly popular in motion pictures--of beginning with a visually arresting object and moving through a series of natural transitions to a human being, in this case, "Miss Thingummy . . . at her desk." (MOT, 12)

The terminus a quo of "Monday or Tuesday" is a white heron, but the writer's camera does not dwell here long before the image has melded into sky. The technique of the opening is particularly delicate in that the reader assumes that Virginia Woolf is describing the heron, when in fact she has moved on to the sky, yet the writing is perfectly consistent--it is the reader's momentum that carries him on with the heron image.

Lazy and indifferent, shaking space easily from his wings, knowing his way, the heron passes over the church beneath the sky. White and distant, absorbed in itself, endlessly the sky covers and uncovers, moves and remains. (MOT, 12)

Two things seem apparent here. First, the writer in deceiving her readers into carrying the heron's image into the sentence describing sky, is making a by now familiar point, that "nothing is simply one thing."³⁷ Mrs. Woolf continually reasserts this theme. We remember Orlando's two thousand selves; Virginia Woolf's Diary statement, "I'm 20 people"³⁸ and the multifaceted life of Clarissa Dalloway earlier referred to. The second point is related, but different: that the things comprising what we call life (Monday or Tuesday) are fluid and dynamic (like the heron and the sky) but interlocking and static in the sense that they "endlessly . . . remain."

Mrs. Woolf's stories sooner or later make us aware of the mechanical forces so much a part of urban life. In this story the voices of the city break in on the narrator's reveries, and appear as parenthetical remarks "between the acts" of the random musings of the writer's mind, which is itself "lazy and indifferent" to regimenting the thought process. The city sounds are the insistent agents of this regimentation, even though the sources of the sounds are as disordered as the thought patterns they intrude upon: "wheels strike divergently. Omnibuses conglomerate in conflict" (MOT, 12).

The one-page sketch reaches a sort of summing up when the narrator appears to muster her images and take stock: "now to recollect by the fireside on the white square of marble." (MOT, 12) The marble reminds us of another repository of bits of life--John's mantelpiece in "Solid Objects"--and serves the same function of a reassuring "plank in the sea" (MOW, 47) on which to anchor oneself. With the warmth and security of the fire comes (presumably) that dreamy state anticipating sleep--as the solid marble begins to float, "the marble square pendant, minarets beneath and the Indian seas" (MOT, 13) and the writer considers a lazy compromise: "truth? or now, content with closeness?" (MOT, 13) As always, the quest for truth has been abortive, but the mind has been active in the pursuit--which perhaps is what life is all about. In the closing lines the heron returns, still "lazy and indifferent," suggesting that the search for truth has likewise been relaxed--as the very loose-knit texture of this sketch would support.

BLUE AND GREEN

"Blue" and "Green" are two independent variations on the same theme, each a single paragraph exploring the nuances of a single color. In this respect the "sketches" (and this word at last seems right for these particular word pictures) are more disciplined than any of Virginia Woolf's work, since

she sets up an arbitrary but, rigid parameter--that of a 'monochromatic' paragraph.

"Green" and "Blue" were printed on facing pages in Monday or Tuesday with "green" first, though the composite title "Blue and Green" suggests that "Blue" was in fact the earlier twin. The style and content would tend to support this hypothesis, as "Blue" is more technically bald than "Green", adhering to the simple and rigid rule of using "blue" once and only once, in each sentence. Bearing in mind that early efforts of the Hogarth Press frequently contained compositional errors--as Leonard Woolf records in Beginning Again--I will adopt the order of the composite title, which I feel probably indicates the order of composition.

Neither "Blue" nor "Green" is particularly noteworthy, and it is not surprising that Leonard Woolf decided to delete them from A Haunted House. They are simply experiments in artistic austerity--how to create a unified scene with a pallet of only one colour while avoiding blandness. Neither sketch is successful, though "Green" has moments of greatness.

The principal defect of "Blue", it seems to me, is the inability of the artist to remain true to her original viewpoint. The sketch purports to be a sea-scape, but the temptation to use "blue" in a different sense lures Mrs. Woolf away from her leviathan and into a cathedral which is "cold, incense laden, faint blue with the veils of madonnas".³⁹

This last sentence seems fraudulent, a gimmick ending without even the compensating shock of the "last-liner" story, since "leviathan" as "something huge and formidable" (seemingly the only associative link) is rather weak. We are forcibly dragged from the beach to church. It is useful to see these sentences together to understand the transition the author has unsuccessfully attempted.

A wave rolls beneath the blue bells. But the cathedral's different, cold, incense laden, faint blue and the veils of madonnas.

"The blue bells" have suddenly appeared on the beach, or they are flowers above and beyond the immediate vicinity. If the latter interpretation is true the scene is rather forced, though it would "shift scenes" enough to allow a cathedral to be placed in our field of vision. If the former is the intention we are simply not prepared to fit another beach sight into our composite picture of "boat-whale." Possibly an allusion to Debussy's "La Cathédrale Engloutie" (the drowned cathedral) is being made. Since the fable underlying this musical composition (a village is flooded and the cathedral bells still toll beneath the waves) parallels the story situation, and since Debussy was part of the impressionistic movement that so importantly influenced Virginia Woolf and Roger Fry, the allusion is highly likely.

"Green" is a better piece for a very obvious reason. The technique is a familiar one--using the reflections from a glass chandelier to suggest analogues having "green" as a common denominator, in the same way as the snail functions in "The Mark on the Wall." Of course "Green" is not "free" association as it must develop according to a rigid criterion--but it is more fluid than "Blue" in that the writer has abandoned the artificial requirement to use color explicitly in every sentence.

"Green" is at once more coherent and cohesive than its fellow, and can be explicated as follows. The glass crystals spill green light onto a marble surface; the white marble becomes a white beach, and the green light the wings of parakeets and the "blades of palm trees." The patches of light on the marble next suggest pools on desert sands, and such oases attract camels to "lurch through them." Since the glass fingers are still, the "light pools" remain motionless, and rushes, weeds and frogs encroach the brackish water (most arrivals being green of course).

The final phase of the sketch is a natural result of the sun's setting. No sun light is received on the glass fingers, hence no green light is dropped on the marble, hence no ships come, and the scene is over. In short, "the green's out."

It is perhaps worth mentioning that the second last sentence of "Green" contains "blue", but since the story also has a "white" blossom it is not considered significant enough to link the sketches. Certainly "Green" concludes with a sea image and "blue" commences with one, but this is a rather tenuous connection for pieces having little in common except the need to concern themselves with one hue.

THE STRING QUARTET

I have chosen to end this chapter with an explication of "The String Quartet" since I feel it is the pivot point at which the early sketches end, and the second phase--that in which the sketches of "Character," begins. The opening "exercises" by and large record the wanderings of a brilliant, but quixotic and as yet undisciplined mind. The stories following "The String Quartet" are generally more structurally developed and involve human protagonists, rather than using them as stage props, if at all. "The String Quartet" itself is the half-way house--on one hand little different from the chaotic collection of impressions comprising the early stories, but on the other, an experiment in using the clichés of human communication preparatory to such stories as "The New Dress" and "The Man Who Loved His Kind."

If the reader doubts that the early stories, that is those prior to and including 1921, lacked "characters," he

is challenged to find one person in any of the sketches previously explicated with any degree of individuality. "The Mark on the Wall" has passing references to historical and literary personages--Charles the First and Shakespeare for example--but the story itself has no dramatis personae.

"Kew Gardens" has a montage of couples, seen only in passing and serving largely as garden ornaments. "A Haunted House" has two couples, one ghostly and one somnambulant, but neither has an objective existence. "Monday or Tuesday" has "Miss Thingummy," but this off-hand appellation makes it obvious that she is a transient image--and the seven words devoted to her in the story preclude development. "Blue and Green", of course, are to the writer what two monochrome sketches are to a painter--and the human element simply does not enter into either of these two word paintings.

This is not to say, of course, that these early pieces are therefore failures--but rather that they are concerned with understanding the nature of truth, on an abstract level, rather than on the human level that links the second group. The first phase was a search for the right technique mentioned in the Diary⁴⁰ as much as it was a search for the truth at the heart of life--the continuing (and principal) premise of all Woolf stories. In other words, the early stories are to the second phase of character development, as the single handed framing of a piano melody is to the same piece with the chording and

rhythm developed. The tentative and wistful strains of "A Haunted House" and "Monday or Tuesday" are replayed with added assurance and fullness in "The String Quartet," and with even greater fluency and grace in the later pieces. The "chording" that has been added is of course "people"--as after 1921 all of Virginia Woolf's stories concerned themselves with revealing truths about various characters. Before that date, most had been experiments in lay psychology--perception and association tests for a fledgling writer, from common sights and objects.

The suspicious reader will possibly have noticed that "Solid Objects" is not among my suggested "characterless" stories, but even here where there is apparent grounds for dissent--I feel my point is valid. Mrs. Woolf does name her "characters" in this story, but they are not separately described nor individualized. Charles is delineated only by "the walking stick on the right hand side" (SO, 79) while John is the possessor of "the body on the left-hand side." Collectively, the two men are the sum of "mouths, noses, chins, little moustaches, tweed caps, rough boots, shooting coats and check stockings" (SO, 79). John and Charles might as well be Tweedledum and Tweedledee--they are simply two peas who chose different pods at the end of their story.

But to return to "The String Quartet," let me illustrate what I mean when I say it has "something old, something

new." The story begins with a note of assurance, the hearty aside to a reader who by now is a trusted companion. "Well, here we are . . ." (SQ, 27) says Mrs. Woolf as if pointing out one's seat at a concert, and immediately takes charge of the reader (" . . . and if you cast your eye over the room you will see . . .") in a forceful, but gracious manner. This is the mature Mrs. Woolf, but at the end of the opening paragraph a note of hesitancy has returned. Perhaps this is not going to be the story, as one had so optimistically envisioned at the outset, but another attempt to synthesize life that will fail: "yet I begin to have my doubts" (SQ, 27).

The question that Leon Edel asks in The Modern Psychological Novel seems to provide the impetus for the story, as a classmate once pointed out to me. Edel asks:

How record, word by word . . . symphonic material, in which certain instruments often speak out but in which, around them, the voices of others are constantly breaking in? How keep the core of thought disengaged from the haloes and fringes?⁴¹

"The String Quartet" would seem to be one artist's answer.

The framework of the story is such that the voices that break in on a spectator's reverie both interrupt and augment her thought processes, acting contrapuntally as do the separate instrumental "voices" of the quartet. The snatches of conversation are the trivial phrases of social banter, but significant in that the underlying thought pattern is much faster than the dialogue allows--thus one thought

triggers another and the answer to a question never arrives before another more imperative thought jostles it aside:

"Seven years since we met!"
 "The last time in Venice."
 "And where are you living now?"
 "Well, the late afternoon suits me best, though,
 if it weren't asking too much--"
 "But I knew you at once!"
 "Still the war made a break" (SQ,27)

The technique of juxtaposing snatches of speech was earlier tried in "Kew Gardens," but it succeeds far better here. The words ring truer, and more important, they seem to function on both the social and artistic levels needed by the writer. For example, the first line immediately explains the haste of the subsequent bursts of conversation--the speakers have not met in seven years and have only a few moments before the concert starts to "catch up" on each other's lives. A few moments is enough for the mind, but the fabric of social discourse is not flexible enough to cover a seven year gulf without leaving worlds unsaid--so the responses become more divergent. This of course is a technical variant of a familiar theme--the inadequacy of words for most situations in life--and likewise recalls "Kew Gardens" in which words were likened to bees: "words with short wings for their heavy body of meaning" (KG, 37). The metaphor has changed only slightly in "The String Quartet"--words here are "little arrows" (SQ, 27), still

short but capable of stinging occasionally.

Another recurrent note in the story is the pessimistic thought that "facts" seem to be covering and deadening human sensitivity, that "facts" form the impervious surface of life through which we rarely penetrate. Virginia Woolf, we may remember, wished to escape such a world in "The Mark on the Wall" in which she wanted "to sink deeper and deeper, away from the surface with its hard separate facts" (MOW, 42). In "The String Quartet" the "surface facts" are named, but the same despair at their existence is evident.

if it's all the facts I mean, and the hats, the fur boas, the gentlemen's swallow-tail coats, and pearl tie-pins that come to the surface--what chance is there?(SQ, 27)

An echo of "A Haunted House" is also heard in "The String Quartet." In the former story a ghostly couple sought an unnamed treasure; in the latter the author suspects we are all seekers: "for there are signs, if I'm not mistaken, that we're all recalling something, furtively seeking something" (SQ, 28).

Thus far I have dwelt upon similarities in "The String Quartet" to early stories, but the story's significance is surely that it progresses beyond the techniques of the first phase. The most obvious departure in format of this story is the use of music as a leavening agent for the mind, rather than using a visual stimulus. The music has

an infectious rhythm and strength, and the prose response to the quartet's opening is full of energy and passion, but with an air of desperation that the word symphony will not keep pace with the music. What emerges surely bespeaks "the power of music," but one feels that the author is on the verge of losing control. It brings to mind Dryden as the sorcerer's apprentice:

Flourish, spring, burgeon, burst! The pear tree on the top of the mountain. Fountains jet; drops descend. But the waters of the Rhone flow swift and deep, race under the arches, and sweep the trailing water leaves, washing shadows over the silver fish, the spotted fish rushed down by the swift waters, now swept into an eddy where--it's difficult this--conglomeration of fish all in a pool; leaping, splashing, scraping sharp fins . . . (SQ, 28)

The writer has created her required crescendo, but is inevitably drawn into the vortex of the swirling sounds. However, the abandoning of self to emotional rapids is a joyous sacrifice, and the soul, thrilled and invigorated, forges upward, not to destruction but salvation and optimism:

. . . the yellow pebbles are churned round and round, round and round--free now, rushing downwards, or even somehow ascending in exquisite spirals into the air; curled like thin shavings from under a plane; up and up How lovely goodness is in those who, stepping lightly go smiling through the world! (SQ, 29)

Both the words and the inspiring music invoke contrary moods in the writer--at once so typical of Virginia Woolf yet

paradoxical. The listener (to an early Mozart work) says that it "makes one despair--I mean hope. What do I mean?" (SQ, 29) and this seems to pinpoint the strange dichotomy in so much of Virginia Woolf's work, in which "sorrow, sorrow, Joy, joy [are] woven together, like reeds in moonlight" (SQ, 29). For example in "An Unwritten Novel" when the spell is broken and Minnie Marsh is transformed into the ordinary traveller, Virginia Woolf's mood remains optimistic: "it's you, unknown figures, you I adore; if I open my arms, it's you I embrace, you I draw to me--adorable world!" (UN, 26) Yet elsewhere when the mirror of illusion breaks, the effect on the writer is quite dissimilar: "supposing . . . the image disappears . . . what an airless, shallow bald, prominent world it becomes!" (MOW, 43). Virginia Woolf's criticism contains this message frequently also, "that life is infinitely beautiful yet repulsive; that one's fellow creatures are adorable but disgusting."⁴²

The writer-listener (for they are surely one person) answers her companion in an interlude between musical pieces,

"No, no, I noticed nothing. That's the worst of music--these silly dreams. The second violin was late you say?" (SQ, 30)

implying that to Mrs. Woolf, music inevitably brings thoughts which prevent a competent assessment of the musicians. The thoughts are dismissed as "silly dreams," but her imagin-

ative apparatus immediately converts the opening bars of the next piece of music into "lovers on the grass" with a vicarious role for herself. The paragraph that follows is one of the most delightful in the whole story canon, and reminds one of the best of Orlando:

He followed me down the corridor, and, as we turned the corner, trod on the lace of my petticoat. What could I do but cry 'Ah!' and stop to finger it? At which he drew his sword, made passes as if he were stabbing something to death, and cried, 'Mad! Mad! Mad!' Whereupon I screamed, and the Prince, who was writing in the large vellum book in the oriel window, came out in his velvet skull-cap and furred slippers, snatched a rapier from the wall--the King of Spain's gift, you know--on which I escaped . . . But listen! the horns! (SQ, 30)

This is sheer indulgence in romantic daydreams, but then so is listening to music (which seems to be the point). The power of music to transport the listener physically to another world is evident in the last line of this passage--"horns" are unlikely in a string quartet, but eminently suitable to a passionate world of princes and rapiers.

The last paragraph of the story provides the only concrete analogy between words and musical notes where the lady "runs up the scale with such witty exchanges of compliment . . . that the words are indistinguishable though the meaning is plain enough" (SQ, 31), reminding us that the story is indeed a concerto for thought and voice. The music has brought to mind the best of life: "love,

laughter, flight, pursuit, celestial bliss" (SQ, 31) which in fact summarises the fantasy just quoted.

Once again, however, the "bliss" achieved is transient and the artist must return to the world of commonplaces, as a listener must arise with a sigh at the inevitable end of any performance. The rewards of art are always ephemeral, but compensatingly eternal in that we can always return to resavor the emotions produced. I feel that this attitude is expressed in the following line from the story, and explains its paradoxical content: "This city to which we travel has neither stone nor marble [yet it] hangs enduring, stands unshakable" (SQ, 31).

As in the earlier stories the "treasure" has been sighted, but found too fragile to be brought to earth and borne away as a mere "solid object." Grail-like it has appeared, then faded, leaving us temporarily satiated--which is surely all we can demand of artistry. The writer too withdraws, "back then I fall, eager no more, desiring only to go" (SQ, 31) and the parting between the two listeners symbolically hints at Virginia Woolf's reluctance to return to the ordinary world and let the muse depart: "'You go this way?' 'Alas. I go that.'" Surely this alludes to the closing lines of Love's Labor's Lost in which Armado expresses the inadequacy of words to compete with the power

of music: "the words of Mercury are harsh after the songs of Apollo. You that way--we this way."⁴³ Then too, the actor Armado points out that as a ward of Apollo, the god of the arts, he must travel a different road to the earthbound audience--just as Virginia Woolf must reluctantly part with her muse.

NOTES

p. 3. ¹(New York: Random House, 1942), Vintage Reprint,

²Ibid., p. 91.

³Ibid., p. 12.

⁴Virginia Woolf, The Common Reader, second series (London: Hogarth, 1932), p. 52.

⁵Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture, p. 80.

⁶"The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia," The Common Reader, 2nd Series (London: Hogarth, 1932), p. 49.

⁷Ibid., p. 50.

⁸The Common Reader (1), pp. 60-71.

⁹A Writer's Diary, p. 150.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 46.

¹¹The Captain's Death Bed, pp. 140-165.

¹²The Common Reader (1), p. 60.

¹³The Captain's Death Bed, p. 147.

p. 83. ¹⁴Religio Medici and Other Writings (London: Dent, 1965),

¹⁵The Common Reader (1), p. 72.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 83.

- ¹⁷"Kew Gardens". All stories appearing in A Haunted House are abbreviated in this fashion according to the "Key to Symbols in the Thesis Proper." For the source of unreferenced quotations, refer to the pertinent appendix.
- ¹⁸Virginia Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 22.
- ¹⁹Leonard Woolf, Beginning Again, p. 235.
- ²⁰Virginia Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. vii.
- ²¹*Ibid.*, p. 14.
- ²²*Ibid.*, p. 23.
- ²³Jean Guiguet. Virginia Woolf and Her Works, p. 330.
- ²⁴Tillyard, The Elizabethan World Picture, p. 71.
- ²⁵Orlando, A Biography (London: Hogarth, 1928), p. 31.
- ²⁶Troilus and Cressida (I, iii, 87-89).
- ²⁷(London: Hogarth, 1931), p. 6.
- ²⁸Roger Fry, Vision and Design, new ed. (New York: Meridian Books, 1960), pp. 19-20.
- ²⁹Jean Guiguet, Virginia Woolf and Her Works, p. 343.
- ³⁰Virginia Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway, p. 40.
- ³¹Virginia Woolf, The Common Reader (1), p. 154.
- ³²*Ibid.*, p. 158.
- ³³Beginning Again, p. 57.

³⁴Mrs. Dalloway, pp. 52-53.

³⁵Virginia Woolf, To The Lighthouse (London: Hogarth, 1927), p. 216.

³⁶Mrs. Dalloway, p. 281.

³⁷To The Lighthouse, p. 216.

³⁸A Writer's Diary, p. 35.

³⁹All quotations not page referenced refer to Appendices II, III and IV of this thesis.

⁴⁰A Writer's Diary, p. 33.

⁴¹(New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964), p. 21.

⁴²"The Narrow Bridge of Art," Granite and Rainbow (London: Hogarth, 1958), p. 12.

⁴³William Shakespeare, Love's Labor's Lost (V, ii, 940-941).

CHAPTER III

THE MACROCOSM PEOPLED

Here all the traditional features of prose narrative--plot, characterization, description, etc.--are deliberately blurred into a new unity Sensibility is sent wandering to and fro, noting this, lingering on that, collecting facts, impressions, moods, ideas, uniting them all into that diaphanous whole which for Mrs. Woolf is the true symbol of life.
 --David Daiches, The Novel and the Modern World

We have thus far discussed one third of the canon--all published in or before 1921. Three stories of this vintage remain; each excluded from the previous chapter for different reasons. They are "An Unwritten Novel", "A Society" and "Lappin and Lapinova". "Nurse Lugton's Golden Thimble" will also be discussed in this chapter for reasons later explained.

The first of the stories, as its title suggests, has more attributes of the novel genre than the story. Unlike its desk-mates it attacks the problem of character development immediately and while the writer's mind still wanders occasionally, this prose experiment develops an environment, a past, and a life for its central character--in fact outlines, in broad strokes, a novel. "A Society" does not fit among the early sketches either, since it is

far more conventional, developed, (over twice the length of every story except "An Unwritten Novel" which it exceeds by ten pages) and, by the way, humorous. One can only deplore its loss to the "common reader" as "A Society" is a truly delightful story, if an atypical one in the Woolf canon. The third "misfit" is "Lappin and Lapinova" which, the Diary tells us,¹ was conceived twenty years or more before its first public airing in 1938. One can only speculate how much the original was altered in the "rehashing"² but the theme of the story is obviously allied with the early period of "Solid Objects"--that one person's fantasy is another's reality--but the style and precision of the piece indicate a mature mind at work.

These three "orphans" then, for one reason or another, sit uneasily in the early group (1917-1921), and chronologically, thematically and technically cannot be placed with the posthumous pieces (1944). I have therefore, somewhat arbitrarily I admit, grouped them in the "middle period" (1927-1938) the span in which the intended market for Woolf stories was the magazines rather than the Hogarth Press. Thus "An Unwritten Novel" at least is at home among the magazine stories, it first appearing in the London Mercury.

It is important to remember that the stories of 1927-1938 were, for the most part, intended for magazines, as

this surely had some bearing on the shape of the finished products. "Blue and Green" for example would never have reached the public through a large circulation journal--its appeal, even if it was written by an "established" writer (which Virginia Woolf was not in 1927),³ was far too limited. Then too, as every aspirant to the writer's craft becomes aware, one's offering must fit the format and image of the market to which it is submitted. For these reasons the stories of the "middle group" are perhaps more conventional than they might otherwise have been.

I am not suggesting by any means that Mrs. Woolf produced "potboilers" for the masses--in fact she prided herself on just the opposite tendency: "it's an odd feeling though, writing against the current: difficult entirely to disregard the current. Yet of course I shall."⁴ But I do feel that the muse made some concessions, perhaps unconsciously, to mammon. For example the Diary also records

--Cables asking me to write. Chambrun offer £500 for a 9,000 word story. And I at once begin making up adventures--ten days of adventures--a man rowing with black knitted stockings on his arms. Do I ever write, even here, for my own eye?⁵

This chapter will be somewhat of a potpourri therefore, since it contains stories of two decades while ostensibly spanning 1927-1938. However, this "period" is not especially

significant in itself, since, to be precise, one should further subdivide the 1927-1938 span as no story appeared, or is referred to, between 1929 and 1938. Our eleven year group in fact represents the fruits of only four years, 1927-29 and 1938. The reader is again referred to Appendix III since I do not intend to proceed chronologically, but first to assess pieces from opposite poles in time, but with identical situations ("An Unwritten Novel" (1920) and "The Shooting Party" (1938)). "A Society" (1921) "Lappin and Lapinova" (1938) and "Nurse Lugton's Golden Thimble" (1965)⁶ will follow. The remaining four stories will revert to chronological order as they have little in common with other pieces, and hence nothing is to be gained by reordering.

AN UNWRITTEN NOVEL

"An Unwritten Novel" and "The Shooting Party" are remarkably similar in so many ways that one wonders if the same incident inspired both. Both stories are Virginia Woolf's musings about the lives of women observed in a train, both women have initials M.M., and both women refute the conjectures made about them by proving to live uncomplicated lives. Milly Masters emerges as "quite an ordinary, rather elderly, woman, travelling to London on some ordinary piece of business" (SP, 68) while Minnie Marsh proves to be just somebody's mother, and the writer can only conclude in disgust that "life's bare as bone" (UN, 26).

I have devoted more time to an explication of these stories than I have any other two, as I feel it is rewarding to compare the mind of Mrs. Woolf at work on two variants of, to all intents and purposes, the same incident. Milly Masters and Minnie Marsh might have been two separate women on different trains, but to Virginia Woolf the cryptic code letters "M.M.--those were the initials on the suit case" (SP, 59) stand for any middle-aged, middle-class woman--be she mother (UN, 26) or mistress (SP, 66).

Like many of Mrs. Woolf's stories, "An Unwritten Novel" is an artistic game. Rather than creating a world from a mark on a wall, the artist creates an hypothetical life for a person observed on a train. The train is an important prop since it ensures that the object of speculation is captive and stationary sufficient time for the sketch to be taken. The story represents an artistic progression from the earlier stories in that the first models were simple and geometrical--"a small round mark" (MOW, 40) or "one small black spot" (SO, 79), occasionally still-life "the oval-shaped flower bed" (KG, 32), but never, until this story, human.

The particular focal point chosen for this verbal canvas is the human face, or more specifically the eyes, for

life's what you see in people's eyes; life's what they learn, and, having learnt it, never, though they seek to hide it, cease to be aware of (UN, 14).

This suggests that a writer is a sort of facial palmist--one who interprets the lines and emotions of a face rather than a hand. The implication is that Virginia Woolf can translate the implications of a glance as easily as she can ascertain the truth about a railroad from "the map of the [railroad] line framed opposite [her carriage seat]" (UN, 14).

In "An Unwritten Novel," as in many of the stories, a subtle technique is employed. The central character never actually speaks, but we tend to forget this fact because of the silent dialogue Virginia Woolf exchanges with her silent protagonist. Notice in the following how the reader is coerced into thinking Minnie speaks, though it is clearly stated that the speech is pure conjecture. "She seemed to apologize and at the same time to say to me, 'If only you knew!'" The writer answers in kind, and another life begins to unfurl. "'But I do know,' I answered silently" (UN, 14)

This story is particularly rich in associative patterns. The newspapers wielded by the passengers, for instance, fulfil many functions. The silent narrator "talks" of the Times, as the "great reservoir of life" (UN, 14) and proceeds to use this paper in various ways. It becomes a

shield to hide behind, "a perfect square, crisp, thick, impervious even to life" (UN, 15), then evolves into that part of life dispensed with and over (like a snake's cast-off skin): "the man who read . . . roused himself, crumpled his paper contemptuously, like a thing done with, burst open the door, and left us alone" (UN, 15).

The "train" of association in many sections of "An Unwritten Novel" parallels that of "The Shooting Party" (and "Nurse Lugton's Golden Thimble"). Compare the following passages, and the mental processes behind them:

". . . you lay across your knees a pocket-handkerchief into which drop little angular fragments of eggshell--fragments of a map--a puzzle She's moved her knees--the map's in bits again. Down the slopes of the Andes the white blocks of marble go bounding and hurtling, crushing to death a whole troop of Spanish muleteers with their convoy--Drake's booty, gold and silver" (UN, 21).

Vast lands, so they said, the old people had owned--her forefathers--the Rashleighs. Over there. Up the Amazons. Freebooter. Voyagers. Sacks of emeralds. (SP, 60)

Both are exercises in association. In both, the mind wanders where it will, but invariably swings to a state of childhood innocence and childish delight in adventure and plunder. It is a tribute to Mrs. Woolf's skill as a writer (and to the clarity of her mental processes) that the lightning transition to "booty" from, in the first case, "egg-shell" and, in the second, "vast lands" is not only

clear, but amazingly logical. Let us, then, at the risk of stating the obvious, examine the thought processes in the first quotation.

The fragments of shell, being irregular yet fitting into a whole, remind one of a jig-saw puzzle, or a map torn into fragments. Who would tear up a map? Pirates. What do pirates connote? Booty. This pattern is reinforced by another--the creation of a macrocosm of the miniscule pieces on a woman's skirt. Minnie's knees under her dress become mountains, the drapery valleys, and the falling bits of white shell ". . . white blocks of marble . . . hurtling and bounding." This avalanche suggests victims, ". . . a whole troop of Spanish muleteers" (UN, 21) and the only interesting cargo they could have: "Drake's booty, gold and silver." The mind thus arrives at its destination through diverse ways, but the fact that each by-road of the mind leads to treasure is not accidental. Virginia Woolf's stories usually unearth a treasure of some sort. "A Haunted House" has its "buried treasure", while in "Kew Gardens" the kiss of an old woman with a wart on her nose is treasured as "precious . . . the mother of all my kisses" (KG, 34). The plunder in "The Mark on the Wall" is "jewels . . . opals and emeralds" (MOW, 41) and of course in "The Shooting Party" it is "sacks of emeralds." Mrs. Woolf seems to equate these physical

riches with the store of life within each of us. Every soul , laid bare, gives up its treasure--and there is no life so shallow or uninteresting as to be dubbed base metal.

It is interesting that the characters Virginia Woolf uses to reveal the riches of life are usually unaware of their appeal. Minnie of this story for example is introverted, terribly sensitive, and (while wishing most of all to communicate) uncommunicative. She possesses "the entombed soul, the spirit driven in" (UN, 24) like many of Virginia Woolf's creations. We think of Sasha Latham, "by some malice of fate . . . unable to join . . . / a widow bird" (ASU, 139-140) and Mabel Waring, "wrapped round and round and round" (ND, 58) and shielded from the world by her cloak. It is indeed possible that Minnie in an "old cloak she had last year" (UN, 17) served as a pattern in "The New Dress" seven years later for Mabel in her "Chinese Cloak she had worn these twenty years." The characters of the two women are similar and both suffer agonies in social intercourse. Mabel feels like a fly in a saucer of milk at a Dalloway party, while the ordeal of asking for assistance is equally agonizing for Minnie:

Niagara's ahead. Here's the crisis! Down she goes. Courage, courage! Face it, be it!
'Oh, I beg your pardon! Yes, this is Eastbourne.' (UN, 25)

The previous quotation contains a slight, but significant piece of evidence that life and the liver of life are synonymous, which would support my contention that the early stories equated life with the myriad experiences of the observer, and therefore was that observer since body and experience are inseparable. Minnie is urged to "face it, be it!" (where "it" is obviously "life" as in "Kew Gardens" and "Solid Objects"). This is especially revealing, as we here have specific evidence that Virginia Woolf at this phase of her story telling demanded a character to be life itself, whereas the early phase limited "life" to various impressions, sights and senses.

The world that Mrs. Woolf creates for Minnie is a meagre but meaningful one. The author selects her fictional materials with the care of a Jane Austen, with "twigs and straws . . . placed . . . neatly together."⁷ We see the writer pondering each thought, trying the sound of names to assess their suitability: "Hilda's the sister-in-law. Hilda? Hilda? Hilda Marsh." (UN, 16) One imagines the nod of satisfaction. The character is right and Mrs. Woolf can move on to the children who, as incidental background, deserve less deliberation: "down they get (Bob and Barbara)."

So far, so good, but the story lacks intrigue. Therefore a crime and a commercial traveller are brought into

Minnie's life to give it texture. However, once Moggridge the traveller is conjured up, the story becomes independent, and begins to run away from its creator. For example, Virginia Woolf knows that to develop details of Moggridge's sales commodity at this point is digressive, yet his buttons assert themselves despite the author's protests: "but the time's not come for bringing them in . . . but I say the time's not come" (UN, 22).

This seems on the surface to be merely author's caprice--self indulgence in the pleasure of unrelated dabbling. But on reflection one realizes that two ends are here achieved. Virginia Woolf has jotted down a detail redundant to a story (Moggridge's buttons) but possibly useful in a novel, and she has reinforced her oft-expressed view that life is not an orderly progression of events (the symmetrical gig-lamps of "Modern Fiction") but a series of quicksilver transitions and departures from the expected. Surely Virginia Woolf is affirming that "to go on gathering richness and rotundity, destiny and tragedy, as stories should" (UN, 21) one must allow the "unborn children of the mind" (UN, 22) freedom of scope and direction.

THE SHOOTING PARTY

The previous section made clear, I hope, the connection between "An Unwritten Novel" and "The Shooting

Party", but one last point is telling. Virginia Woolf saw "The Shooting Party" as an unwritten novel also, as her Diary attests.

It came over me suddenly last night as I was reading The Shooting Party--the story that I'm to send to America, H.[arper's] B.[aazar]--that I saw the form of a new novel. It's to be first the statement of the theme: then the restatement: and so on: repeating the same story: singling out this and then that, until the central idea is stated.⁸

"The Shooting Party" itself does not adopt the method of "repeating the same story" from different viewpoints as does, say, Browning's The Ring and The Book, but one can see in the story a pattern that would suggest such a novel form. The person that is Milly Masters is first viewed from the standpoint of a fellow train passenger. Then, with a peculiar "little click at the back of her throat...

'chk,'" (SP, 59) Milly dissolves and we are in the decaying mansion of the Rashleigh's, and before us is Miss Antonia--not the woman that was Milly Masters, but one with the same peculiarity. Since "Milly" smiles as she makes a sound "like somebody imitating the noise that someone else makes" (SP, 59) we can assume that the "chk" is the physical manifestation of a private reminiscence which is immediately made public through the writer's omniscience. It is hard to keep the characters straight initially, since Milly parodies

Miss Antonia's "chk" (which precipitates the scene shift to the Rashleigh Edwardian manor) while Miss Antonia's "scar on her cheek" (SP, 62) is shared by Milly, her housekeeper, who is "scarred on the jaw." (SP, 59) The point seems to be not that the women are synonymous--but that they have suffered a similar debilitation and internment in Rashleigh house (hence their battle scars).

The transitions in "The Shooting Party" are especially rapid, and the sight of an object or objects may trigger a related, but very different scene in a later passage. For example, the passenger M.M. carries a brace of pheasants, which reappear later "out in the King's Ride [where] the pheasants were being driven across the noses of the guns" (SP, 60). However, the bodies of Miss Antonia and old Miss Rashleigh while serving this game also become pheasant-like "as if their bodies were warm and languid underneath their feathers as they drank." (SP, 64) In fact, these two old birds are continually likened to the pheasants accumulated by the hunters, presumably to emphasize the fact that the two women, like the birds outside, are close to death and subject to the whims of the squire.

The connecting links between the birds and the women are quite explicit. The pheasants have "lustrous eyes" (SP, 60) so the women's "bec[o]me lustrous" (SP, 64)

likewise. In death, the pheasants' "claws gripped tight, though they gripped nothing" (SP, 62) as do the ageing women's: "their hands gripped their hands like the claws of dead birds gripping nothing" (SP, 66).

The atmosphere of the "inner" story--that is, that portion away from the "realities" of the train carriage--is one of decayed magnificance, of decadence almost Faulknerian in mood. The house is shabbily genteel, but near collapse: "the doors did not fit . . . the sun . . . pointed . . . at a hole in the carpet," (SP, 60) but the residents retain their pride in their coat of arms and the rather shopworn memory of having once hosted King Edward.

Just as the mysterious Miss Antonia grows in Virginia Woolf's mind from a simple mannerism observed in a woman, so too grows the story's setting in a manner reminiscent of "The Mark on the Wall." Mrs. Woolf speculates that Milly

must have wormed her way into the room that [the author] was seeing through the stuffing of the carriage, and the man's bald head, and the picture of York Minster. (SP, 59)

The picture that the author "sees" (Rashleigh House) is made of the ingredients actually viewed in the carriage. The worn and faded plush seats of a British railways coach suggest the moth-eaten furnishings of the Rashleighs, just

as the "bald head" and "York Minster" evoke "a photograph . . . an egg-shaped baldish head . . . and the name Edward written with a flourish beneath" (SP, 60). When we recall that York Minster was the seat of Edward IV and successive heirs, the transitional thought becomes explicit. Mrs. Woolf is fond of these associative leaps of the mind, and has Miss Antonia, for instance, feeling "all scales from the tail to the waist" (SP, 60) in viewing the family shield which contains a mermaid.

"The Shooting Party" is much like a cross-word puzzle in reverse--the words are given, and one must create the clues and background. The two last Rashleigh females listen to the last of the male heirs shooting outside, while reminiscing about the deaths of the other men in the family. We are told nothing specifically about the family, but are invited to create the necessary background by the same intuitive process that the author uses.

The family has had a tragic history--each male seemingly destroyed by a woman. The first victim shoots himself, ostensibly in a hunting accident ("tripped. Caught his foot.") (SP, 64) but old Mrs. Rashleigh's chuckle betrays a family skeleton--suicide over a woman. Another heir, John, is trampled by his mare but a human female accomplice is implied. Another son, very like Percival of The Waves, had "charged at

the head of his men . . . as if he had twenty devils in him" (SP, 65) but met his Waterloo at the hand of "one white devil" (surely, but we must say so ourselves, another woman).

The heirs of Rashleigh change, but each succumbs to a similar fate, ruin with a wench beneath his station: "pink and white Lucy at the Mill . . . Ellen's daughter at the Goat and Sickle . . . and the girl at the tailor's (SP, 65). It is here that the carriage occupant is re-utilized, as she becomes Milly the housekeeper, and the latest nemesis of the Rashleigh heirs: "Milly Masters She's our brother's . . ." (SP, 66). The reader is compelled to do the detective work to fill the ellipsis with the required "mistress"--which he can do from the clues that Milly's son is "the boy who cleaned the Church" (SP, 62) and the later "it's his [Hugh Rashleigh's] boy . . . that cleans the Church." (SP, 65)

The clues that Mrs. Woolf provides are brief, but sufficient from which to compile the family situation. Miss Antonia and Miss Rashleigh are sisters, since they refer to "the squire" as "our brother." That Hugh Rashleigh is the current heir is suggested by Milly's presence in the house, since she is implied to be his mistress. That the old women resent their own loneliness and their menfolk's

profligacy is implied in the tone of their conversation, and that the end of their crumbling dynasty is near is suggested by the fall of the family coat of arms and Edward's photograph.

The history and future of a family is sketched in a few words, and the concision and coherence suggests that "A Shooting Party" has come a long way technically from the mental marginalia comprising "An Unwritten Novel." Symbolically too, the later story has interesting overtones if one associates Milly Masters with "mother Mary", and Christ who cleansed the church (John 2:14, Matthew 21:12, Mark 11:15 and Luke 19:45) with Milly's unnamed son. Or, Milly Masters as Mary Magdalene has some merit, when one remembers the prostitute condemned by the self-righteous, and compares her to the "ruined" maid despised by the virtuous Rashleigh sisters.

"The Shooting Party", since so little is stated explicitly, yet so much is implied, affords perhaps the richest ore for explication of any of the stories. As Miss Antonia sits and stitches, the fire log burns away--forshadowing her demise. Before the pheasants rise from the brake for the last time

in the innocent air, as if straying alone like a cherub, a bell from a far hidden steeple frolicked, gambolled then faded. Then again up shot the rockets . . . [and] again the guns barked. (SP, 62)

This passage suggests the voice of the church attempting to reassert itself over the noise of the guns, which further suggests Milly's son "who cleaned the church" vainly seeking recognition by his errant father.

A few other scenes are remarkably pregnant with implications. Both Milly and Miss Antonia answer "coming" to an unheard summons, Milly laughing (SP, 62) but Miss Antonia croaking (SP, 66). It is as if the summoner is a fresh wind, progress, that will right the wrongs done to the Millys of the world, and blow away the decadent Rashleigh bourgeoisie. Miss Antonia reacts, in fact, as if she had heard her death-knell struck as she salutes the mermaid on the family crest (the siren who has ruined the Rashleigh house by luring its males to their deaths?), drinks off the last of her wine (her life) and prepares to meet death-- as "'coming!' she croaked" (SP, 66) suggests. She appears to welcome the end that is forthcoming in the final scene: "'closer! closer!' grinned Miss Rashleigh."

The concluding scene in the Rashleigh house is perhaps the richest in implications, and combines the force of Conan Doyle's The Hound of the Baskervilles and Poe's The Fall of the House of Usher. The squire, whose "voice was weak" (SP, 66) enters with his hounds, and a symbolic sequence of events takes place. A spaniel has been eating

the carcass of the pheasant served for lunch, and is set upon by the squire's hounds. In attempting to separate the dogs the squire inadvertently strikes "old Miss Rashleigh . . . [who falls] against the mantelpiece . . . striking . . . the shield above the fireplace" (SP, 67). She falls into the ashes, as does the shield, and the picture of King Edward.

This cycle of events is surely a symbolic encapsulation of the Rashleigh story. The pheasant (whose association with the Rashleigh sisters is by now explicit) falls to the spaniel (a weak hunter--hence the squire). This parallels the role of the women who are subjugated to their brother's whims. The spaniel in turn is attacked by "the great dogs" who seem to be avenging spirits bent on the destruction of the decadent household. Since women, house and monarch fall together, one assumes that a way of life has passed, and that Edwardians have given way to their progressive heirs--Milly and the millions of women freed from drawing rooms and tyrannical families, and able to travel abroad alone. This is reinforced in the final paragraph in which we return to the "real" world--by now far less real than the fantastic realm of the Rashleighs. Milly's eyes in the railroad carriage suggest "the ghost of a family, of an age, of a civilization dancing over the grave" (SP, 67).

In returning to the present to conclude her story, Virginia Woolf points out that this ordinary woman is the new aristocrat. The Milly Masters of the twentieth century are the meek who have finally inherited the earth and ousted the Rashleigh's who were "rotten at the heart" (SP, 65) and crumbling like "an old mushroom, all wormy inside, and hollow under a smooth skin."⁹ The squire of "The Shooting Party" is Lawrence's bourgeois personified, "tramping his thirty miles a day after partridges,"¹⁰ but where Lawrence is vitriolic, Virginia Woolf is cool, almost clinical in her treatment of these "mushrooms." Unlike her contemporary, Mrs. Woolf sees the Rashleighs as a dying breed under an ever-changing, but ever interesting social panoply. For Mrs. Woolf there are no causes to be fought for--only people and events which become stories, "moments of being" to be arrested if possible and then released.

Virginia Woolf's stories have been likened to spider webs, and "The Shooting Party" seems to fit this description exactly. The characters are trapped and arrested in specific poses and moments of time. But the object of the spider is not to devour, but to explore the nuances of the moment and to plumb, always, the meaning of this life in this situation.

NURSE LUGTON'S GOLDEN THIMBLE

This story, written for Virginia Woolf's niece, is so like "An Unwritten Novel" in its technique that it is a use-

ful piece of evidence that both stories were commenced before 1925. "Nurse Lugton" was found "in the middle of the text of [Mrs. Dalloway] . . . but has nothing to do with it" (See Appendix IV), confirming that her writing habits were quixotic--and that she would take up a new idea wherever and whenever it presented itself.

In the section dealing with "An Unwritten Novel" I ventured to explain the train of thought whereby Minnie Marsh's knees become mountains, and the egg-shell fragments on her lap "white blocks of marble . . . bounding and hurtling" (UN, 21). In "Nurse Lugton's Golden Thimble" exactly the same setting and mental processes are employed: a woman's lap is expanded to the dimensions of a country, and the printed gingham on her lap comes to life--becoming the magic kingdom of "Millamarchmontopolis." The name is full of associations: "Milla" recalls "Milly Masters" of "The Shooting Party"; "March" recalls "Minnie Marsh" of "An Unwritten Novel"; "montopolis" suggests "mounts" (Minnie and Nurse Lugton's knees), and "polis" a capital city--in this case of the animal kingdom. The whole alliterative mouthful would delight a child, yet an adult reader acquainted with Mrs. Woolf can associate this "mount" with the other in "An Unwritten Novel".

Leonard Woolf's foreword to "Nurse Lugton" implies that the fragment found in Mrs. Dalloway was untitled, since "it is here published under the title . . ." would otherwise suggest a title change, which is unlikely. This heading is not particularly appropriate since a "golden thimble" appears only once in the story--"over [the animals] burnt Nurse Lugton's golden thimble like a sun"--and Mrs. Dalloway reveals that a thimble is merely one of those domestic objects that one can never remember the name of. "She would take her silks, her scissors, her--what was it?--her thimble of course, down into the drawing room"11

"The Ogress" would seem a better title--and one more thrilling to children tired of their nannies and nurses, and seeking adventure. For Nurse Lugton awake is an "ogress [who] . . . caught the animals, and froze them, and they stood still on her knee all day, till she fell asleep" But more important, the word would remind adults (who can also enjoy the story) that the author is an ogress too, one who forever is arresting life in specific postures--women in trains, garden flowers, a snail on the wall--to assess their meaning in relation to life itself. "Nurse Lugton" like many of the stories, resulted from an associative game,

an amusing game, especially for a dark winter's morning. One says to the eye Athens; Segesta; Queen Victoria and one waits, as submissively as possible, to see what will happen next. And perhaps nothing happens, and perhaps a great many things happen, but not the things one might expect Sights marry, incongruously, morganatically (like the Queen and the Camel), and so keep each other alive.¹²

Just as "Nurse Lugton" suddenly appears in the Mrs. Dalloway manuscript, so too does a revealing plan in the Jacob's Room holograph,¹³ Part I, p. 131:

Oct. 6th, 1922 Thoughts upon beginning a book to be called perhaps, At Home or The Party: This is to be a short book consisting of six or seven chapters each complete separately, yet there must be some sort of fusion. And all must converge upon the party at the end. My idea is to have [. . .]¹⁴ characters like Mrs. Dalloway much in relief: then to have interludes of thought, or reflection, or short digressions (which must be related, logically, to the rest) all compact, yet not jerked.

The chapters might be

- 1 Mrs. Dalloway on Bond Street
- 2 The Prime Minister
- 3 Ancestors
- 4 A Dialogue
- 5 The old ladies
- 6 Country House?
- 7 Cut Flowers
- 8 The Party

Since the holograph is dated April 15th 1920--March 12 1922 (probably correctly, since it presages Mrs. Dalloway) the above insertion would seem to be dated incorrectly, especially since the first Diary reference to Mrs. Dalloway ("I shall

produce Mrs. Dalloway in Bond Street") is June 23, 1922.

The story "The Prime Minister", a seven page unsigned holograph (also dated Oct 6th, 1922) is in the Berg Collection as well, the Diary mentioning this project on August 28th, 1922, and saying, (on Oct 14th) "I shall finish The Prime Minister in another week."

What does this suggest, and how is it relevant to this study? First, it suggests that Mrs. Dalloway as we know it is very close to the short stories of the post-1921 era. It also would indicate that Mrs. Dalloway evolved into a separate project, the novel having no chapter divisions, and little to do with "ancestors" or "the old ladies." In fact there seems to have evolved two "Mrs. Dalloways": one, the novel, the other a collection of short stories involving "Mrs. Dalloway . . . interludes of thought, or reflection, or short digressions." For what it is worth, I suggest that the divisions suggested by Virginia Woolf's "chapters" might refer both to the stories and to sections in the novel.

The opening of Mrs. Dalloway seemingly has "Mrs. Dalloway on Bond Street" in "the middle of June"¹⁵ the time she was working on it in her Diary reference. "The Prime Minister" is referred to ("She would marry a Prime Minister")¹⁶ in this chapter and again in "The Party" at the end of the book, where he is the guest of honour.¹⁷ This would imply

that the "separate chapters" have melted into brief scenes throughout the novel, as would be likely to happen in a stream of consciousness work. Mrs. Woolf could hardly have kept the chapters separate and still strung her thoughts together in the order she wished.

Without a rigorous examination of the Berg holographs the following is merely speculative, but it would seem consistent with the stories. "Chapters" 1 and 2 of Mrs. Woolf's plan seem to have been utilized in the novel, and "Ancestors" (3)--which is also in the Berg Collection--dropped from the novel but suggestive of a story sequence. "Ancestors" possibly evolved into "The Shooting Party" since an ancestral home dominates the story, and the characters are Edwardian. Perhaps "Country House?" became amalgamated with this theme, as did "The Old Ladies" which describes the two Rashleigh "old birds." "A dialogue" describes "Together and Apart." "Cut Flowers" reminds us that Isabella Tyson of "The Lady in the Looking Glass" cuts garden flowers while being observed, and that once she is "picked" (by the observer) she too wilts and sheds her former glory. "A Summing Up" obviously takes place at "The Party", and the subsequent name suggests that all did "converge upon the party at the end"--as does Mrs. Dalloway of course. This all suggests that it is a mistake to insist that any of the stories were of a particular year, since even the posthumous stories (in the light of the holo-

graphs) seem to have been in Virginia Woolf's mind before 1923.

A SOCIETY

In the introduction to this thesis I questioned the Woolfs' decision to omit "A Society" from A Haunted House, but in some respects the omission is understandable. The story is unlike any other in the canon in its evangelistic fervour for feminism, and its undisciplined girlishness. There is, for example, implied self-praise in the young Mrs. Woolf's "there is no reason to suppose that any woman ever has been able to write or ever will be able to write" since one can detect the author's ironic undertone--"but of course I shall prove to the contrary."

The decision to delete the story was unfortunate in a way though, since it has a verve and freshness lacking in other, more experimental pieces. For example Judith's "measures for dispensing with prostitutes and fertilizing virgins by Act of Parliament" has a delightfully racy ring, even though the measures are only implied:

an invention . . . to be erected at Tube stations and other public resorts, which, upon payment of a small fee would safeguard the nation's health, accommodate its sons, and relieve its daughters.

Very little is known, or has been said, about "A Society." Virginia Woolf makes no reference to it in the

Diary (or her husband has not seen fit to include references to the story if they exist) and since the only public airing of "A Society" was the 1000 copy¹⁸ edition of Monday or Tuesday, few critical assessments are available to us. One critic suggests that "one might call the sketch a parable, with a core of narrative more luminous and less definable than most parables"¹⁹ but this is hardly very enlightening. Let us turn to the story then and see what it might yield to a careful reading.

The style of "A Society" is quite conventional, but the story differs from The Voyage Out or Night and Day in its pace and humor. It was written in 1921, the same year that "A String Quartet" was written, and both stories seem to allude to Love's Labor's Lost. The connection between "A String Quartet" and the play have already been noted, and it is interesting that "A Society" and Love's Labor's Lost both concern societies (one of women, the other of men) who isolate themselves and devote themselves to study. A society of young women met together to assess the ability of men "to produce good people and good books" is in itself an amusing, if presumptuous theme, and the method whereby these latter-day suffragettes attack their quest is occasionally hilarious. One abortive attempt to discover how well the Royal Navy has accomplished the ends of the society results in a disguised

member's being arraigned before the ship's captain, who demands satisfaction as a gentleman, since his "honour" presumably has been sullied. The humour lies in the captain's discomfort--he is perfectly at ease in dealing with men, but how to punish a woman is beyond his experience or capability:

the captain . . . demanded that honour should be satisfied. "But how?" she asked. "How?" he bellowed. "With the cane of course!" Seeing that he was beside himself with rage and expecting that her last moment had come, she bent over and received, to her amazement, six light taps upon the behind. "The honour of the British Navy is avenged!" he cried

The satisfaction of the miscreant's honour proves a knottier problem--since the gentleman is a lady--and it is only after much deliberation (delightfully comic and ironic to the reader but not to the sweating captain) that "four strokes and a half . . . (the half conceded . . . in recognition of the fact that her great grandmother's uncle was killed at Trafalgar)" should assuage the trespasser's honour.

In this and other scenes Virginia Woolf takes delight in showing men to be nonplussed at the very thought of women in roles beyond that of the traditional fireside fixture. She is more cynical in later passages when she implies that men insist upon monopolizing all important roles in life, yet refuse to accept responsibility for any distressing results: "their wives wished [for whatever is distasteful] . . . or perhaps it was the British Empire."

The printing of Monday or Tuesday is execrable (as Leonard Woolf acknowledges)²⁰ and it is difficult to determine whether Mrs. Woolf or McDermott, her compositor, is responsible for such unusual structures as "instead of rejoicing our eyes we have to shut them if we are to take him in our arms" The number of times it became necessary to insert [sic] in appendix II attests to the sloppiness of the composition, and a rigorous explication of unusual lines is not considered useful--as complexities are more probably the result of chance than design. The space would perhaps be better filled by an analysis of the story's intention, and an assessment of its success in terms of such intent.

"A Society" is basically a feminist story which asks, with tongue in cheek, whether men are competent to be entrusted with preserving "civilisation". The findings of the society are inconclusive since the declaration of war interrupts the final meeting before the reports are all heard, but the opinion of the majority would seem to be cynically voiced by Castalia (who, ironically, is the society's first mother):

for Heaven's sake let us devise a method by which men may bear children! For unless we provide them with some innocent occupation we shall get neither good people nor good books.

There is a suggestion of social protest in the story in that the women have all but decided in favour of men when

the news of the outbreak of World War I interrupts, and the scene shifts to that in which Castalia sums up the general feeling. It is implied that man is indeed marvellous--"man flies in the air, talks across space, penetrates to the heart of an atom, and embraces the universe in his speculations"--but is seemingly incapable of peacefully cohabiting the planet with his fellows.

The story in other ways is a collection of odd styles and incidents. The scheme for "fertilizing virgins" previously referred to reminds us of Gulliver and the impractical scientific schemes of the Academy of Lagado--Mrs. Woolf ironically proposing a method by which the sexes might be completely independent--since they are obviously worlds apart in all respects. The question "is Kensington a nice place to live in?" is not answered in this story, but is twice affirmed in a later one: "much the nicest part of London . . . is Kensington" (MoB, 104 & 105).

Other bits of "A Society" reappear elsewhere in Mrs. Woolf's work. Elizabeth's report that "Mr. Wells is the most popular living writer; then comes Mr. Arnold Bennett" is ironic in that these are the two authors most often criticized by Virginia Woolf in "Modern Fiction," "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" and elsewhere. Each of the female artists dealt with in "A Society" (Sappho, Jane Austen, the

Bröntes and George Eliot) is discussed in "Women and Fiction," and it is in this essay that the best argument against "A Society" can be found:

[if] we are conscious of a woman's presence/--of someone resenting the treatment of her sex and pleading for its rights . . . it introduces a distortion and is frequently the cause of weakness. The desire to plead some personal cause or to make a character the mouthpiece of some personal discontent or grievance always has a distressing effect²¹

Perhaps Virginia Woolf recognized this defect in her story and withdrew it, preferring to snuff out a piece of her early creativity rather than run counter to her critical tenets. For in the end "A Society," with all its whimsey and sparkling repartee, is a tub-thumping story. The final scene in which Castalia's daughter falls heir to the society's notes unsheaths the feminist blade hitherto subtly concealed in the humorous dialogue. The tears of the distressed child vicariously stand for the sorrows of all subjugated women--for all who have been given the gift of education, but who have been refused the right to use it. Cassandra's advice to Castalia "there's only one thing you can teach her to believe in--and that is herself" denies the possibility that men have anything worth believing in. Seemingly Virginia Woolf recognized that she herself had played Cassandra in this story, and with maturity came wisdom. Women, she later realized, were what they

themselves decreed, and Virginia Woolf forswore the role of feminist prophet of doom.

LAPPIN AND LAPINOVA

This story is, as Guiguet calls it, an "abridged drama of married life"²² but more important, it is a study of the dangers of intolerance. A man, by refusing to recognize his wife's need for "a private world, inhabited . . . entirely by rabbits" (LaL, 72) destroys his marriage. The similarity of this story to "Solid Objects"--in which another relationship is ended forever by the failure of one of the parties to credit an unconventional need in the other--has earlier been noted.

It is perhaps worth mentioning here--at the halfway point in the canon--that the law of diminishing returns will make itself increasingly felt. Since I have referred to passages from the later stories during the explications of the first half of the canon, redundancy will inevitably result if the same procedure is followed for the later explications. It will be expedient to mention some connections between stories that might have been earlier alluded to, but in general, comparisons (and with them the lengths of explications) will be reduced.

The Thorburns of "Lappin and Lapinova" typify so many couples--lovers who are so different by temperament that when the honeymoon is over, life together becomes unlivable.

"Ernest," unfortunately takes his name seriously, and his wife has reason to regret that her man does not prove to be the mad-cap "Jack" of the Wilde comedy. On the honeymoon Rosalind fortunately discovers a means whereby she is able to preserve her sanity through the next two years. She notes that her muscular young man, so upright and commendable, has one (to her) redeeming feature: "when he was eating toast he looked like a rabbit . . . his nose twitched."

(LaL, 69) This suggests an imaginary private world to Rosalind in which, if she can lure her husband hither, they can escape the establishment represented by Ernest's stuffy parents, and be "in league together against the rest of the world" (LaL, 72).

The game that the Thorburns adopt, that of King and Queen Rabbit, anticipates the game of squirrels and bears played by the Porters in Osborne's Look Back in Anger, and of course the marital ritual that keeps the combatants alive in Albee's Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf. One is tempted to explore the many connections between Albee's play and Mrs. Woolf's story, but, regretfully, it would be digressive here in terms of the scope of this thesis. It is interesting, however, that Virginia Woolf's examination of the need within people for surrogate existences spurred

so many works of fiction, and perhaps the recent full-scale inquiry into this field by psychiatrists. Mrs. Woolf recognized in 1920 what has just recently been formalized:

people tend to live their lives by consistently playing out certain "games" in their interpersonal relationships. They play these games for a variety of reasons: to avoid confronting reality [or] . . . to avoid actual participation.²³

Surely these are exactly Rosalind's motivations: to avoid the reality of life as the Thorburn family sees it, and under whose influence she feels that "her icicle ["cool" in colloquial parlance] is being melted; dispersed; dissolved into nothingness," (LaL, 74) and to avoid participation in the Thorburn world by metamorphosing it:

rabbits! . . . and at that a mysterious catastrophe befell the Thorburns. The golden table became a moor with the gorse in full bloom; the din of voices turned to one peal of lark's laughter ringing down from the sky (LaL, 74).

The Thorburn world is a distasteful one to Mrs. Woolf, and "the decayed family mansion, the plaster peeling off the walls" (LaL, 75) reminds us of the crumbled Rashleigh manor and its occupants. It is significant that Rosalind sees "her mother-in-law--whom they dubbed The Squire" (LaL, 75) in the same way that the reader sees Hugh Rashleigh--as an anachronism in "a world that had ceased to exist" (LaL, 75).

Another rather curious feature connects "Lappin and Lapinova" with "Solid Objects." John's "downfall," (as far as Charles is concerned) is his mania for collecting materially worthless bric-a-brac. Rosalind's father-in-law's "foible is collecting things" also, and the implication is that he too wishes to live a life very different to that demanded by "The Squire", his mannish wife. Virginia Woolf reinforces this contention, I feel, in her parenthetical remark that "The Squire's" children also would defect from her world if they could: "her children (who hated her). . . ." (LaL, 75).

Like most husbands, Ernest Thorburn gradually reneges on the little lunacies required by his wife until he is "completely blank" when Rosalind attempts to tell him of Lapinova's day. At this point, Lappin's twitch has become exceedingly rare, and something within Rosalind has started to die; "she felt a load on the back of her neck, as if someone were about to ring it . . . she was stiff and cold" (LaL, 76). The Thorburn dynasty has won, and Rosalind begun to feel the encroachment of the arthritis concomitant with Thorburn existence. It only remains for Ernest to finish her off in the trap to accomplish the inevitable: "so that was the end of that marriage" (LaL, 78).

THE NEW DRESS

"The New Dress" is doubtless Virginia Woolf's best known story. It is the piece that anthologists insist typifies Mrs. Woolf's stories--and they invariably associate a "terribly sensitive mind"²⁴ with Mabel Waring and her creator. The general feeling seems to be that here is a self-portrait: Mabel Waring reads "Borrow or Scott" like Virginia Woolf, Mabel has a husband with a "safe, permanent . . . job" like her creator, and Mabel and Mrs. Woolf both seem to vacillate through the same pendulous arc, between optimistic confidence--"she would become a new person. She would be absolutely transformed" (TND, 57)--and utter despair at the hopelessness of communicating: "all [of her life] had been absolutely destroyed, shown up, exploded, the/ moment she came into Mrs. Dalloway's drawing room!" (TND, 49-50).

Whether or not Mabel is a vicarious Virginia is debatable, but critics persist in accusing Mrs. Woolf of possessing the same qualities as Mrs. Waring. Mabel, "puffed up with vanity" and saying "'How dull!' to show off" (TND, 49) exhibits the same frenetic desire to be socially adept that Donald Hall sees in Virginia Woolf;

always there is a breathless anxiety to be brilliant; a sentence must never be boring . . . it is showing-off, and it effectively undercuts the seriousness of her emotion.²⁵

Most readers, I feel, will disagree with the above assessment of Mrs. Woolf, and say that Mr. Hall is mistaken in his review of the critical canon (now collected in four volumes).²⁶ His is a common opinion, however, and the casual reader of "The New Dress" might be as readily induced to repeat Mr. Hall, applying the criticism to Mabel Waring. To do so means that one interprets Mabel's early departure from the party as defeat--she has not been "brilliant" and "never boring"--hence she withdraws, as would Mrs. Woolf in the same situation. This is to miss a few subtle hints in the story that Mabel (and vicariously Mrs. Woolf) is not heartbroken at the story's ending, but rather has accepted her lot, albeit a painful one. This is clear in the veiled note of sarcasm in Mrs. Woolf's description of Rose Shaw who epitomizes "the height of fashion . . ." (TND, 50). It is in the phrase that follows that the barb is concealed. ". . . precisely like everybody else, always." Surely this implies that for Mabel to fit in with the group perfectly she must dress, talk and be "like everybody else" and hence lose her identity. This again suggests Mrs. Dalloway, the novel about which so many of the stories revolve. Clarissa, we remember, withdraws at the height of her party into "the little room"²⁷ (that symbolically seems to be her mind) in order to face the truth of Septimus' death and her life. Only by withdrawing can

Clarissa reassert her own identity and return to her guests--
 "go back to them"²⁸ (my italics)--but not just as one of a
 crowd, one of them. Her decision to leave the party is based
 not on failure to achieve rapport, but the result of a sudden
 "epiphany"--to use Joyce's term. Her self-pity suddenly sick-
 ens her, and she achieves the courage to live her own life:

but that [self-pity] was deplorable! That was not to be en-
 dured! That made her feel ashamed of herself She
 would be absolutely transformed; she would never give a thought
 to clothes again It would be always . . . as if she
 was lying in the sun It would be it! (TND, 57)

Once again we see in a Virginia Woolf story the nebulous
 "it" without an antecedent--and once again, as in "Kew Gardens"
 ("what do you mean by 'it'?") (KG, 37), "Solid Objects" ("I've
 not given it up,") (SO, 85), and "A Haunted House" ("here we
 left it") (HH, 9), the unspecified "it" suggests "life" itself.
 It would seem that critics are therefore wrong in associating
 Mabel's early departure as a failure to come to grips with
 life: she has simply come to terms with her own life and de-
 cided that being a third class Rose Shaw or Mrs. Dalloway is
 not for her.

The image that Mabel uses to describe herself and the
 others at the party is a beautifully logical one, and supports
 the interpretation of Mabel's defection from fashionable
 society just given:

We are all like flies trying to crawl over the edge of . . . a saucer of milk with . . . wings stuck together . . . trying to hoist [our]selves out of something, or into something, meagre, insignificant, toiling flies. (TND, 51)

In departing, Mabel has resigned from the company of flies. She has refused to become enmeshed in the struggle for social position and power--not because she is above such things but because she recognizes her inability to compete. This is, however, a redeeming weakness, since Mabel at least has the insight to see herself clearly.

Those who feel that I credit Mabel with too much will-power and understanding will point to the weak-kneed Mrs. Waring using the same social conventions she despises as she leaves:

"'I'm afraid I must [go],' said Mabel Waring, 'But,' she added in her weak, wobbly voice . . . / 'I have enjoyed myself enormously.'" (TND, 57-58)

This is true, but she recognizes her falseness, and though too weak to rebel outwardly, she recognizes that her words, and those of others at the party, are "lies, lies, lies!" (TND, 58) She has achieved the painful recognition that at parties she will always be a "fly," and never an accepted, beautiful "dragonfly" and her discovery is total and immediate:

she saw in a flash to the bottom of . . . everything. She saw the truth. This was true, this drawing-room, this self, and the other false (TND, 51).

"Truth" has been found, unsought, in this story, and the quest of "Monday or Tuesday" realized: "desiring truth, awaiting it" (MoT, 12). In this and other stories of what Guiguet calls "the Mrs. Dalloway saga"²⁹ we find pessimism dominant. However, a note of optimism is surely inherent in Mabel's escape from the saucer to return to her dull but liveable world. After all, the "dragonflies" of the Dalloway party may be beautiful, but they are also callous and unfeeling, and therefore not to be emulated. We remember another occasion that the dragonfly appeared--in "Kew Gardens"--and was associated with a callous and indifferent rebuff to an ardent lover. "The dragonfly went round and round: it never settled anywhere" (KG, 33), and Mrs. Woolf, through Mabel, has rejected this aimless drifting of the socialite. Life to both Mabel and Mrs. Woolf is, in the last analysis, too precious to flit away with social butterflies, and Mabel's "wrapp[ing] herself round and round and round, in the Chinese cloak she had worn these twenty years" (TND, 58) is symbolic. She has neither the plumage nor the constitution to join the "beautiful insects, dancing, fluttering, skimming" (TND, 51) so she encapsulates herself once more in a familiar cocoon and returns to a less demanding, but more secure phase of life. Some might cry that this is the ultimate in cowardice, an ostrich act, but I doubt that Virginia Woolf would see it so. To live one's own life is more important

than catering to the whims of society. In December 1927, a few months after "The New Dress" was published in The Forum, Virginia Woolf noted in her diary

to forget one's own sharp absurd little personality, reputation and the rest of it, one should read . . . think more . . . and practice anonymity. Silence in company; or the quietest statement, not the showiest; is also "medicated" as the doctors say. It was an empty party, rather, last night. Very nice here, though.³⁰

Both Mabel and Mrs. Woolf have decided that the quiet moments of life, "far from the madding crowd", are most meaningful. Parties are "empty," but certain "moments of being"--often in solitary situations--become the essence of life:

she had quite unexpectedly . . . for no reason, opening a letter, coming into a room--divine moments, when she said to herself (for she would never say this to anybody else), "This is it. This has happened. This is it!" (TND, 56)

MOMENTS OF BEING

The preceding section on "The New Dress" should serve to indicate my principal reason for grouping that story with "Moments of Being", but the two are probably chronologically adjacent also. They have a further link in the use of dressmaker's pins--though the two stories use them in different ways.

In "The New Dress" Mabel Waring feels "like a dressmaker's dummy standing there, for young people to stick pins into," (TND, 50) and thus the pins are objects of torment, rather than the neutral objects used to shift scenes in "Moments of Being":

The setting of that scene could be as varied as one chose, Fanny Wilmot reflected. (Where had that pin fallen?)/ It might be Ravenna; or Edinburgh The scene could be changed. (MoB, 105-106)

In the other occurrence of pins in "The New Dress" however, they are used much as they are in "Moments of Being" --almost as tiny links between humans. The love felt by Mabel for Miss Milan while the latter pins Mabel's dress (TND, 52) is paralleled by Fanny Wilmot's rapport with Julia Craye as they search for a pin dropped from Fanny's carnation. (MoB, 108).

The date of conception of "Moments of Being" is uncertain, Leonard Woolf feeling it "possible that . . . 'Moments of Being' was published [before A Haunted House in 1944]." ³¹ Guiguet asserts (without documentation) that the story was published in 1929 ³² but Kirkpatrick does not include the story among those appearing in magazines, yet he spans 1920 to 1938. Guiguet is probably correct as stylistically and thematically it seems to follow "The New Dress", but one wonders about his source of information, as neither Leonard nor Virginia Woolf seemingly provide it.

In one respect, "Moments of Being" is a throwback to the apprenticeship period in which certain objects provided focal points and grist for the mill of the author's mind. "Moments of Being" uses a single straight pin as the

catalyst of action--Julia's innocuous comment upon Fanny's dropping the pin precipitating Fanny's speculation about her music teacher. The difference between the early prototypes (like "The Mark on the Wall" and "Solid Objects") and this story however, is that the pin itself serves so many ends. It is not simply an arresting object, a "plank in the sea" from which pure speculation can spring. Consider the uses of one tiny straight pin.

First, the pin falls from Fanny's flower, and Miss Craye responds with the subtitle of the story: "Slater's pins have no points" (MoB, 101). This reply serves three purposes: to make Fanny think of the many commonplaces of her life that the regal Miss Craye must share--since Miss Craye obviously shops at the plebian "Slater's" also; to put the pupil and student on the same social plane (since two fellow customers have presumably at least this in common) hence enabling rapport and the "epiphany" of the kiss at the story's end; and to suggest a dominant idea in the story--that many incidents in life, like searching for a lost pin, have "no point" yet can be memorable and ecstatic "moments of being" like Mabel feels "for no reason, opening a letter, coming into a room" (TND, 56). Next, by having Fanny search for the pin while Julia Craye holds the unpinned flower, Mrs. Woolf is able to separate the women, so that the reader

can savor a symbolic and solitary act by Julia. Miss Craye, a spinster, is cursed

with a perpetual frustration. So it was even now with the carnation. She had her hands on it; she pressed / it; but she did not possess it, enjoy it, not entirely and altogether. (MoB, 104-105)

It is significant, too, that the flower brings to Julia a sense of her loneliness, her "apartness" since the flower that has fallen from Fanny's breast, is also separate, unattached. When Fanny finds the pin and reattaches "the flower to her breast" she is kissed by the reawakened Julia who "burnt like a dead star" (MoB, 108) in the ecstatic moment of union--of flower to breast, and of woman to woman.

Finally, the pin allows Mrs. Woolf to indulge in a bit of whimsy in: "(where had that pin fallen?) / It might be Ravenna; Or Edinburgh" (MoB, 105-106) implying that objects, thoughts and situations are all one, and all mutable. One's mind can readily flash between cities, and since objects often stimulate the transition, why cannot those tiny objects one is constantly losing, irretrievably, be spirited abroad also? This thought echoes that in "The Mark on the Wall" in which Mrs. Woolf counts "a few of the things lost in one lifetime . . . always the most mysterious of losses. . . ." (MoW, 41).

"Moments of Being" hinges about a particular pinpoint of time--a mental excursion takes place in the time it takes to drop and recover a pin. Fanny Wilmot's thoughts of the living Julia, and dead Julius Craye (both of whom seem part of a glass menagerie untouched by life) comprise the story, and the emphasis on glass reminds one of the fact and reflected fact in "The Lady in the Looking-Glass." Julia is thought of as living "in the cool glassy world of Bach fugues" (MoB, 101) and Fanny wishes to "break the . . . glass that separate [s the Crayes] from other people" (MoB, 102).

The principal technique of the story is to give the thought processes of Fanny with all the repetition and eddying one accepts in a mind mulling over a mystery. Thus we get "was it for that reason then . . . that she had never married?" (MoB, 104) repeated with slight variations twice more (MoB, 104 and 106) and "much the nicest part of London --Kensington" (MoB, 104 and 105) twice.

Once again a story by Virginia Woolf searches for an intangible: never clearly articulated and never completely realized. The treasure of "A Haunted House" and other pieces is still elusive, "it's on the field, it's on the pane, it's in the sky--beauty; and I can't get at it" (MoB, 103).

This time the "it" of the quotation has an antecedent, "beauty", but Mrs. Woolf is surely adapting Keats' equation,

as other stories from her pen associate "it" with "truth" and "life". For Virginia Woolf, truth is beauty and both are synonymous with the quintessence of life, but only rarely do her characters achieve any of the terms of this equation. However, when truth (or "beauty") is realized, that character can be said to have known a "moment of being", and the sum of such moments constitute all that is worthwhile in life. Julia Craye, for example, blossoms into life as she kisses Fanny and returns the carnation (MoB, 108). Eleanor of "Kew Gardens" is quickened by another kiss, bestowed "suddenly . . . on the back of [her] neck and [her] hand shook all the afternoon / . . . it was so precious" (KG, 33-34). The kiss bestowed by Sally Seton on Mrs. Dalloway can be considered a similar "moment of being" in which "the whole world might have turned upside down."³³ Mrs. Woolf surely is pointing out that "the semi-transparent envelope" surrounding life is only occasionally visible, but those rare occasions on which it is constitute the pith of life. Hence, Julia Craye

sitting hunched and compact holding her flower, seemed to emerge out of the London night, seemed to fling it like a cloak behind her, it seemed, / in its bareness and intensity, the effluence of her spirit, something she made which surrounded her. (MoB, 107-108)

THE LADY IN THE LOOKING-GLASS

Throughout these explications of the stories I have mentioned repetitive techniques employed by Virginia Woolf,

and these techniques seem to recur in stories regardless of their dates of conception. One of these is the use of mirrors, which I earlier suggested might have been due to Roger Fry's influence. In "The Lady in the Looking-Glass," or in "A Reflection"--(the purposely ambiguous subtitle)--we have perhaps the most striking utilization of glass to reflect the truth so often missed by direct scrutiny, since "things . . . never happen, so it seems, if someone is looking" (LiLG, 86).

Mrs. Woolf, in the opening to "The Lady in the Looking-Glass", utilizes much the same technique as in "Green"--mentally transposing reflected light into a room full of "shy creatures" (LiLG, 86) that would be far too elusive to observe without the magic of a mirror. For only in a mirror can sights be arrested "so accurately and so fixedly that they seem . . . held there in their reality unescapably." (LiLG, 87). Also, as in "Green", objects have become fluid in "The Lady in the Looking-Glass", like the letters which are "all dripping with light and colour" (LiLG, 89). This brings to mind Salvador Dali, since in this and other stories Mrs. Woolf is doing in prose what Dali does in oil--making the universe, and time itself, fluid and exciting: "nothing stayed the same for two seconds together" (LiLG, 87).

As in most of Mrs. Woolf's stories, the plot of this story is almost nonexistent. A silent and unnoticed observer examines a quite ordinary woman as she works in her garden--but the observer does so completely by images reflected into the house by the hall mirror. Thus the narrator is limited by the frame of the looking-glass since all outside this frame of reference is blank. Of course, the observer could easily change position and thus widen her field of vision immensely, but she does not do so--for the same reason that the observer of "The Mark on the Wall" does not rise and visually verify the object of speculation. It is not laziness that causes the fixed point of view--rather the opposite. The artist desires to exercise her imagination to the fullest, and savours the challenge of working with the bare minimum of facts. Of course, by now, we know Virginia Woolf's attitude to facts; in "The Mark on the Wall," "The String Quartet," "An Unwritten Novel" and particularly the essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" all reveal her disdain. This story is no different in this respect, and the reader who requires facts must "snatch what little there [is] greedily" (TND, 54) like Mrs. Holman. "For it was another fact--if facts were what one wanted . . ." (LiLG, 88) makes Mrs. Woolf's position clear.

The object of the particular game behind "The Lady in the Looking-Glass" (and most of Virginia Woolf's sketches are artistic games) is the guessing of the truth behind Isabella Tyson's exterior. Since "she concealed so much and knew so much one must prise her open with the first tool that came to hand--the imagination." (LiLG, 89) Of course this creation of a surrogate life for a woman observed is precisely what is done in "An Unwritten Novel", "Moments of Being" and "The Shooting Party" ~~does~~, as Guiguet has noted in grouping the four stories as "the writer in quest of Mrs. Brown."³⁴ There is only one modification in the rules of the observation game. Since the author has had practice on three former occasions in direct transmogrification, she now will perform the trick using a mirror.

Another by now familiar technique recurs in "The Lady in the Looking-Glass". "Kew Gardens" first explores the parallels between people and life in a garden, and Isabella, picking garden flowers assumes the characteristics of the "tremulous convolvulus" (LiLG, 87) in a related metamorphosis. In the later story though, Mrs. Woolf does not allow her mind to pursue this train of thought, since

such comparisons are worse than idle and superficial--they are cruel even, for they come like the convolvulus itself trembling between one's eyes and the truth. There must be truth (LiLG, 87)

Thus, even though the same concerns are evident in this story of 1929 as were found in "Kew Gardens" written ten years previously, concision and precision have replaced undisciplined "butterfly-hunting"--leaping off in pursuit of every colourful image.

"The Lady in the Looking-Glass" has a kinship with its chronological predecessor, in its desire to catch a "moment of being" in Isabella--though no such moment occurs. The observer rejects the trivial facts of Isabella's life "the things that she talked about at dinner [since] it was her profounder state of being that one wanted to catch and turn to words" (LiLG, 90). "The Lady in the Looking-Glass," though, is markedly different from "Moments of Being" in its conclusion. It has no ecstatic moment--in fact the moment of truth is bitter and pessimistic. The mirror does its work, stripping off "the unessential and superficial . . . to leave only the truth [but] . . . Isabella was perfectly empty. She had no thoughts. She had no friends" (LiLG, 92). Guiguet makes an interesting comparison of this scene with the terminal one of Virginia Woolf's last novel, in which the pessimism presaging her suicide is evident. He notes that

the same emptiness, the same sterility in social relations are similarly conveyed in the final pages of Between the Acts, where the heroine, another Isabella, again has "only bills" by the evening post.³⁵

Mrs. Woolf, here, is in a grey mood, and is not far from the blackness of 1941. In that year she determinedly wrote "this trough of despair shall not, I swear, engulf me"³⁶ though we know, alas, it did.

THE DUCHESS AND THE JEWELLER

We seem to know more "facts" about this story than any other of the canon, as various sources provide us with the approximate completion date (August 1937),³⁷ the firm requesting the story ("Chambrun, N[ew] Y[ork]")³⁸ the published date (March 1938)³⁹ and the outlet (Harper's Bazaar).⁴⁰ Mrs. Woolf would probably smile at this joyful seizure of pertinent data, but it is reassuring to have something specific at last to support what, unfortunately, must otherwise be critical shadow-boxing.

"The Duchess and the Jeweller" is one of two Woolf stories we could call conventional ("The Legacy" being the other). The characters in both these stories are revealed almost entirely by actions and descriptions--and the inner workings of the mind are peripheral. In "The Duchess and the Jeweller" we have another rare occurrence for Virginia Woolf but a common one among conventional writers--that is the exploitation of a character's name as a vehicle for meaning. "Oliver" seems reminiscent of *Oliver Twist*--and "Bacon" suggests the greedy, rooting animal that the jeweller

has become. The story is not so much one of mental anguish as a study in motivation--an appraisal of how a man is willing to sacrifice his native Jewish shrewdness (and £20,000) for the chance to win a duchess's daughter. As a member of the nouveau riche Oliver yearns for the only thing his money has not been able to buy--social acceptance. The duchess obviously provides an avenue to this end--and the plot scarcely needs resumé.

Oliver has won his bet with his mother and become "the richest jeweller in England" (DaJ, 94) but he is "still a sad man, a dissatisfied man, a man who seeks something that is hidden" (DaJ, 95). Like many of his class, Oliver uses his wealth as a club, and sees in his diamonds "gunpowder enough to blow Mayfair--sky high, high, high!" (DaJ, 96) He takes sadistic pleasure in having the duchess await his convenience, and realizes his power over the impecunious woman. But the enemies are well matched--she knows his weakness--his love for her daughter.

The story is rather trivial when compared to most of the others. One knows the duchess will cheat the supposedly shrewd Oliver since she has done so before, and realizes her power: "was she lying again? Did she dare?" (DaJ, 98) The reader also can guess that the thought of "the light of the eyes of Diana" will hold sway over "the eyes of the

old woman in the picture . . . his mother" (DaJ, 99) and that his infatuation for the younger woman will necessitate his ignoring the silent disapproval of the older--symbolically his Jewish shrewdness. He takes the proffered paste pearls in exchange for £20,000 and the invitation to "come for a long week end" and is not really surprised when the jewels prove to be "rotten at the centre--rotten at the core" (DaJ, 100).

What is significant in this story ~~is its~~ connections with "The Shooting Party" and "Lappin and Lapinova." The "truffle" that Oliver wishes most of all to "rout out of the earth" (DaJ, 100) is precisely the way of life that Virginia Woolf reveals so mercilessly in these other stories. The two "Squires" of the two earlier stories both typify a way of life outmoded, "a world that had ceased to exist" (LaL, 75). The same phrase used by Oliver as he realizes his deception--"rotten at the core"--occurs in "The Shooting Party"--"rotten at the heart" (SP, 65)--and the irony on both occasions lies in the fact that the speakers apply the term to innocent sources while failing to recognize the canker in themselves. Oliver's desires are rotten, but then so is he, and herein lies the story's weakness. We don't really care about Oliver's duping, since he gets what he deserves. This is a story of bare "facts of life" and we are relieved when Mrs. Woolf moves on to stories pursuing that "profounder

state of being" (LiLG, 90) with which she is both more concerned, and more proficient.

NOTES

¹A Writer's Diary, p. 308.

²Ibid.

³Mrs. Dalloway and Orlando were Mrs. Woolf's most marketable novels (with To The Lighthouse they earned her £2,000) and established her reputation in 1927-1928.

⁴A Writer's Diary, p. 308.

⁵Ibid., p. 286.

⁶This story, part of the Mrs. Dalloway MS., is obviously pre-1925, though published in 1965.

⁷The Common Reader (1), p. 143.

⁸A Writer's Diary, p. 287.

⁹D.H. Lawrence, "How Beastly the Bourgeoise Is", In A Little Treasury of Modern Verse, ed. O. Williams (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1948), p. 983.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Mrs. Dalloway, p. 56.

¹²"The Sun and the Fish," The Captain's Death Bed, p. 193.

¹³The Berg Collection, New York Public Library.

¹⁴Illegible.

¹⁵Mrs. Dalloway, p. 5.

- ¹⁶Ibid., p. 9.
- ¹⁷Ibid., p. 264.
- ¹⁸Leonard Woolf, Beginning Again, p. 240.
- ¹⁹David Daiches, Virginia Woolf (Norfolk: New Directions Books, 1942), p. 45.
- ²⁰Beginning Again, pp. 239-240.
- ²¹Virginia Woolf, Granite and Rainbow, pp. 79-80.
- ²²Virginia Woolf and Her Works, p. 338.
- ²³Eric Berne, Games People Play (New York: Grove Press, 1964) dustcover.
- ²⁴A phrase used by Mrs. Woolf to describe Katherine Mansfield, but usually associated with Virginia Woolf herself.
- ²⁵Donald Hall, "Who Else is Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" New York Times Book Review, 24 December 1967, Section 7, p. 1.
- ²⁶Virginia Woolf, Collected Essays (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1966). This edition, by far the most convenient source of the complete critical canon, was not available at the time this thesis was commenced.
- ²⁷Mrs. Dalloway, p. 279.
- ²⁸Ibid., p. 283.
- ²⁹Virginia Woolf and Her Works, p. 336.
- ³⁰A Writer's Diary, p. 121.
- ³¹A Haunted House and Other Short Stories, p. 8.

³²Virginia Woolf and Her Works, p. 330 n.

³³Mrs. Dalloway, p. 40.

³⁴Virginia Woolf and Her Works, p. 332.

³⁵Ibid., p. 335.

³⁶A Writer's Diary, p. 354.

³⁷Ibid., p. 286.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹A Bibliography of Virginia Woolf, p. 106.

⁴⁰Ibid.

CHAPTER IV
POSTHUMOUS PIECES

The mind is full of monstrous, unmanageable emotions. That the age of the earth is 3,000,000,000 years; that human life lasts but a second; that the capacity of the human mind is nevertheless boundless; that life is infinitely beautiful yet repulsive; that one's fellow creatures are adorable but disgusting; . . . yet some control must exist.

--Virginia Woolf, "The Narrow Bridge of Art"

The last five stories of A Haunted House share an aura of mystery. None are referred to in the Diary or elsewhere by Mrs. Woolf, and her husband presents them with the tersest of preambles. The reader must take the stories as Virginia Woolf left them, "only just in the stage beyond that of her first sketch"¹ which is unfortunate, as one feels that a synthesis of life is sought and almost realized in these last pieces. They contain echoes of most of their predecessors, and if they fail (as Guiguet suggests of "The Searchlight" at least²) it is in the attempt to sum up too much.

Four of the five stories have party settings (three at the home of the gregarious Dalloways) suggesting that the final phase of Virginia Woolf's story writing was an attempt

to come to grips with what social contacts mean, and whether communication is in fact possible. The three stories comprising Guiguet's "Mrs. Dalloway Saga"³ would seem to imply a pessimistic conclusion--that the human animal is incapable of meaningful communion in that each of the conversing couples fails to achieve rapport. Prickett Ellis and Miss O'Keefe end up "hating each other, hating the whole houseful of people who had given them this painful, this disillusioning evening." (TMWL, 115) Richard Serle and Miss Anning fare little better, left with "that paralysing blankness of feeling, when nothing bursts from the mind," (TaA, 136); while Sasha Latham, after an apparently successful encounter with Mr. Bertram Prichard, still feels her soul to be "unmated, a widow bird" (ASU, 140). "The Legacy" is similarly pessimistic in that Gilbert Clandon, a widower, finds that even while his wife lived he too was unmated--since she loved another man. Only "The Searchlight" reveals the early spark of optimism and contains the significant kiss--the catalyst of so many Woolfian epiphanies. But even here one detects a note of failure, as Guiguet implies in his suggestion that "The Searchlight" is "the least successful of all the stories and the most profoundly typical of Virginia Woolf."⁴

Because "The Searchlight" is the last of the stories that might be considered optimistic in tone, and because it incorporates no less than seven techniques essential to

earlier stories, I have chosen to explicate it first. "The Legacy" which follows earned another superlative from Guiguet, who sees it as "Virginia Woolf's most dramatic story."⁵ This leaves three stories that can be seen as a trilogy leading to and including "The Summing Up"--each story of which assesses the possibility of communication, each of which has a Dalloway setting, and each of which (as one title suggests) reveals how a couple placed "together" in a social context invariably and inevitably draws "apart."

THE SEARCHLIGHT

"The Searchlight" is reminiscent of so much of Virginia Woolf's early short fiction that one is tempted to suggest that it, and not the last story in A Haunted House should bear the title "A Summing Up." The opening sentence immediately recalls the Rashleigh house of "A Shooting Party"--an impression reinforced by the setting of the "inner story," a "place gone to rack and ruin [but with] . . . a coat of arms over the door" (TS, 117). The fact that there is an inner story prompted by a slight motivating incident suggests the technique of "An Unwritten Novel"--and the motivating incident (the Searchlight passing over the party) in turn recalls "The Mark on the Wall" and its fellows. Of course, the party brings to mind the social setting of "The New Dress," and the mind revolves like the Chinese boxes of

"Kew Gardens"--one thought turning within another and each thought mobilizing a deeper layer of meaning.

The story is not successful in its attempt to link the themes and techniques of the early stories for the same reason that the earliest stories failed. Mrs. Woolf has apparently regressed to butterfly-hunting--creating and shepherding too many "unborn children of the mind" to evolve a believable story. However, since we cannot know the date of conception of this story we are perhaps unjustified in calling it regressive.

The motivating incident that triggers Mrs. Ivimey's memories (and the author's narrative) is the bathing of an after-dinner gathering in the light of an errant searchlight beam. This stimulus invokes "you'll never guess what that made me see!" (TS, 116) from the blue-capped narrator of the story within a story,--that evolving into her great-grandfather's telescope through which another girl "wearing blue upon her head" (TS, 119) was "spotted." The searchlight and the telescope of the story serve precisely the same ends that the looking-glass does in earlier pieces--each is a mechanical lens system used by the author to momentarily reveal a woman in a specific posture of transcendental significance. But in this story one feels that Mrs. Woolf (like Mrs. Ivimey's grandfather "covered with dust, steaming with sweat") has gone too far--the sight of a couple kissing

"miles and miles across the moors" (TS, 120) triggering a compulsive desire in the beholder to win the girl himself. The fact that this ardent swain has had a wife, now has a woman he has "taken to live with" (TS, 117) and is raising a son is immaterial, as is his age (elderly) and station (impoverished). He somehow wins the girl, spirits off his rival, and begets a second line--all of which the dumbfounded reader must accept without explanation, for "the light . . . only falls here and there." (TS, 120)

Dramatically, this is of course incredible, but Mrs. Woolf never claims to be a purveyor of realism. Throughout the stories she is more concerned with uncovering the meaning of life--and in the later stories, in discovering the specific meaning of human existence--than in creating credible intrigues. Yet, significantly, this story has much in common with "The Legacy", the most dramatic story of the twenty-one. Both are concerned with escape from a stultifying existence--in the latter story through suicide--which would clearly support the case for these being late sketches, had we no other knowledge of this fact.

Virginia Woolf's fondness for associative patterns led her to develop "doubles" in at least two of the stories. By this term I mean two separate characters, but with sufficient similarity to suggest that in some respects the two are one--

as in the way the separate characters react to life. For example, Milly Masters and Milly the housekeeper in "A Shooting Party" are not necessarily the same person--and Milly and Miss Antonia certainly are not--yet each has the same peculiar "chk" and facial scar. In "The Searchlight" the narrator unconsciously acts out the role of her ancestor, (and both women we are told wear blue) and by the story's end is not sure herself whether the kiss was her's or her great-grandmother's:

"Oh that girl . . . She was my--" she hesitated, as if she were about to say "myself." But she remembered; and corrected herself. "She was my great-grandmother," she said. (TS, 120)

"The Searchlight" also has a great deal in common with "Moments of Being" in that a simple kiss (and one between essentially disinterested parties since the great-grandfather's rival quietly "vanished" (TS, 120)) provides the impetus to charge a mediocre life with meaning--as does Julia Craye's kiss in the earlier story. A further similarity is obvious in the closing lines of "The Searchlight" in which it is clear that Mrs. Ivimey too (like her great-grandfather and presumably his wife) only assumes significance while the light is on her. Once the searchlight beam has passed on, the narrator-actor resumes the ordinary attributes of a Milly Masters or Minnie Marsh. Mrs. Ivimey then

reaches for a reassuring solid object to reaffirm her return to earth as the light passes: "Mrs. Ivimey murmured, stooping to fumble with her cloak (the searchlight had left the balcony) . . ." (TS, 120).

It is easy to see this story as a trial run for Virginia Woolf's last novel, Between the Acts. Mrs. Ivimey becomes her great-grandmother as she narrates the drama whereby she came to be, and this vicarious life seems a welcome interlude from the tedious business of everyday life. In the same way Miss LaTrobe in the novel unfurls a pageant between the acts of life, and this dramatic interlude becomes her moment of being. The concluding lines of both the story and the novel suggest that life is a never-ending series of plays within plays. The actors of the novel are quietly awaiting the next inevitable cycle and the raising of the curtain; those of the story, after witnessing a dramatic monologue prepare to depart, for "it was time they went on to the play" (TS, 120).

THE LEGACY

If any of Virginia Woolf's short fiction can be said to be "in the French rather than the Russian manner",⁶ "The Legacy" is that story. It is the only whodunit Mrs. Woolf has written, and it is certainly true that in this story

the last sentence of the last page flares up . . . [and] we see by its light the whole circumference and significance of the story revealed,⁷

whereas most of Mrs. Woolf's stories are decidedly Russian:

Everything is cloudy and vague, loosely trailing rather than tightly furled. The stories move slowly out of sight like clouds in the summer air, leaving a wake of meaning in our minds which gradually fades away.⁸

Perhaps the reason that Virginia Woolf chose to fashion this story alone as a mystery, was to disguise the fact that she vicariously was Angela Clandon. All of the "clues" left scattered through the story suggest that the suicide of Angela anticipated Virginia Woolf's. The diary entry "have I the courage to do it too?" (TL, 128) is Virginia Woolf's own query, and "The legacy" bequeathed to Gilbert is precisely that left to Leonard Woolf--"her diary . . . behind him on her writing table" (TL, 121). Angela Clandon's habits match those of her creator: "ever since they were married, [Angela] . . . had kept a diary" (TL, 121) while Mrs. Woolf, married in 1912, "began regularly to write a diary . . . in 1915."⁹ Angela, like the narrator of "Kew Gardens" has "a passion for little [Chinese] boxes" (TL, 121) and one suspects that Virginia Woolf did too--Mabel Waring in her Chinese cloak reminds one very much of the Virginia Woolf portrait

fronting Eileen Pippett's work.¹⁰ Leonard Woolf lends support to these implications--that certain stories are autobiographical, in providing a most striking sketch of the effect his wife's appearance had on people. We can guess that Angela with her Chinese boxes and diaries is Virginia Woolf, but that Mabel Waring evolved from her creator is almost certain from the following:

to the crowd in the street there was something in [Virginia's] appearance which struck them as strange and laughable . . . nine out of ten people would stare or stop and stare at Virginia . . . there was something in [her] . . . which they found ridiculous It was only partly that her dress was never quite the same as other people's.¹¹

The echoes of other stories are fainter in "The Legacy" than in the other posthumous pieces, but they are present. Sissy Miller, another middle-aged drone, joins the ranks of Minnie Marsh, Milly Masters and the "thousands of . . . drab little women in black." (TL, 122) The egotistical Gilbert, mistaking Sissy's "sympathetic yet searching" (TL, 124) look for a look of love, recalls the pompous males of the early feminist story "A Society." And, the choice of occupation for Gilbert Clandon--politician--recalls John's early career in "Solid Objects", and reminds us that both John and Angela choose to escape a stuffy political environment in unconventional ways!

"The Legacy" has an extremely simple structure very atypical of Mrs. Woolf. The little mystery surrounding Angela Clandon's death is set up far too neatly, which perhaps accounts for the feeling of dissatisfaction with which it leaves the reader. All the "clues" point immediately to suicide--we are not even treated to an occasional red herring. At the opening Gilbert thinks

how strange it was . . . that [Angela] . . . had left everything in such order--a little gift of some sort for every one of her friends . . . as if she had foreseen her death. (TL, 121)

This surely anticipates the anticlimactic discovery of suicide, just as "she had left him nothing in particular, unless it were her diary" (TL, 121) presages Gilbert's legacy--the knowledge that his wife had nothing to leave him but the clues to her defection from his conservatism and indifference, to the alien, but vital world of "B.M." The old story of a husband's growing immersion in his own selfishness is revealed in the scattered diary references and Gilbert's thoughts, and the inevitable pattern emerges:

he had become more and more absorbed in his work. And she, of course, was more often alone . . . / she felt so idle, so useless. She wished to have some work of her own So it seemed that every Wednesday she went to Whitechapel [where she meets B.M.] (TL, 125-126)

One might protest from this that Angela is surely not Virginia Woolf; the latter could scarcely be imagined to have had an idle hour--as her more than a score of books attests. But while I would agree that the motivation for the two womens' suicides was different, their need for escape was equally strong. Angela "had stepped off the kerb to escape . . ." (TL, 129) while Virginia Woolf chose to step into the River Ouse to flee the voices that tormented her:

I have the feeling that I shall go mad I hear voices and cannot concentrate on my work,¹² I have fought against it, but cannot fight any longer.

The Diary also records, on June 11, 1936:

I can only, after two months, make this brief note, to say at last after two months dismal and worse, almost catastrophic illness--never been so near the precipice to my own feeling since 1913¹³

Between 1933 and 1936 Virginia Woolf was writing The Years, and there is reason to believe that "The Legacy" belongs to this period also (several parallels between the two works will later be pointed out). Angela Clandon flees to escape her husband, Mrs. Woolf to spare herself further suffering (as her farewell letter to Leonard records);¹⁴ and the reader, at the close of "The Legacy" feels an acute sorrow that this story, no more than a melancholy musing preparatory to death, should have been necessary.

THE MAN WHO LOVED HIS KIND

The first of what I have taken to be Mrs. Woolf's final three stories establishes a framework that will be continued through "Together and Apart" and "A Summing Up"--the bringing together of mixed couples at Dalloway parties to explore, once more, "Kew Garden's" thought: "What precipices aren't concealed in [insignificant words]" (KG, 37).

Each of the couples brought together by the Dalloways reveal conversational characteristics analogous to repelling magnetic poles--the closer they get to an issue vital to them both, the farther apart they are thrust--which perhaps is the point of the title "Together and Apart."

"The Man Who Loved His Kind" brings an old school friend of Richard Dalloway's (Prickett Ellis) into contact with a Miss O'Keefe--and the resulting conversation--and what is left unsaid--forms the conflict. Ellis is a self-satisfied lawyer who prides himself on his humanity--and looks with pity upon the wretches at the party (and in his world) who contribute nothing--who do not "love their kind." His pompous account of his one charitable act, and Miss O'Keefe's parallel evangelistic fervour for Shakespeare and poetry, show how people of different words are completely ignorant of the workings of alien realms. This of course is not a new theme; rather it suggests "Solid Objects" or "Lappin and Lapinova" revisited. It has been suggested

that Mrs. Dalloway is the novel most pertinent to the stories, and "The Man Who Loved His Kind" certainly has overtones of that work. Prickett Ellis reminds one of the over-stuffed Hugh Whitbread, "the perfect specimen of the public school type [whom] no country but England could have produced."¹⁵ Similarly, Miss O'Keefe recalls Miss Isabel Pole, "lecturing in the Waterloo Road about Shakespeare",¹⁶ which makes one wonder if "The Man Who Loved His Kind" was in Virginia Woolf's mind as part of the "Mrs. Dalloway" project referred to in the Jacob's Room holograph quoted earlier.

Prickett Ellis is described by Richard Dalloway as a man "with predjudices sticking out all over him" (TMWL, 109) while Ellis sees his host as a man who "was married, gave parties; wasn't his sort at all, [understanding immediately that] . . . they had nothing to say to each other" (TMWL, 109). And from this unpromising start things degenerate further, as Prickett Ellis and Miss O'Keefe are reluctantly coupled by the ebullient Richard Dalloway--who at least had school days in common with Ellis, whereas Miss O'Keefe seems completely beyond Ellis' ken. The irony in the situation is the similarity between the two, while each associates the other with an inferior and alien way of life. Ellis sees Miss O'Keefe as "this pale, abrupt, arrogant woman", and she him as "ill-kempt, all moustache, chin and silver watch

chain" (TMWL, 114) yet each reacts in precisely the same way to the injustices they see in the world. Ellis, a lawyer who has just defended a couple without fee, thinks of himself as "an ordinary human being, pitted against the evil, the corruption, the heartlessness of society" (TMWL, 111) and Miss O'Keefe feels the same indignation that "a woman and two children, very poor, very tired" (TMWL, 112) cannot be left into the comfortable world of the Dalloways. The difference between the two, and the root of their estrangement, is that Miss O'Keefe is a realist who knows that "the/whole force of the world can't [reform injustice]" (TMWL, 112-113) whereas Ellis, a crusader, feels he cannot waste an hour at the National Gallery "with the world in the state it was in" (TMWL, 111). The concluding remarks "I am afraid I am one of those very ordinary people . . . who love their kind" and the stinging retort "so do I". (TMWL, 115), reveal how two people who profess so much love reveal so little: "hating each other, hating the whole houseful of people . . . these two lovers of their kind . . . parted for ever." (TMWL, 115)

It might be noted at this point that nearly all of Mrs. Woolf's stories--which attempt to achieve a synthesis of life--end with a separation (and a corresponding sense of failure). Recall the concluding lines of several stories and note the feeling of finality in them, the feeling that life and Mrs. Woolf were committed to opposite poles:

"'You go this way?' 'Alas. I go that.'" (SQ, 31)
 "So that was the end of that marriage." (LaL, 78)
 ". . . he left John--for ever." (SQ, 85)
 ". . . these two lovers . . . parted for ever." (TMWL, 115)
 "She had stepped off the kerb to escape from him." (TL, 129)
 "And they could separate." (TaA, 136)
 ". . . by nature unmated, a widow bird/ . . . her soul
 . . . [was] startled up into the air by a stone thrown at
 it." (ASU, 140-141)

An indication that the voices initiating Virginia Woolf's suicide were being heard at the time "The Man Who Loved His Kind" was being written is suggested by the equating of the half-heard conversation from a distant room, to the music accompanying a dance of death:

you could hear a buzz and hum and a chatter and a jingle, like the mad accompaniment of some phantom orchestra to a cat or two slinking across the grass . . . the talk seemed like a frantic skeleton dance music set to something very real, and full of suffering. (TMWL, 113)

TOGETHER AND APART

Both the title and the second sentence of "Together and Apart" reveal the story to be a continuation of the study in non-communication seen in "The Man Who Loved His Kind," Mrs. Woolf making it clear that this conversation will produce the same nihilistic feeling--"the conversation began some minutes before anything was said" (TaA, 130). This meeting, of Mr. Serle and Miss Anning, pits a new set of combatants against each other, but little else is changed--the setting might be the same Dalloway party.

Mr. Serle and Miss Anning again explore the by now familiar world of the "unsaid"--inaneities of polite conversation shroud the real medium of communication, the sensing probes used by each sensitive, questing individual in Mrs. Woolf's world. Her first novel, we remember, had Terence Hewet wishing "to write a novel about the things people don't say."¹⁷ Miss Anning originally does not like her partner, but when the fact that they both love Canterbury kindles their interest in each other, "her tentacles sen[t] back the message that Roderick Serle was nice" (TaA, 134).

In this story we are forcibly reminded of how terribly sensitive and questing Virginia Woolf's characters are. Those who are lonely (and this includes the married like Mabel Waring) invariably speculate on the joys of togetherness: "sometimes she wished she had married" (Miss Anning, TaA, 135); "for all her dreams . . . married to some hero" (Mabel Waring, TND, 55); "she had never married, and yet . . . she had gone through twenty times more . . . passion" (Isabella Tyson, LiLG, 88); "to be them would be marvellous" (Sasha Latham, ASU, 139). Of course, among those who have achieved a successful relationship many fail to retain it--like the Thorburns of "Lappin and Lapinova" or the Clandons of "The Legacy". The world of Virginia Woolf, especially in the darkening years, is a tortured introspective one--a world in

which the green grass on the other side is either unattainable, or found to be brown if it is realized.

"Together and Apart," like "The New Dress" and "The Legacy" has autobiographical snatches, but the author is not specifically associated with one character as before. Mrs. Woolf seems to be indulging in self-recrimination about what she might have achieved when Roderick Serle thinks-- "half bitterly, for he had never done a tenth part of what he could have done" (TaA, 132); but she becomes Miss Anning at another point in the story: "hers being a deplorable timidity" (TaA, 131). Leonard Woolf verifies the latter tendency in his wife in stating:

she had a curious shyness with strangers which often made them uncomfortably shy . . . some intangible aura, which made her very often seem strange to the 'ordinary' person.¹⁸

Virginia Woolf also seems to become Ruth Anning where the latter "settle[s] in to disinter the true man who was buried under the false, saying to herself: 'On, Stanley, on'" (TaA, 131). It is as if Mrs. Woolf considered her self and her work as exploring the untouched jungles of the human mind, and that at times her courage failed at the magnitude of her self-imposed undertaking. That she undoubtedly felt she had failed to uncover the truth at the heart of life is revealed in the guise of Mr. Serle who felt "he had failed . . . be-

cause he could not cut himself off utterly from society . . . and write. He had involved himself too deeply in life" (TaA, 133). This introspective thought is surely the author's own. It is found repeatedly in her criticism, and can best be seen in "Life and the Novelist." Mrs. Woolf argues that

the novelist--it is his distinction and his danger--is terribly exposed to life. Other artists, partially at least, withdraw . . . but the novelist never forgets and is seldom distracted He can no more cease to receive impressions than a fish in mid-ocean can cease to let the water rush through his gills.¹⁹

The writer would like to be able to step outside the cage of society and study its teeming life with clinical detachment, but she can't, as Mr. Serle also discovers. However, even here, near her darkest hour, the old love of life returns--a moment of being occurs in spite of, rather than because of, a social encounter. Mrs. Woolf, through Miss Anning, feels

the old ecstasy of life; its invincible assault; for it was unpleasant, at the same time that it rejoiced and rejuvenated and filled the veins and nerves with threads of ice and fire. (TaA, 135)

This incident is one of the last stories in which light returns to a world steadily growing darker. It is interesting that Miss Anning's attempt to look objectively at her ecstatic moment is likened to "lay[ing] a shade over an intense light, or cover[ing] some burning peach with a green leaf" (TaA, 135)

since this analogy reveals that Mrs. Woolf's thought processes did not change significantly in thirty years. Her husband records an incident before their marriage where Virginia, in reply to Rupert Brooke's "'Virginia, what is the brightest thing you can think of?'" responded--"'a leaf with the light on it'"²⁰ and the same basic image becomes the brightest moment of "Together and Apart".

In this story, unlike the other two of the concluding trilogy, a moment of fusion is reached, and one is reminded once again that "sorrow, sorrow. Joy, joy [are] woven together" (SQ, 29) in all of Virginia Woolf's work. Mr. Serle and Miss Anning do achieve a sense of communion through their mutual feelings for Canterbury, but the reader is aware that the transitory moment is neither joyful nor sorrow-laden, but has "alternations of pain and pleasure" (TaA, 135-136) as always. But there is a new terror in this story, a feeling that the well-springs of the mind are drying up, and that the writer's muse can no more be summoned at will. The sight of a simple spot in "The Mark on the Wall" had produced myriad thoughts--too many in fact to be marshalled effectively, but now the same stimulus provokes nothing:

the eyes petrified and fixed see the same spot--a pattern, a coal scuttle--with an exactness which is terrifying, since no emotion, no idea, no impression of any kind comes to change it, to modify it, to embellish it, since the fountains of feeling seem sealed and . . . the mind . . . rigid. (TaA, 136)

"Facts" are looming before the terrified writer whose fancy is fast failing, and "exactness" to Mrs. Woolf is the writer's curse. Perhaps in this next to last story she saw her fate if she chose to live (as she would certainly continue to write)--the hardening of the arteries of her mind until she became, like Wells and Bennett whose styles she had rebelled against, merely a fact-monger.

A SUMMING UP

It would be presumptuous to suggest that this story is a conscious attempt by Virginia Woolf to pull together the thematic threads of the story canon (though in some ways the story does this) since the use of an indefinite article in the title suggests that this is only one summing-up of life, rather than the synthesis that so often eluded the author. If anything, the story is a summing-up of what happened in "The Man Who Loved His Kind" and "Together and Apart" since these last three stories seem different drafts of the same incident. The "yellow and red fruit like Chinese lanterns wobbling this way and that" (TMWL, 113) of "The Man Who Loved His Kind" are back: "the Chinese lanterns seemed hung red and green in the depths of an enchanted forest", (ASU, 137) as is the affable male conversationalist of "Together and Apart." Mr. Serle, we may remember had characteristics--" his laugh, his melancholy and his humour [that] made people like him" (TaA, 132)--and Mr. Pritchard of the civil service is similarly

"almost invariable liked." (ASU, 137) Mrs. Woolf's own "deplorable timidity" (TaA, 131) emerged in Miss Anning, while Sasha Latham has her creator's stature and feelings:

the tall, handsome, rather idolent looking lady, whose majesty of presence was so great that people never credited her with feeling inadequate and gauche. (ASU, 137)

The Years provides a striking parallel to these last stories also--suggesting that they might belong to the 1933-36 period of Virginia Woolf's creativity. In the 1907 section we find Sara Pargiter reading while the people across the street are having a party in a garden marked with blue and yellow lamps. The episode ends with a brief conversation between a man and a woman in the garden at the party, and though the similarities between The Years and the last sketches are general--they are frequent enough to suggest the same period of conception.

Bertram Pritchard and Sasha Latham seem to represent the many shades who have passed through the Dalloway's garden, and their conversation can be thought of as the quintessence of all who have gone before. They offer the extremes of human conversation--one a garrulous talking machine, "one night of [whose] . . . talk would have filled a whole book" (ASU, 137); the other, a conversational sponge "by some malice of fate . . . unable to join" (ASU, 139). The fact

that the flow of talk is disproportionate is unimportant--the reader by now realizes that words do not constitute a Virginia Woolf conversation--for "tentacles" (TaA, 135) convey all that is necessary by a sixth sense of mental-touch.

In this concluding story, the old question is again raised--"which view [of life] is the true one?" (ASU, 140) Is it the misty, ephemeral world of the Russian story tellers (and Mrs. Woolf)--"men in coracles, oysters, and wild ducks and mists" (ASU, 140)--or the "logical affair of drains and carpenters" of the French School (and Wells and Bennett). The answer, as always, is non-committal but the only one possible to the writer who, in To the Lighthouse, had affirmed that "nothing was simply one thing."²¹ There is no true view of life, for the human soul will not tie itself to any one fact: "the soul . . . is by nature unmated, a widow bird; a bird perched aloof on that tree" (ASU, 140).

One is always tempted upon reaching the last story or last segment of any explication, to dwell upon it, reluctant to close, since in retrospect any attempt to "sum-up" a writer seems inadequate and so much of significance, one feels, is hidden in the last work of an author. To say more about "A Summing Up", however, would be to credit the story with too much weight in the total canon--since it is doubtful that Mrs. Woolf saw it as her last story, or an especially

significant one. "A Summing-Up" spans four pages, and much of this brief composition simply reiterates the theme and technique of its two predecessors. However, much has been said in the twenty-one pieces we have traversed, and a summing-up of Virginia Woolf's total achievement in her stories remains to be done.

NOTES

- ¹Introduction to A Haunted House, p. 8.
- ²Virginia Woolf and Her Works, p. 34.
- ³Ibid., p. 336.
- ⁴Ibid., p. 341.
- ⁵Ibid., p. 340.
- ⁶Virginia Woolf, "An Essay in Criticism," Granite and Rainbow, p. 90.
- ⁷Ibid.
- ⁸Ibid.
- ⁹Leonard Woolf, Beginning Again, p. vii.
- ¹⁰The Moth and the Star: A Biography of Virginia Woolf (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1953) frontispiece.
- ¹¹Beginning Again, p. 29.
- ¹²The Moth and the Star, p. 368.
- ¹³A Writer's Diary, pp. 268-269.
- ¹⁴Ibid.
- ¹⁵Mrs. Dalloway, p. 110.
- ¹⁶Ibid., p. 128.
- ¹⁷The Voyage Out (London: Duckworth, 1915), p. 263.
- ¹⁸Beginning Again, p. 28.

¹⁹Granite and Rainbow, p. 41.

²⁰Ibid., p. 19.

²¹To the Lighthouse, p. 216.

CHAPTER V
THE SUM RETOTALED

He who goes daily into the world of aesthetic emotion returns to the world of human affairs equipped to face it courageously and even a little contemptuously. And if by comparison with aesthetic rapture he finds most human passion trivial, he need not on that account become unsympathetic or inhuman.
--Clive Bell, Art

Most critics would agree, I think, that Virginia Woolf was one who went "daily into the world of aesthetic emotion"¹ but there are many who feel that she failed as an artist and as a human being in never clearly defining her position as a writer, and in abandoning a life she could never catch the meaning of. C.B. Cox represents a fair number of readers in saying that

the weakness of Virginia Woolf's art is that she understood so little of human character. Like G.E. Moore in Principia Ethica, she takes too little account of the life of action and of the satisfaction derived from the creation of social order and justice.²

David Daiches feels the problem in Mrs. Woolf's art is not so much a thematic failing (as Cox suggests) but a technical one, Virginia Woolf's writing having

a kind of rarification which is something between lyrical poetry and fiction . . . yet too fleeting, too insubstantial, unballasted; something which vanishes when one tries to grasp it.³

Between the two, Cox and Daiches suggest that Mrs. Woolf was doomed to artistic failure from the outset, since (if we are to believe Cox) she did not understand the characters she created and (if we take Daiches' words as truth) these creations were too insubstantial even had their author understood the social animal with whom she worked. A glance at a few recent titles of work about Virginia Woolf suggests that even those critics who admire her work feel obliged to qualify at the outset--lest the world should mock their interest. "Insubstantial Pageant" and "The Quest for Identity in the Writing of Virginia Woolf" typify the trend, the former implying a fragility about the work of Mrs. Woolf and the latter that her fiction is completely introspective and obsessed with "Who am I?"

I can only hope that the foregoing explications have pointed out that Mrs. Woolf had something to say to us in her fiction, and if these fleeting fragments achieve a significant form (as I feel, in most cases, they do) surely it is time for a reassessment of Virginia Woolf's whole fictional canon in relation to the period in which she wrote. For it is significant that the critics who feel Mrs. Woolf's achievement to be slight are usually those who feel the movement of which she was an innovator (stream of consciousness) to be of no great significance. To do this, however, is to

deny the tremendous impact such fiction has had, not only upon modern writers, but upon the graphic arts and psychological studies as well--since artists such as Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Richardson, Marcel Proust, Henry James and James Joyce were instrumental in introducing the complexities of the human mind to the common reader in the early 1920's.

A telling point often forgotten by those who condemn Mrs. Woolf as a purveyor of trivia is that the mind, not the author, is characteristically concerned with minutiae. The individual thoughts of any mind on most occasions are unimportant and fleeting, but the quest to present the larger pattern behind these thoughts, a pattern that the thinker is often unconscious of, is of great interest and significance--both to the writer who seeks to uncover the truth at the heart of the people, and to the scientist who wants to know what thought entails. It is thus a great mistake to demand physical action and movement in fiction (as did the early dictators of short story methodology)--for the mind is of far more interest than the body in fiction--unless one's goal is eroticism and then a visual stimulus would be more effective. For example, Marcel Proust's concerns were the most trivial imaginable, yet because of his ability to enchant his tiny building blocks he has been ceded a place of literary distinction. Like Virginia Woolf, his "stuff of fiction" comprised

the most diverse materials, the corner of my pillow, the top of my blankets, a piece of shawl, the edge of my bed, and a copy of an evening paper, all of which things I would contrive, with the infinite patience of birds building their nests, to cement into one whole.⁴

The image Proust uses, that of equating fiction to the careful nesting of birds, was one used by Mrs. Woolf in describing Jane Austen (which I have earlier alluded to) and the image is no less fitting to Virginia Woolf herself. The section of "An Unwritten Novel," so typical of the author and of the story canon, in which Mrs. Woolf tries out the names of characters before making the irrevocable decision, reminds one of nothing so much as a fastidious bird selecting materials with which to build. That Mrs. Woolf did in fact see life as a sort of nest or shell for the soul that can occasionally be broken into is suggested in a few lines penned in 1927.

The shell-like covering which our souls have excreted to house themselves, to make for themselves a shape distinct from others, is broken, and there is left of all these wrinkles and roughnesses a central oyster of perceptiveness, an enormous eye.⁵

Mrs. Woolf continues a few lines farther on with the thought that "the eye is not a miner, not a diver, not a seeker after buried treasure"⁶ but she implies that the artist certainly is--and that his function is to "prise open" life, and to try to understand the "oyster of perception" hidden behind the craggy exterior we all present

to the world. The twenty-one stories we have briefly examined are symbolically twenty-one bivalves--and if only a few were capable of being cracked, and even less revealed their treasure--we should not complain. For life is not an easy quarry.

A few critics have seen Virginia Woolf's stories as deserving attention, but they invariably praise for the wrong reasons. Carl Woodring feels Mrs. Woolf's contribution to fiction to be that she

went inside sensitive minds and slackened the brake of the super ego / Above all, the stories helped establish a new set of conventions for fiction.⁷

It is unfortunate that he uses "conventions" since "a general agreement on usages and practices" for fiction was never what Virginia Woolf attempted (or achieved). She in fact devoted her abilities in fiction to broadening its horizons, and her novels and stories are, if nothing else, unconventional. Other critics credit the mysterious spirit with which Mrs. Woolf infuses her fiction, but they seem more interested in forcing her fiction to fit specific academic labels, mysteriously connected with the magical number three, than in reading it. One sees "subjective impressionism, stream of consciousness, and the spatialization of time [as the] three closely related experimental techniques"⁸ at the core of Mrs. Woolf's work, while Josephine Schaefer carries the "triplification" of Virginia Woolf still farther. She sees

the same vision of a three-fold reality of natural phenomena, social conventions and/individual experience⁹

behind all of Virginia Woolf's work, and tries to show that this "three-fold reality" is a Bloomsbury criterion of art. She suggests in a note that Lytton Strachey and Roger Fry both saw life as similarly structured in a tripartite manner. Strachey conceived of life as

the enormous mechanism . . . the inevitable processes of nature . . . and art [while Fry divided existence into] instinctive life . . . social life . . . and aesthetic vision.¹⁰

To tie Virginia Woolf, or any artist, to the conscious realization of three visions of life is surely restricting, and to do so implies that the artistic process is a mechanical one, a process completely under the writer's control. That Virginia Woolf did not achieve (or seek) such control is evident throughout the stories--and one of her "specific techniques," (if we wish to call it such) especially in the early stories, was to let her thoughts roam apparently at will. In the middle phase of her story-telling a more selective ordering of thoughts takes place but we have only to remember "An Unwritten Novel" and Moggridge's buttons to see how unsummoned thoughts arrive, and become a part of the story. It would seem that Virginia Woolf is of the old school--one still subservient to the muse in fiction (or in conversation) as her husband records:

at any moment, in a general conversation . . . [Virginia] might suddenly 'leave the ground' and give some fantastic, entrancing, /amusing, dreamlike, almost lyrical description of an event, a place, or a person. It always made me think of the breaking and gushing out of the springs in autumn after the first rains. The ordinary mental processes stopped, and in their place the waters of creativeness and imagination welled up and, almost undirected, carried her and her listeners into another world.¹¹

Certain techniques, styles and moods recur throughout the fiction of Virginia Woolf however, and these--undirected though they might have been--can be summarized as follows. The earliest stories launch perhaps the central theme, the desire to unearth buried treasure, or open the "oyster" of life. This phase is predominantly optimistic, but from the start the stories suggest that joy and sorrow commingle in all of life. Stylistically, the early period is marked with an undisciplined enthusiasm, and the stories are thought-reservoirs more than coherent narratives.

By the "middle period," Virginia Woolf had been writing twenty years, and the magazine stories of this phase reveal a sophistication lacking in the pre-1921 group. But the old bursts of lyricism regularly appear, with the concomitant abandoning of structural cohesiveness. The thematic innovation of this era is the peopling of Mrs. Woolf's fictional world previously limited to those facets of life impinging upon the mind through inanimate or sub-human

stimuli. The world in the 1930's is still "adorable" in many stories, but when pessimism looms, the author's mood is bitter--and her world "rotten at the core" (a phrase found in two stories of the middle period.)¹²

The posthumous pieces presented in A Haunted House reveal three things about Mrs. Woolf: that her art as a storyteller evolved (from early "mark as universe" sketches through "people as repositories of life") to character analyses of specimen pairs of the social animal; that her view of the essence of life as moments of great significance is a fixed one; and that she is a most persistent oyster-shucker. In four of the last five stories Virginia Woolf merely changes her stance slightly before attacking the same oyster--the old question "is there a true view of life, and can it be found in human discourse?" The stories do not provide an answer, but their author is wise enough to know that the quest itself is not in vain--for one must continually be engrossed in the pursuit of life if one is to recognize life when it arrives,, for "the answer came often by accident" (ASU, 140). The stories all seem of this basic philosophy: that the meanings so long sought one day emerge, unbidden, as solutions to problems often spring from the subconscious, completely uncalled for.

Before leaving the stories, one must confess that they contain many mysterious facets that have proved impossible to explicate. Virginia Woolf has never been credited with the desire (or ability) to fashion sexually symbolic passages, yet surely the following is bluntly erotic:

I like to think of the tree itself: first the close dry sensation of being wood; then the grinding of the storm; then the slow, delicious ooze of sap. I like to think of it, too, on winter's nights standing in the empty field with all leaves close-furled, nothing tender exposed to the iron bullets of the moon, a naked mast that goes tumbling, tumbling all night long. (MOW, 47)

Or, at the other end of the canon, and seemingly poles apart from the mood of the previous passage, one encounters "the usual terrible sexless, inarticulate voice" (ASU, 140) and wonders what voice? It is not that of the widow-bird, since this synonym for soul is startled by the cry, leaving the reader to speculate that the cry might originate from life itself. The source of the cry might suggest this--"some back street or public house" (ASU, 140)--but to see life as "terrible" "sexless" and "inarticulate" surely presupposes the deepest melancholia. Or, if Virginia Woolf saw herself this way, the closing lines of the last story have a tragic ring, and "the usual . . . voice" reminds us of the voices that drove her to her death.

The wheel has gone full circle. Our starting point, "The Mark on the Wall," suggests that the world could survive most catastrophes; "life isn't done with It is full of peaceful thoughts, happy thoughts," (MOW, 48) But it also prophesied the death of a writer who, like the mirrors she exploited so often, has only a limited resiliency.

Supposing the looking-glass smashes, the image disappears, and the romantic figure with the green of forest depths all about it is there no longer, but only that shell of a person which is seen by other people--what an airless, shallow, bald, prominent world it becomes! A world not to be lived in. (MOW, 43)

NOTES

¹Clive Bell, Art (London: Chatto and Windus, 1913), p. 190.

²The Free Spirit (London: Oxford U. Press, 1963), p. 113.

³The Novel and the Modern World (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1939), p. 159.

⁴Remembrance of Things Past. Trans. C. Scott-Moncrieff (New York: Random House, 1934), p. 6.

⁵"Street Haunting: A London Adventure." Yale Review, 1927.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Virginia Woolf. Columbia Essays on Modern Writers #18 (New York & London: Columbia U. Press, 1966), pp. 10-11.

⁸Serena Sue Hilsinger. "Insubstantial Pageant: A Reading of Virginia Woolf's Novels." DA XXV, 4700.

⁹Josephine O'Brien Schaefer, The Three-Fold Nature of Reality in the Novels of Virginia Woolf (The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1965), pp. 10-11.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 11n.

¹¹Beginning Again, pp. 30-31.

¹²DaJ, 100; SP, 65.

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APPENDIX I

CHRONOLOGY

PHASE	STORY	DATE PUBLISHED †	FIRST APPEARANCE
I	The Mark on the Wall	May 1917 (W, 235)	<u>Two Stories</u> (W, 235)
	Kew Gardens	May 1919 (W, 241)	<u>Kew Gardens</u> (W, 241)
	An Unwritten Novel	Jul. 1920 (K, 106)	<u>London Mercury</u> (K, 106)
	Solid Objects	Oct. 1920 (K, 106)	<u>Athenaeum</u> (K, 106)
	A Haunted House	Mar. 1921 (L, 7)	<u>Monday or Tuesday</u> (D, 30)
	Monday or Tuesday	Mar. 1921 (L, 7)	<u>Monday or Tuesday</u> (D, 30)
	The String Quartet	Mar. 1921 (L, 7)	<u>Monday or Tuesday</u> (D, 30)
	Blue and Green	Mar. 1921 (L, 7)	<u>Monday or Tuesday</u> (D, 30)
	A Society	Mar. 1921 (L, 7)	<u>Monday or Tuesday</u> (D, 30)
IIa	The New Dress *	May 1927 (K, 106)	<u>The Forum</u> (K, 106)
	Moments of Being	? 1928 (G, 330)	? (L, 8)
	The Lady in the Looking-Glass *	Dec. 1929 (K, 106)	<u>Harper's Magazine</u> (K, 106)
IIb	The Shooting Party *	Mar. 1938 (K, 106) <u>Finished Oct. 1937</u> (D, 287)	<u>Harper's Baazar</u> (K, 106)
	The Duchess and The Jeweller	Apr. 1938 (K, 106) <u>Finished Aug. 1937</u> (D, 286)	<u>Harper's Baazar</u> (K, 106)
	Lappin and Lapinova	Nov. 1938 (D, 308) <u>First Draft 1918</u> (D, 308)	?
III	The Man Who Loved His Kind	Jan. 1943 ‡ (L)	<u>A Haunted House & Other Short Stories</u> (L)
	The Searchlight *	Jan. 1943 (L)	<u>A Haunted House & Other Short Stories</u> (L)
	Together and Apart *	Jan. 1943 (L)	<u>A Haunted House & Other Short Stories</u> (L)
	The Summing Up *	Jan. 1943 (L)	<u>A Haunted House & Other Short Stories</u> (L)

KEY TO SYMBOLS IN THE CHRONOLOGY

- D. Virginia Woolf, A Writer's Diary
- L. Leonard Woolf, Introduction to A Haunted House
- W. Jean Guiguet, Virginia Woolf and Her Works
- K. B.J. Kirkpatrick, A Bibliography of Virginia Woolf

NOTES:

† Dates provided by the Woolf's are used wherever possible.

* These stories probably belong to the period at which Virginia Woolf was writing Mrs. Dalloway (1922).

‡ The first edition of A Haunted House is dated 1943, but subsequent impressions date the first edition as January 1944, as does the appendix to A Writer's Diary, p. 367. Guiguet supports the 1944 date (pp. 194 n, 329, 466).

The obvious explanation for this discrepancy is that the book was scheduled for release in 1943, but a distribution delay resulted in its making its first appearance early in 1944.

APPENDIX II

A SOCIETY.

This is how it all came about. Six or seven of us were sitting one day after tea. Some were gazing across the street into the windows of a milliner's shop where the light still shone brightly upon scarlet feathers and golden slippers. Others were idly occupied in building little towers of sugar upon the edge of the tea tray. After a time, so far as I can remember, we drew round the fire and began as usual to praise men--how strong, how noble, how brilliant, how courageous how beautiful they were--how we envied those who by hook or by crook managed to get attached to one for life--when Poll, who had said nothing, burst into tears. Poll, I must tell you, has always been queer. For one thing her father was a strange man. He left her a fortune in his will, but on condition that she read all the books in the London Library. We comforted her as best we could; but we knew in our hearts how vain it was. For though we like her, Poll is no beauty; leaves her shoe laces untied; and must have been thinking, while we praised men, that not one of them would ever wish to marry her. At last she dried her tears. For some time we could make nothing of what she said. Strange enough it was in all

conscience. She told us that, as we knew, she spent most of her time in the London Library, reading. She had begun, she said, with English literature on the top floor; and was steadily working her way down to the Times on the bottom. And now half, or perhaps only a quarter, way through a terrible thing had happened. She could read no more. Books were not what we thought them. "Books" she cried, rising to her feet and speaking with an intensity of desolation which I shall never forget, "are for the most part unutterably bad!"

Of course we cried out that Shakespeare wrote books, and Milton and Shelley.

"Oh yes," she interrupted us. "You've been well taught, I can see. But you are not members of the London Library." Here her sobs broke forth anew. At length, recovering a little, she opened one of the pile of books which she always carried about with her--"From a Window" or "In a Garden" or some such name as that it was called, and it was written by a man called Benton or Henson or something of that kind. She read the first few pages. We listened in silence. "But that's not a book," someone said. So she chose another. This time it was a history, but I have forgotten the writer's name. Our trepidation increased as she went on. Not a word of it seemed to be

true, and the style in which it was written was execrable.

"Poetry! Poetry!" we cried, impatiently. "Read us poetry!" I cannot describe the desolation which fell upon us as she opened the little volume and mouthed out the verbose, sentimental foolery which it contained.

"It must have been written by a women" one of us urged. But no. She told us that it was written by a young man, one of the most famous poets of the day. I leave you to imagine what the shock of the discovery was. Though we all cried and begged her to read no more she persisted and read us extracts from the Lives of the Lord Chancellors. When she had finished, Jane, the eldest and wisest of us, rose to her feet and said that she for one was not convinced.

"Why" she asked "if men write such rubbish as this, should our mothers have wasted their youth in bringing them into the world?"

We were all silent; and in the silence, poor Poll could be heard sobbing out, "Why, why did my father teach me to read?"

Clorinda was the first to come to her senses. "It's all our fault" she said "Every one of us knows how to read. But no one, save Poll, has ever taken the trouble to do it. I, for one, have taken it for granted that it was a woman's

duty to spend her youth in bearing children. I venerated my mother for bearing ten; still more my grandmother for bearing fifteen; it was, I confess, my own ambition to bear twenty. We have gone on all these ages supposing that men were equally industrious, and that their works were of equal merit. While we have borne the children, they, we supposed, have borne the books and the pictures. We have populated the world. They have civilized it. But now that we can read, what prevents us from judging the results? Before we bring another child into the world we must swear that we will find out what the world is like."

So we made ourselves into a society for asking questions. One of us was to visit a man-of-war; another was to hide herself in a scholar's study; another was to attend a meeting of business men; while all were to read books, look at pictures, go to concerts, keep our eyes open in the streets, and ask questions perpetually. We were very young. You can judge of our simplicity when I tell you that before parting that night we agreed that the objects of life were to produce good people and good books. Our questions were to be directed to finding out how far these objects were now attained by men. We vowed solemnly that we would not bear a single child until we were satisfied.

Off we went then, some to the British Museum; others to the King's Navy; some to Oxford; others to Cambridge; we visited the Royal Academy and the Tate; heard modern music in concert rooms, went to the Law Courts, and saw new plays. No one dined out without asking her partner certain questions and carefully noting his replies. At intervals we met together and compared our observations. Oh, those were merry meetings! Never have I laughed so much as I did when Rose read her notes upon "Honour" and described how she had dressed herself as an ~~A~~ Ethiopian Prince and gone aboard one of His Majesty's ships. Discovering the hoax, the Captain visited her (now disguised as a private gentleman) and demanded that honour should be satisfied. "But how?" she asked. "How?" he bellowed. "With the cane of course!" Seeing that he was beside himself with rage and expecting that her last moment had come, she bent over and received, to her amazement, six light taps upon the behind. "The honour of the British Navy is avenged!" he cried, and, raising herself, she saw him with the sweat pouring down his face holding out a trembling right hand. "Away!" she exclaimed, striking an attitude and imitating the ferocity of his own expression, "My honour has still to be satisfied!" "Spoken like a gentleman!" he returned, and fell into profound thought. "If six strokes avenge the honour of the King's Navy" he mused, "how many avenge the

honour of a private gentleman?" He said he would prefer to lay the case before his brother officers. She replied haughtily that she could not wait. He praised her sensibility. "Let me see," he cried suddenly, "did your father keep a carriage?" "No" she said. "Or a riding horse?" "We had a donkey," she bethought her, "which drew the mowing machine." At this his face lightened. "My mother's name--" she added. "For God's sake, man, don't mention your mother's name!" he shrieked, trembling like an aspen and flushing to the roots of his hair, and it was ten minutes at least before she could induce him to proceed. At length he decreed that if she gave him four strokes and a half in the small of the back at a spot indicated by himself (the half conceded, he said, in recognition of the fact that her great grandmother's uncle was killed at Trafalgar) it was his opinion that her honour would be as good as new. This was done; they retired to a restaurant; drank two bottles of wine for which he insisted upon paying; and parted with protestations of eternal friendship.

Then we had Fanny's account of her visit to the Law Courts. At her first visit she had come to the conclusion that the Judges were either made of wood or were impersonated by large animals resembling man who had been trained to move with extreme dignity, mumble and nod their heads. To

test her theory she had liberated a handkerchief of blue-bottles at the critical moment of a trial, but was unable to judge whether the creatures gave signs of humanity for the buzzing of the flies induced so sound a sleep that she only woke in time to see the prisoners led into the cells below. But from the evidence she brought we voted that it is unfair to suppose that the Judges are men.

Helen went to the Royal Academy, but when asked to deliver her report upon the pictures she began to recite from a pale blue volume "O for the touch of a vanished hand and the sound of a voice that is still. Home is the hunter, home from the hill. He gave his bridle reins a shake. Love is sweet, love is brief. Spring, the fair spring, is the year's pleasant King. O! to be in England now that April's there. Men must work and women must weep. The path of duty is the way to glory--" We could listen to no more of this gibberish.

"We want no more poetry!" we cried.

"Daughters of England!" she began, but here we pulled her down, a vase of water getting spilt over her in the scuffle.

"Thank God!" she exclaimed, shaking herself like a dog. "Now I'll roll on the carpet and see if I can't brush off what remains of the Union Jack. Then perhaps--"

here she rolled energetically. Getting up she began to explain to us what modern pictures are like when Castalia stopped her.

"What is the average size of a picture?" she asked. "Perhaps two feet by two and a half," she said. Castalia made notes while Helen spoke, and when she had done, and we were trying not to meet each others eyes, rose and said, "At your wish I spent last week at Oxbridge, disguised as a charwoman. I thus had access to the rooms of several Professors and will now attempt to give you some idea--only," she broke off, "I can't think how to do it. It's all so queer. These Professors," she went on, "live in large houses built round grass plots each in a kind of cell by himself. Yet they have every convenience and comfort. You have only to press a button or light a little lamp. Their papers are beautifully filed. Books abound. There are no children or animals, save half a dozen stray cats and one aged bullfinch--a cock. I remember," she broke off, "an Aunt of mine who lived at Dulwich and kept cactuses. You reached the conservatory through the double drawing-room, and there, on the hot pipes, were dozens of them, ugly, squat, bristly little plants each in a separate pot. Once in a hundred years the Aloe flowered, so my Aunt said. But she died before that happened--" We told her to keep to the point. "Well," she resumed, "when Professor Hobkin

was out I examined his life work, an edition of Sappho. Its a queer looking book, six or seven inches thick, not all by Sappho. Oh no. Most of it is a defence of Sappho's chastity, which some German had denied, and I can assure you the passion with which these two gentlemen argued, the learning they displayed, the prodigious ingenuity with which they disputed the use of some implement which looked to me for all the world like a hairpin astounded me; especially when the door opened and Professor Hobkin himself appeared. A very nice, mild, old gentleman, but what could he know about chastity?" We misunderstood her.

"No, no," she protested, "he's the soul of honour I'm sure--not that he resembles Rose's sea captain in the least. I was thinking rather of my Aunt's cactuses. What could they know about chastity?"

Again we told her not to wander from the point,-- did the Oxbridge professors help to produce good people and good books?--the objects of life.

"There!" she exclaimed. "It never struck me to ask. It never occurred to me that they could possibly produce anything."

"I believe," said Sue, "that you made some mistake. Probably Professor Hobkin was a gynecologist. A scholar is a very different sort of man. A scholar is overflowing

with humour and invention--perhaps addicted to wine, but what of that?--a delightful companion, generous, subtle, imaginative--as stands to reason. For he spends his life in company with the finest human beings that have ever existed."

"Hum," said Castalia. "Perhaps I'd better go back and try again."

Some three months later it happened that I was sitting alone when Castalia entered. I don't know what it was in the look of her that so moved me; but I could not restrain myself, and dashing across the room, I clasped her in my arms. Not only was she very beautiful; she seemed also in the highest spirits. "How happy you look!" I exclaimed, as she sat down.

"I've been at Oxbridge" she said.

"Asking questions?"

"Answering them" she replied.

"You have not broken our vow?" I said anxiously, noticing something about her figure.

"Oh, the vow" she said casually. "I'm going to have a baby if that's what you mean. You can't imagine," she burst out, "how exciting, how beautiful, how satisfying--"

"What is?" I asked.

"To--to--answer questions," she replied in some confusion. Whereupon she told me the whole of her story.

But in the middle of an account which interested and excited me more than anything I had ever heard, she gave the strangest cry, half whoop, half holloa--

"Chastity! Chastity! Where's my chastity!" she cried. "Help Ho! The scent bottle!"

There was nothing in the room but a cruet containing mustard, which I was about to administer when she recovered her composure.

"You should have thought of that three months ago" I said severely.

"True" she replied. "There's not much good in thinking of it now. It was unfortunate, by the way, that my mother had me called Castalia."

"Oh Castalia, your mother--" I was beginning when she reached for the mustard pot.

"No, no, no," she said, shaking her head. "If you'd been a chaste woman yourself you would have screamed at the sight of me--instead of which you rushed across the room and took me in your arms. No, Cassandra. We are neither of us chaste." So we went on talking.

Meanwhile the room was filling up, for it was the day appointed to discuss the results of our observations. Everyone, I thought, felt as I did about Castalia. They kissed her and said how glad they were to see her again.

At length, when we were all assembled, Jane rose and said that it was time to begin. She began by saying that we had now asked questions for over five years, and that though the results were bound to be inconclusive--here Castalia nudged me and whispered that she was not so sure about that. Then she got up, and, interrupting Jane in the middle of a sentence, said,

"Before you say any more, I want to know--am I to stay in the room? Because," she added "I have to confess that I am an impure woman."

Everyone looked at her in astonishment.

"You are going to have a baby?" asked Jane.

She nodded her head.

It was extraordinary to see the different expressions on their faces. A sort of hum went through the room, in which I could catch the words 'impure,' 'baby,' 'Castalia,' and so on. Jane, who was herself considerably moved, put it to us,

"Shall she go? Is she impure?"

Such a roar filled the room as might have been heard in the street outside.

"No! No! No! Let her stay! Impure? Fiddlesticks!" Yet I fancied that some of the youngest, girls of nineteen or twenty, held back as if overcome with shyness. Then we all came about her and began asking questions, and at last

I saw one of the youngest, who had kept in the background, approach shyly and say to her:

"What is chastity then? I mean is it good, or is it bad, or is it nothing at all?" She replied so low that I could not catch what she said.

"You know I was shocked," said another, "for at least ten minutes."

"In my opinion," said Poll, who was growing crusty from always reading in the London Library, "chastity is nothing but ignorance--a most discreditable state of mind. We should admit only the unchaste to our society. I vote that Castalia shall be our President."

This was violently disputed.

"It is as unfair to brand women with chastity as with unchastity," said Moll. "Some of us haven't the opportunity either. Moreover, I don't believe Cassy herself maintains that she acted as she did from a pure love of knowledge."

"He is only twenty one and divinely beautiful" said Cassy, with a ravishing gesture.

"I move," said Helen, "that no one be allowed to talk of chastity or unchastity save those who are in love."

"Oh bother," said Judith, who had been enquiring into scientific matters, "I'm not in love and I'm longing to

explain my measures for dispensing with prostitutes and fertilising virgins by Act of Parliament."

She went on to tell us of an invention of hers to be erected at Tube stations and other public resorts, which, upon payment of a small fee would safeguard the nation's health, accommodate its sons, and relieve its daughters. Then she had contrived a method of preserving in sealed tubes the germs of future Lord Chancellors "or poets or painters or musicians" she went on, "supposing, that is to say, that these breeds are not extinct, and that women still wish to bear children--"

"Of course we wish to bear children!" cried Castalia impatiently. Jane rapped the table.

"That is the very point we are met to consider," she said. "For five years we have been trying to find out whether we are justified in continuing the human race. Castalia has anticipated our decision. But it remains for the rest of us to make up our minds."

Here one after another of our messengers rose and delivered their reports. The marvels of civilisation far exceeded our expectations, and as we learnt for the first time how man flies in the air, talks across space, penetrates to the heart of an atom, and embraces the universe in his speculations a murmur of admiration burst from our lips.

"We are proud," we cried, "that our mothers sacrificed their youth in such a cause as this!" Castalia, who had been listening intently, looked prouder than all the rest. Then Jane reminded us that we had still much to learn, and Castalia begged us to make haste. On we went through a vast tangle of statistics. We learnt that England has a population of so many millions, and that such and such a proportion of them is constantly hungry and in prison; that the average size of a working man's family is such, and that so great a percentage of women die from maladies incident to childbirth. Reports were read of visits to factories, shops, slums, and dockyards. Descriptions were given of the Stock Exchange, of a gigantic house of business in the City, and of a Government Office. The British Colonies were now discussed, and some account was given of our rule in India, Africa and Ireland. I was sitting by Castalia and I noticed her uneasiness.

"We shall never come to any conclusion at all at this rate," she said. "As it appears that civilisation is so much more complex than we had any notion, would it not be better to confine ourselves to our original enquiry? We agreed that it was the object of life to produce good people and good books. All this time we have been talking of aeroplanes, factories and money. Let us talk about men

themselves and their arts, for that is the heart of the matter."

So the diners out stepped forward with long slips of paper containing answers to their questions. These had been framed after much consideration. A good man, we had agreed, must at any rate be honest, passionate, and unworldly. But whether or not a particular man possessed those qualities could only be discovered by asking questions, often beginning at a remote distance from the centre. Is Kensington a nice place to live in? Where is your son being educated--and your daughter? Now please tell me, what do you pay for your cigars? By the way, is Sir Joseph a baronet or only a knight? Often it seemed that we learnt more from trivial questions of this kind than from more direct ones. "I accepted my peerage," said Lord Bunkum "because my wife wished it." I forget how many titles were accepted for the same reason. "Working fifteen hours out the twenty four as I do--" ten thousand professional men began.

"No, no, of course you can neither read nor write. But why do you work so hard?" "My dear lady, with a growing family--" "but why does your family grow?" Their wives wished that too, or perhaps it was the British Empire. But more significant than the answers were the refusals to answer. Very few would reply at all to questions about

morality and religion, and such answers as were given were not serious. Questions as to the value of money and power were almost invariably brushed aside, or pressed at extreme risk to the asker. "I'm sure," said Jill, "that if Sir Harley Tightboots hadn't been carving the mutton when I asked him about the capitalist system he would have cut my throat. The only reason why we escaped with our lives over and over again is that men are at once so hungry and so chivalrous. They despise us too much to mind what we say."

"Of course they despise us" said Eleanor. "At the same time how do you account for this--I made enquiries among the artists. Now no woman has ever been an artist, has she Poll?"

"Jane-Austen-Charlotte-Bronte-George-Eliot," cried Poll, like a man crying muffins in a back street.

"Damn the woman!" someone exclaimed. "What a bore she is!"

"Since Sappho there has been no female of first rate--" Eleanor began, quoting from a weekly newspaper.

"It's now well known that Sappho was the somewhat lewd invention of Professor Hobkin," Ruth interrupted.

"Anyhow, there is no reason to suppose that any woman ever has been able to write or ever will be able to

write" Eleanor continued. "And yet, whenever I go among authors they never cease to talk to me about their books. Masterly! I say, or Shakespeare himself! (for one must say something) and I assure you, they believe me."

"That proves nothing," said Jane. They all do it. "Only," she sighed, "it dosen't[sic] seem to help us much. Perhaps we had better examine modern literature next. Liz, it's your turn."

Elizabeth rose and said that in order to prosecute her inquiry she had dressed as a man and been taken for a reviewer.

"I have read new books pretty steadily for the past five years, said she." "Mr. Wells is the most popular living writer; then comes Mr. Arnold Bennett; then Mr. Compton Makenzie[sic]; Mr. McKenna and Mr. Walpole may be bracketed together." She sat down.

"But you've told us nothing!" we expostulated. "Or do you mean that these gentlemen have greatly surpassed Jane-Eliot[sic] and that English fiction is--where's that review of yours? Oh, yes, 'safe in their hands.'"

"Safe, quite safe" she said, shifting uneasily from foot to foot. "And I'm sure that they give away even more than they receive."

We were all sure of that. "But," we pressed her, "do they write good books?"

"Good books?" she said, looking at the ceiling. "You must remember," she began, speaking with extreme rapidity, "that fiction is the mirror of life. And you can't deny that education is of the highest importance, and that it would be extremely annoying, if you found yourself alone at Brighton late at night, not to know which was the best boarding house to stay at, and suppose it was a dripping Sunday evening--wouldn't it be nice to go to the Movies?"

"But what has that got to do with it?" we asked.

"Nothing--nothing--nothing whatever" she replied.

"Well, tell us the truth" we bade her.

"The truth? But isn't it wonderful," she broke off--
"Mr. Chitter, has written a weekly article for the past thirty years upon love or hot buttered toast and has sent all his sons to Eton--"

"The truth!" we demanded.

"Oh the truth," she stammered--"the truth has nothing to do with literature," and sitting down she refused to say another word.

It all seemed to us very inconclusive.

"Ladies, we must try to sum up the results" Jane was beginning, when a hum, which had been heard for some time through the open window, drowned her voice.

"War! War! War! Declaration of War!" men were shouting in the street below.

We looked at each other in horror.

"What war?" we cried. "What war?" We remembered, too late, that we had never thought of sending anyone to the House of Commons. We had forgotten all about it. We turned to Poll, who had reached the history shelves in the London Library, and asked her to enlighten us.

"Why," we cried "do men go to war?"

"Sometimes for one reason, sometimes for another" she replied calmly. "In 1760, for example--" The shouts outside drowned her words. "Again in 1797--in 1804--It was the Austrians in 1866--1870 was the Franco-Prussian--In 1900 on the other hand--"

"But its now 1914!" we cut her short.

"Ah, I don't know what they're going to war for now," she admitted.

* * *

The war was over and peace was in process of being signed when I once more found myself with Castalia in the room where our meetings used to be held. We began idly turning over the pages of our old minute books. "Queer," I mused, "to see what we were thinking five years ago." 'We are agreed,' Castalia quoted, reading over my shoulder; 'that it is the object of life to produce good people and

good books.' We made no comment upon that. 'A good man is at anyrate honest passionate and unworldly.' "What a woman's language" I observed. "Oh, dear," cried Castalia, pushing the book away from her, "What fools we were! It was all Poll's father's fault," she went on. "I believe he did it on purpose--that ridiculous will, I mean, forcing Poll to read all the books in the London Library. If we hadn't learnt to read," she said bitterly, "we might still have been bearing children in ignorance and that I believe was the happiest life after all. I know what you're going to say about war," she checked me, "and the horror of bearing children to see them killed, but our mothers did it, and their mothers, and their mothers before them. And they didn't complain. They couldn't read. I've done my best," she sighed, "to prevent my little girl from learning to read, but what's the use? I caught Ann only yesterday with a newspaper in her hand and she was beginning to ask me if it was 'true.' Next she'll ask me whether Mr. Lloyd George is a good man, then whether Mr. Arnold Bennett is is[sic] a good novelist, and finally whether I believe in God.. How can I bring my daughter up to believe in nothing?" she demanded.

"Surely you could teach her to believe that a man's intellect is, and always will be, fundamentally superior to

a woman's?" I suggested. She brightened at this and began to turn over our old minutes again. "Yes," she said, "think of their discoveries, their mathematics, their science, their philosophy, their scholarship--" and then she began to laugh, "I shall never forget old Hobkin and the hairpin," she said, and went on reading and laughing and I thought she was quite happy, when suddenly she threw the book from her and burst out, "Oh, Cassandra why do you torment me? Don't you know that our belief in man's intellect is the greatest fallacy of them all?" "What?" I exclaimed. "Ask any journalist, schoolmaster, politician or public house keeper in the land and they will all tell you that men are much cleverer than women." "As if I doubted it," she said scornfully. "How could they help it? Haven't we bred them and fed and kept them in comfort since the beginning of time so that they may be clever even if they're nothing else? Its all our doing!" she cried. "We insisted upon having intellect and now we've got it. And its intellect," she continued, "that's at the bottom of it. What could be more charming than a boy before he has begun to cultivate his intellect? He is beautiful to look at; he gives himself no airs; he understands the meaning of art and literature instinctively; he goes about enjoying his life and making other people enjoy theirs. Then they teach him to cul-

tivate his intellect. He becomes a barrister, a civil servant, a general, an author, a professor. Every day he goes to an office. Every year he produces a book. He maintains a whole family by the products of his brain--poor devil! Soon he cannot come into a room without making us all feel uncomfortable; he condescends to every woman he meets, and dares not tell the truth even to his own wife; instead of rejoicing our eyes we have to shut them if we are to take him in our arms. True, they console themselves with stars of all shapes, ribbons of all shades, and incomes of all sizes--but what is to console us? That we shall be able in ten years time to spend a week-end at Lahore? Or that the least insect in Japan has a name twice the length of its body? Oh, Cassandra, for Heaven's sake let us devise a method by which men may bear children! It is our only chance. For unless we provide them with some innocent occupation we shall get neither good people nor good books; we shall perish beneath the fruits of their unbridled activity; and not a human being will survive to know that there once was Shakespeare!"

"It is too late" I said. "We cannot provide even for the children that we have."

"And then you ask me to believe in intellect" she said.

While we spoke, men were crying hoarsely and wearily in the street, and listening, we heard that the Treaty of

Peace had just been signed. The voices died away. The rain was falling and interfered no doubt with the proper explosion of the fireworks.

"My cook will have bought the Evening News" said Castalia "and Ann will be spelling it out over her tea. I must go home."

"It's no good--not a bit of good" I said. "Once she knows how to read there's only one thing you can teach her to believe in--and that is herself."

"Well that would be a change," said Castalia.

So we swept up the papers of our Society, and though Ann was playing with her doll very happily, we solemnly made her a present of the lot and told her we had chosen her to be President of the Society of the future--upon which she burst into tears, poor little girl.

APPENDIX III

BLUE & GREEN.

GREEN.

The pointed fingers of glass hang downwards. The light slides down the glass, and drops a pool of green. All day long the ten fingers of the lustre drop green upon the marble. The feathers of parakeets--their harsh cries--sharp blades of palm trees--green too; green needles glittering in the sun. But the hard glass drips on to the marble; the pools hover above the desert sand; the camels lurch through them; the pools settle on the marble; rushes edge them; weeds clog them; here and there a white blossom; the frog flops over; at night the stars are set there unbroken. Evening comes, and the shadow sweeps the green over the mantelpiece; the ruffled surface of ocean. No ships come; the aimless waves sway beneath the empty sky. It's night; the needles drip blots of blue. The green's out.

BLUE.

The snub-nosed monster rises to the surface and spouts through his blunt nostrils two columns of water, which, fiery-white in the centre, spray off into a fringe of blue beads. Strokes of blue line the black tarpaulin of his hide. Slushing the water through mouth and nostrils he sinks, heavy with water, and the blue closes over him dowsing the polished pebbles of his eyes. Thrown upon the beach he lies, blunt, obtuse, shedding dry blue scales. Their metallic blue stains the rusty iron on the beach. Blue are the ribs of the wrecked rowing boat. A wave rolls beneath the blue bells. But the cathedral's different, cold, incense laden, faint blue with the veils of madonnas.

APPENDIX IV

FOREWORD

Mr. Wallace Hildick, when examining the MS of Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway, now in the British Museum, discovered the short children's story which is here published under the title Nurse Lugton's Golden Thimble. The story appears suddenly in the middle of the text of the novel, but has nothing to do with it. It was in fact written for Virginia Woolf's niece Ann Stephen when she, as a child, was on a visit to her aunt in the country. The story was first published, with an explanatory note by Mr. Hildick, in The Times Literary Supplement of June 17, 1965.

Leonard Woolf

NURSE LUGTON'S GOLDEN THIMBLE

She had given one great snore. She had dropped her head, thrust her spectacles up her forehead, and there she sat, by the fender with her thimble on her finger, and her needle full of cotton, snoring, snoring--on her knees, and covering her apron, a large piece of figured blue stuff. The animals had not moved until--one, two, three, four, five--Nurse Lugton snored for the fifth time. Ah! the old woman was asleep. The antelope nodded to the zebra; the giraffe bit off a leaf of the tree. For the pattern on the stuff

was this: all the animals in the world were trooping down to the lake and the pagoda, and the boat and the bridge to drink.

But so long as Nurse Lugton stitched, there they stood: the elephant with his trunk in the air; the zebra with his front hoof raised; the giraffe smelling the leaves, and the monkey holding the nut in his paws. The stuff was blue stuff; a curtain for Mrs. Gingham's fine big drawing-room window. They were only patterns so long as old Nurse stitched. But directly she began to snore, the blue stuff turned into blue air, and the trees waved; you could hear the waves breaking on the lake; and see the people crossing the bridge to market. Immediately, the animals began to move.

First the elephant and the zebra; next the giraffe and the tiger; the ostrich, the mandrill, the marmot and the mongoose followed; the penguins and the pelicans waddled and waded alongside. Over them burnt Nurse Lugton's golden thimble like a sun; and when Nurse Lugton snored, all the animals heard the wind roaring in the trees. Down they went to drink and, as they walked, the blue curtains became covered with grass, and roses and daisies, white stones and red; and puddles and reeds and ditches and cart tracks with frogs hopping quickly in and out of the grass lest the elephant should tread on them.

On they went. They stood by the lake to drink. Really it was a beautiful sight--and to think of it all, lying across old Nurse Lugton's knees, as she snored, on her Windsor chair in the lamplight; to think of her apron covered with roses and grass, with great wild beasts which she had only poked at through the bars with her umbrella at the zoo!

For she was mortally afraid of wild beasts, and could she have known that she had wild beasts all over her, as she slept, what would she have said? Poor old woman! Even a little beetle made Nurse Lugton yell. And now her apron was covered with stags and albatrosses, elephants, penguins and wild jungle leopards. But she knew nothing of it all.

So the elephants drank, and the giraffes ate the tulip trees; and the people who crossed the bridge threw apples and pineapples into the air for them to catch, and beautifully crescent-shaped rolls filled with rose leaves and honey. These the monkeys loved. The old Queen of the town came by in her palanquin; the general of the army passed; so did the Prime Minister; the Admiral; the Executioner; and other great dignitaries on business in the town, which was a very beautiful place called Millamarchmontopolis. Nobody harmed the lovely beasts; but it was well known that nobody could ever catch them.

For it was said that a great ogress had them in her toils. Her name was Lugton. She had a face like the side of a mountain, with great precipices and avalanches and chasms for eyes and hair, nose and teeth. And she caught the animals, and froze them, and they stood still on her knee all day, till she fell asleep, and then they came in the evening to Millamarchmontopolis to drink.

Suddenly old Nurse Lugton gave a great gasp and a twitch and woke up.

For a bluebottle was buzzing round the lamp and woke her. All the animals lay still on her knee once more. And Nurse Lugton went on stitching at Mrs. Gingham's drawing-room curtain.

THE END