VIRGINIA WOOLF'S DRAMA: HER SEARCH FOR FORM

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DECLARATION

I declare that I, James Clark Quinn Stewart, am the undersigned, and that the ensuing thesis, entitled 'Virginia Woolf's Drama: Her Search for Form', was composed by myself, the research and composition being entirely mine and unassisted.

J C Q Stewart
September 1989

This thesis is for Bridget R. McGinley, my wife, and mother of John and Peter, who interrupted it by being born; for my oldest son, Sean; for my sister and niece, Rosalind and Marilla Flogdell; my mother, Millicent M. Stewart; and for Valerie Shaw, midwife.

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All citations from the diaries and letters of Virginia Woolf follow her own spellings and usages, however ungrammatical, and regardless of whether she is self-consistent even within any one quoted passage.

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ABSTRACT

Virginia Woolf's essays on the actresses Sarah Bernhardt, and 'Rachel', reveal her excitement over the ways in which these women's art resembled her own writerly situation. They transvalued their sex's conventional enforced spectatorship, into public metaphor which could criticise the role-playing endemic in their society, doing so by taking up an even more personal possession of the social obligation incumbent on women to 'act'.

Woolf's own subversive retreat into a notable objectivity of vision results in vivid caricature and acute satire. But it also affords her a breadth of outlook which is panoramic. This vantage - from which she sees facts both comic and pathetic more or less as pure spectacle - transforms her outlook in the direction of tragicomedy, at the same time accentuating her scenic sense, and her ear for token dialogue, her eye for gestural revelation, and her sensitivity to dramatic value.

Her tragicomic (or, in her own terms 'humorous') perception of character and of situation, leads to an inchoate search for significant form, which emerges into ever clearer technical awareness. Formally, she wishes to incorporate dramatic modes into the novel. There are various practical effects. Her active lyricism is a dramatic epiphenomenon; and her narrativity, often spectacular, offers deictic experience to non-passive readers.

As part of her enterprise, she must define herself against James's attitude to his audience, Conrad's feeling about action, Wagner's control over the Gesamtkunstwerk, and the Renaissance drama's sheer noise. Especially during the thirties, Woolf must negotiate fictions which court, but do not appease, an audience with, in that partisan decade, its prejudices about 'action'. She discovers, during the twenties, how to preserve her own and the audience's privacy as proof against melodrama, by redefining the notional solitude of Marvell, just as, earlier, she faults those other solitaries, Emerson and Thoreau, for lack of social sense.

Woolf's expressivity is also a pre-intentional tendency to verbal play, sometimes surfacing as marked punning, in her experimental work. Language itself puts on an act as surface, much as the drama deploys exteriors. Strategically and lexically, Woolf stages her fictions as productions of her existential and gender situation. This gives to them their metaphoric status, which some see as artistic passivity, and others as surrogate activism.

PREFACE

Ralph Freedman wrote in 1980:

> One of the more surprising discoveries about Virginia Woolf is her use of dramatic conventions or forms. But since she did not become famous for writing plays ... her dramatic propensities have remained metaphoric.

During the 1980s, critics have been taking Woolf's dramaturgy more literally, now that it has, in itself, ceased to surprise.[1] Jane Marcus argues, in 1981, that Woolf's 1909 visit to Bayreuth 'filled her with the desire to make fiction aspire to the condition of Wagner's opera'; what Woolf wants is Brechtian 'epic theatre for ordinary people', Marcus suggests, in 'an age in which fascism and socialism fought for the allegiance of the masses'. Suzette A. Henke cites approvingly Marcus's observation that Woolf tried to reinstate the classical Greek chorus in the novel - a move (Marcus had said) 'the aesthetic equivalent of a revolutionary political act, a socialist's demonstration of faith in the people'.[2] This approach to Woolfian dramaturgy explicitly links it to her social and political stances. It is relevant, in this connection, to note that A Room of One's Own was staged at The Playhouse in London, during June, 1989.[3]

By 1989, however, Jane Wheare, for one, seems uneasy about this framework of thought. She is prepared to refer to three of Woolf's novels as 'dramatic' (usually, it may be noted, retaining this word within quotations). Wheare sees that Woolf prefers to dramatise rather than to preach. But as to what it is Woolf is dramatising, Wheare suggests that, for example,

> In Night and Day, as in The Voyage Out, Woolf puts forward feminist ideas whilst avoiding overt propaganda by dramatising such ideas in the lives of her fictional characters.

This is a typical remark, and shows how Woolf's 'dramatic' novels are considered essentially novels of ideas, albeit ideas conveyed in an implicit way: Wheare very frequently uses the verb 'dramatise' as synonymous with 'illustrate'.[4] The rhetorical confusion this signals exists because Wheare, it seems, does not think of Woolf as really dramatising - creating autonomous characters, in some sense beyond authorial judgement or control. Wheare's analysis threatens to reduce Woolf to a superior kind of illustrator who, being wary of the parabolic, decides to use dramatic form, so as to avoid the appearance of mere illustration.

These approaches are not satisfying. Marcus's angle comes close to making Woolfian dramaturgy, by association, a political activism. Wheare's dissent sounds subdued and half-convinced. B.H. Fussell, on the other hand, offers a fine statement of the case:

> Throughout her novels Woolf's imagination is "dramatic." She sees life as conflict and art as dialectic: she orders oppositions in the way that drama does by juxtaposing opposite points of view, opposite styles, and opposite worlds. Her mode is the mode of tragicomedy in which detachment counters involvement, laughter counters tears ... In Between the Acts the audience does not know whether to laugh or cry at the amateur performances and so it does both.

Cursory though it is, this is a useful appraisal. Practically, however, its results are disappointing. Fussell says of Between the Acts' main character, that 'of the many self-portraits executed by Virginia Woolf, Miss La Trobe is her most satiric'. Standing still further back, it may be seen, says Fussell, how Woolf 'satirizes her own devices of narrative. She ridicules her own shaping rhythms ... She ridicules her own distancing images ... She ridicules finally her own structural analogies between play and poem'. For Fussell, then, 'not until this last novel does she exploit fully the idea of the drama'; and when she does so, it is for satiric purposes, and largely in order to ridicule.[5] The satiric mode comes at last to predominate over the tragicomic, in this view. Apart from the failure of this reading to account for the novel in question's beauty, its problematic nature may be simply stated: satire comes so very easily to Woolf, and with such effortless facility, that it is hard to think of Between the Acts as representing in fact some achievement, as distinct from a (perhaps facile) lapse.

The present thesis has sought a different understanding of Woolf's procedures and ends. Of what (it asks) is her dramaturgy the significant form? Who is it that is doing this dramatising, and what is being dramatised? How permanent a tendency is it, and in what ways does it become manifest? The argument, pursuing such questions, moves from very broad considerations, down to the lexical unit, the very word itself, attempting to account for Woolf's speculating interiority and active lyricism as much as for her attachment to surfaces. It begins its inquiry in 1909, with the tensions inherent in her response to Wagner, but passes quickly to her last years, as a framing device, her final novels receiving discussion first. It then pauses to explore the basis of Woolf's whole wish for a dramatising fiction; and when it resumes, having read her first two novels from this standpoint, it goes on to consider her experimental works as narrative and fictive realisations of the tragicomic, and as deictically figurative of a certain solitude (this last inquiry assumes in the reader some knowledge of the poetry of Andrew Marvell).[6] A concluding chapter considers Woolf's ends; and theorises more fully about her verbal play, various cruces in which are noticed throughout the thesis as opportunity affords.

Some general remarks on 'acting' are in order here. In the earlier modern period, discomfort with acting expressed the more severe theocratic impulse of the seventeenth century, when, for a significant element in the movement of Puritanism, the dissembling proper to acting was found morally suspect. For Shakespeare the problem was the reverse. In *Much Ado About Nothing*, Don John the Bastard is the threat within a society so given to dissimulation that it assumes everyone is surface. Those characters who finally help Hero redeem herself must learn *consciously* how to act. In so doing, they gain access to the secrets of the passionately social lie - which, on a metatextual view, much dramatic art already is. It was still possible to stage this in the

London of Shakespeare: there was 'nothing' (despite the word's sexual nuance) for the city fathers to seize upon. The theocratic experiment in government put an end to this sort of exposition, registering its disapproval of acting as such. Much (for instance) of Marvell's poetic energy goes, thereafter, into speaking from within an incognito, a convention which, for himself and others, like Lovelace, might be thought increasingly prudential.

After 1660 and the Restoration, puritanism as a specific force had nowhere to go politically. Its relatively monolithic integrity became lateralized into an appearance of public manners masking private vice: the period's drama, especially in its portrayal of sexual relations, can often be cynical. The system of public manners became itself more pronouncedly vicious in the longer run, so that Victorianism is now notorious for its endemic, puritanical inducements to 'acting'. So Woolf's Orlando finds.[7] Whatever they may have written privately for themselves or for a coterie, no Victorian dramatist could have publicly produced bawdry on any Shakespearean scale, for instance. It may even be doubted whether early seventeenth-century Londoners, bourgeois or not, 'acted' quite so much in their daily lives as did Victorians and Edwardians. For early modernists like James and Conrad, there is, correspondingly, intense preoccupation with what it means to act (in both senses of doing something, or dissembling). That major capacity for the implicit in Samuel Richardson, Austen, and James, makes virtue from necessity; and when it fails, particularly in Richardson, less than virtue. Woolf can find James 'lewd', a charge often laid, from Coleridge on, at Richardson's door too.[8] Pursuit of what is implicit behind social 'acting' cannot, free from taint, simply portray these mores without some countervailing scepticism. Richardson and James sound as though they like things as they are: life as matter for subtle fictions. Austen's ironies, however, amount to a judgement. Hardy, too, is moving beyond these manners. His much heavier ironies trumpet the embracing of action as doom. And for T.S. Eliot, action is never free of some posturality: a necessary redemption (aesthetic and religious) re-moralises what, in his experience, still tends fatally to untruth. But this dilemma is precisely correlated to the puritan in him. In attempting verse drama, he really wishes for greater explicitness, for an audacious admission of acting. Auden and Isherwood, representing a younger generation, pursue their own verse drama because it is an active mode, and, for them, poetry must be politicised, to the extent of being a form of action in the external world.

This was, broadly, the nature of the case. Yet it is to be expected that 'acting' was even more of an ingrown business for that creature whom Coventry Patmore had called, in famous phrase, 'the Angel in the House'. So Richardson's Clarissa discovered; and, less creditably, his Pamela. Both sexes habitually put on their acts. But, to make a metaphor, it takes something extra to the norm for the young Virginia Stephen, as sole woman in a white all-male group, to act a black man in the 1910 Dreadnought hoax. All her companions need do, is change colour, costume, and language; whereas she must also feign sex, almost in strange reversal of a boy-player's Desdemona. Deeper acting is thus required of her; and this may be taken, if one likes, to cipher a more general condition in which women, if they act at all, are to act for, or even like, men. But Virginia, as much mole as male, is well behind the enemy lines. There was (in Renaissance sexual pun) a 'nought' which the Dreadnought did well to dread.[9] One thinks here of Elizabeth Gaskell writing her fiction between interruptions from four growing daughters; and of the externalised social action of her public philanthropies. Her fictive spectacle rarely exists for its own sake: she is like Lawrence in having a spiritual programme. Woolf, by contrast, though feeling in her own experience the typically marginalising power of patriarchalism, is more the pure or abstract spectator. Her writing is markedly free - so far as major characterisation goes - of moralising.

She proffers a pathos of spectacle rather than of morality. Her clear-sighted comedy tenders no lessons either. Life's determinants are witnessed through a spectacular narrativity which is, to that end, actively lyrical.

To some this has seemed indistinguishable from passivity and inwardness. Many readers, from the Scrutineers and before, have seen her as a hyperaesthetic recorder of received impressions. Elaine Showalter famously complained in 1977 about 'Woolf's female aesthetic', that, inasmuch as it extends 'her view of women's social role', it is a case of 'receptivity to the point of self-destruction'. But George Steiner gives this, in effect, its answer when he writes of drama as,

> the supreme practice of altruism. By a miracle of controlled self-destruction ... the dramatist creates living characters whose radiance of life is precisely commensurate to their "otherness" - to their not being images, shadows, or resonances of the playwright himself.

Hence Woolf's passivity, real as it is, need not be taken as an end in itself.[10] Other readers, sensing injustice, have claimed Woolf for a marked feminism, her rage barely suppressed, her fictions credal. Some of these readings will receive notice in the ensuing argument. There is no disputing that Woolf was indeed active in the search for form, and that this was for her a way of being, productive of meaning. Woolf interrogates the social system's acted manners by passionately surveying them. It is no small thing, to be looked at by Virginia Woolf. Her unimpeded vision, which is not an act, is to act discursively in the world.

This thesis hopes to show Woolf's novelistic drama as sited within her existential and gender experience, and not to have been (as Wheare implies) entirely a decision, or a means to the superior illustration of pre-existent ideas. Her dramatising, as aesthetic response, emerges naturally from her life situation. If her fiction may be thought to teach anything, this is because it achieves a formal beauty: 'beauty teaches ... beauty is a disciplinarian', Woolf says, whose teaching is 'inseparable from the sound of her voice'. To attend to Woolf's search for form - sometimes ascetic, and by distant descent a touch puritanical itself - is instruction enough.[11] Conversely, to lay claim to her for particular activisms, produces a number of forced readings. The present thesis wishes to make some contribution towards recovering a balance.

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations have been used either in the main text, or in the referencing and bibliography. Fuller details of volumes will be found in the References and Bibliography.

BA	Between the Acts
BP	Books and Portraits
CE I-IV	Collected Essays
CI	Critical Inquiry
CQ	Critical Quarterly
CR I-II	The Common Reader, I and II
D I-V	The Diary of Virginia Woolf
DM	The Death of the Moth
DQ	Dutch Quarterly Review of Anglo-American Letters
DUJ	Durham University Journal
EC	Essays in Criticism
ELH	English Literary History
ES	English Studies
EVW	The Essays of Virginia Woolf
Fr	Freshwater
GR	Granite and Rainbow
JML	Journal of Modern Literature
JNT	Journal of Narrative Technique
JR	Jacob's Room
L	To the Lighthouse
L I-VI	The Letters of Virginia Woolf
MD	Mrs Dalloway
MFS	Modern Fiction Studies
MLQ	Modern Language Quarterly
MLR	Modern Language Review
MLS	Forum for Modern Language Studies
NCE	Virginia Woolf: New Critical Essays, ed P. Clements, I. Grundy
ND	Night and Day
NFE	New Feminist Essays on Virginia Woolf, ed J. Marcus
NLH	New Literary History
O	Orlando
PLL	Papers on Language and Literature
PMLA	Proceedings of the Modern Language Association
PNR	P.N. Review
R	A Room of One's Own
SR	Southern Review

SwR	_Sewanee Review_
_3G_	_Three Guineas_
_V_	_The Voyage Out_
VWB	_Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury_ , ed J. Marcus
VWRC	_Virginia Woolf: Revaluation and Continuity_
_W_	_The Waves_
_Y_	_The Years_

THE SENSE OF AN AUDIENCE

I

In her 1909 essay 'Impressions at Bayreuth', Virginia Woolf subsumes tragic drama under the name of verse, and wonders whether anyone will yet do for opera what Aristotle did '2,000 years ago for poetry', namely clarify its theory. But the _Poetics_ is professional analysis - and Woolf is not at all 'disposed to go to the root of the matter', though she feels 'dissatisfied with the old evasions'. True, amateurs do not often venture their opinions, she concedes; but still they secrete a belief 'that they understand as well as other people'. She chooses, speaking for herself, to admit ignorance, while declaring her interest. Straddling these oppositions, and publicising some formal ideas, her punning simultaneously signals and transvalues the difficulty she feels - 'the audience at Bayreuth, pilgrims many of them from distant lands, attend with all their power', she says.[1] Present (heard and heeded) to Woolf herself, though, there persists what is not exclusively operatic, nor other than the opera. 'During the intervals between the acts', pilgrims have to break their attention, oppressed, as the opera's burden makes itself felt beyond the limits of form. Because the Grail can elide scenic transitions and provide a 'completeness' uniting words and music, _Parsifal_ has 'no incongruous associations'. So, although Wagner's audience must have relief, the opera does, nevertheless, transcend the necessary breaks.[2]

It is significant, with regard to these very breaks, 'how much of the singular atmosphere which surrounds the opera in one's mind springs from other sources than the music itself'. For, 'to step out of the opera-house' is 'to combine the simple landscape with the landscape of the stage'. Successful, the work proceeds to extend itself metaphorically: 'in the next interval ... there is another act out here also'. This is not ruinous: 'these strange intervals in the open air, as though a curtain were regularly drawn and shut again, have no disturbing effect, upon _Parsifal_ at least'. _Lohengrin_, unfortunately, does suffer damage, and is easily reduced to little but 'tinsel ... sham armour ... gorgeous skirts ... mantles of knights'. The between-acts world, which is on good poetic terms with Parsifal, endangers Lohengrin's illusion, and that opera consequently shrinks to mere pageantry, 'pricked by the stubble' of Bayreuth's fields.

Woolf's inclusive perception of Wagnerian form is achieved despite her real diffidence. Her male companions, she complains to her sister, 'make me read the libretto in German', having to do which 'troubles me a great deal'. There are, for Woolf personally, far more interesting things to look at - 'a great many fashionable women', for instance, 'have arrived, who stare at me between the acts, and, as my head was washed yesterday, my hair is unusually free'. Foreignness, in addition, makes for comic distance in the intervals, and so the stared-at simply stares back. 'I can never', she continues elsewhere to Vanessa,

> quite get over the florid Teuton spirit, with its gross symbolism - and its flaxen tresses. Imagine a heroine in a nightgown, with a pig tail on each shoulder, and watery eyes ogling heaven. Saxon says nothing; Adrian prods him for an opinion. He reclines on his hips between the acts, and pulls at a weed. There is a great crowd, and we get stared at, not for our beauty. Yesterday /here she returns the stares/, a lean woman with a face like a ferret bowed to me.

In the delicately finished essay, with its mandarin gentility, there is not a trace of these freakish observations. An amateur's nervousness is conceded, and anything outlandish suppressed. Woolf, one might be tempted to say, is acting. Between those acts, though, her essay's polish shows the same objectivizing power as is instanced in the retailing of pigtailed Teutons, not to say, of herself as strange and hairy spectacle. It evinces a certain purity of witness, the capacity to stand back for the better contemplation of scene. In that respect, it is no act, being of a piece with Woolf's whole tendency. On the other hand, considering what the essay represses, even its recuperation of original judgement masquerades somewhat. Paradoxically, however, this pose, insofar as it is on Woolf's terms, is more real than the literal truth - a point to bear in mind for the later discussion of Bernhardt, Terry, and 'Rachel'. In the letters, meanwhile, anecdotes blend with the opera. Saxon's name, mysteriously and melodramatically integral to those flaxen viragos, seems continuous with Wagnerian incident. The interval-world spills into those letters:

> We have got to have tea with old Cornish and the Meinertzhagens this afternoon, between the acts. They seem to me like pink dish clothes, which have hung out all night in the rain.

The pure-sightedness may be merciless, then, implying no uncertain dividing of itself from what it sees, among the (in a much later phrase) 'ugly pretentious ... operatic scenery'.[3]

Woolf's encounters with these gross Valkyries, these ferret faces, and drenched dishcloths, are admittedly funny. Yet they are without doubt unfriendly. She is, of course, by no means alone in suffering these contrary impulses. Meredith (Robert Baker explains),

> carefully distinguished between the "satyr" and the "faun." The satyr's laugh was remarkable chiefly for its savage intensity ... and its clearly discernible aversion for its subject. The satirist's art ... was rejected by Meredith in favour of the "humanely malign" wit ... of the faun.

Baker says of this 'scrupulously argued classification', all very well in theory, that in practice it was 'a source of profound tension in Meredith's letters and novels where the "malice" of the faun-like Comic Spirit is readily ... transformed into the "Ironeist/'s/ ... pursuit of the grotesque"'. If Baker's evaluation is just, it gives added point to the thrust of Woolf's 1905 essay 'The Value of Laughter', which will be discussed in chapter three, and which appeared only eight years after Meredith's 1897 'An Essay on Comedy and the Uses of the Comic Spirit', at a time when Woolf is also thinking about Hood and Sheridan. Meredith, it seems, puts on quite as much of an act as Woolf does; only he fails, according to Baker, to negotiate this tension in his novels.[4]

Woolf, it emerges, resented Parsifal's audience, for reasons that struck her as being good, and which appear, again, in her correspondence to Vanessa:

> We heard Parsifal yesterday - a very mysterious emotional work ... People dress in half mourning, and you are hissed if you try to clap ... Saxon and Adrian say that it was not a good performance, and that I shant know anything about it until I have heard it 4 times. Between the acts, one goes and sits in a field, and watches a man hoeing turnips. The audience is very dowdy, and the look of the house is drab; one hardly has any room for ones knees, and it is very intense. I think earnest people only go - Germans for the most part, in sacks, with symbolical braid ... We have been discussing obscure points in Parsifal all the morning. It seems to me weak vague stuff, with the usual enormities, but I can only read the German with great difficulty.

Wagnerian lyric will not bear a literary reading. At the same time, and by way of ludic compensation, one may hear Woolf only just stop short of dalliance with lexical form. 'Saxon', 'flaxen', and 'sacks' are apt enough modulations for a creature who inhabits the surface. They are also action of a kind, but provisional, without being intense or being (despite its undoubted importance) earnest.[5]

Woolf's is therefore a complex resentment. It objects to this solemnly élitist concourse, and can feel similarly oppressed by masculinist textual purism. Not altogether amenable to re-creation in Wagner's image, Woolf does not clear him of responsibility for drawing such an audience. Indeed, there is no call for her to do so. Steiner, writing of dramatists' attempts to rediscover the audience which had been lost to prose fiction, says,

> The most sumptuous attempt was Wagner's. He sought at Bayreuth to invent or educate a spectator adequate to his own vision of the role and dignity of drama. What matters at Bayreuth is ... the auditorium destined for the kind of ideal audience which Wagner imagined to have existed in antiquity.

Uneasy about having Wagner invent or even educate her, Woolf feels the force of these multiple exclusions.[6] She thinks the bathos of the intervals a better place to be. Between the acts is, after all, where Wagnerian opera either succeeds or is broken. And since she is, anyway, in effect relegated to life between others' acts, her deflations are an orienting tactic, rather like her 1935 reduction of Eliot ('Said he could not like poetry that had no meaning for the ear. Read lacking in sensuality').[7] These compound hindrances mean that, even prior to the demands of editorial decorum, the 'Bayreuth' essay is something of an achievement. It is so tonally (feeling and sounding inclusive). Ethically, it is not unmerciful. Additionally, it also represents a pleasured, endorsing return to one's own, most pristine feeling before society's spoliation. This is a decision to mediate only the promptest delight, and it pronounces upon the bitter unhappiness of that summer, when Woolf was not herself.[8] It results from the same radically pure grasp of scene which underlies and produces the all-but-malign satire. Conceding that she can 'understand the form but slightly', her essay, even so, will openly admit to only the most joyful of difficulties - that of 'changing a musical impression into a literary one' - generic bounds being entirely 'arbitrary'. Despite its hearers, Parsifal, between acts pervading the world which, for Woolf at least, changed it, suggested mimetic prospects for literature. Woolf's response is not to the Gesamtkunstwerk, but to its status as formal manipulation, and to the audience which helps make it what it is.[9]

Commenting on Woolf at this time in her life, Lyndall Gordon sees fit to convict her of,

> a literal-mindedness that can be wilfully obtuse. If her more cutting caricatures (the kind she tossed off in her letters) are probed, there is a certain mundaneness masquerading as liveliness.

Gordon knows, we are to take it, when the younger Virginia is being wilful, and does not so much approach Woolf, as probe. Probing Gordon's diction, though, the masturbatory echo of 'tossed off' is a little unsympathetic, surely, not to say mundane. This claim to special knowledge of Woolf's masquerades will itself require probing in turn. For to call her unlively is, unlike the perception of masquerade as such, unjust.[10] Woolf's literal-mindedness, and the self who does the acting, are best considered in the light of her excitement over Sarah Bernhardt, Ellen Terry, and 'Rachel', the first two of whom will be discussed shortly. Meanwhile, to ponder her real sense of exclusion from the high Wagnerian art understood so forensically and so solemnly by male companions, is to realise how enforced is Woolf's spectatorship. It brews repressed energy which goes in search of victims, herself as spectacle included. Her bid (symptomised in caricatures) is, to convert what could be straits into strategy, and a forced onlooking to effect. This is understandable behaviour, in one obliged to live only at the surface of some (it was implied) momentous depth.

Reacting to her feeling of isolation, Woolf withdraws further than is strictly needful, and the retreat facilitates panoramic vision. In turn, this move assists towards 'humour' (her account of which will be considered in the third chapter). The 'Bayreuth' piece aspires to deconstruct the usual opposition of artifact and environment. Her letters to Vanessa bemoan her lot, fallen in with specialist public, and private masculinist, audiences. But in practice Woolf adopts her limitations as keenly as she feels them, becoming the consummate spectator. This releases comic force, replenishing that still greater vantage, the spectatorial power of humour which, away from those overly earnest technicians, relishes its liberation into wider vistas. As for Wagner himself, Woolf probably found him a grandly ridiculous, gifted buffoon. His ideal audience was effectively some vast, collective Cosima; and his heroic quest for the grail of an all-encompassing art work, which is exclusive to himself, might have been the stuff of oxymoron. She may thus have anticipated, or at least she would have understood, Steiner's allusion to 'the "totalitarian" aspirations of Wagner'.[11] These aspirations, in their widest social effect, would come to a head precisely as Woolf was moving towards more explicitly dramatic modes; but that is a point to return to.

If Woolf, too, is looking for inclusive form, and for an audience which would value this, she yet demands no Wagnerian reverence. Instead, she offers an inviting textual erotics. Active lyricism is ingrafted with a narratively spectatorial posture, both implying a dramatic awareness. There are, as time goes on, sufficient problems. Her earlier fictions imagine a reader who is a given kind of onlooker, an imagining reader. Later, attempts will recur to enlist readerly and writerly solitude in the structuring of a larger, ever more magnanimous dramaturgy. None of these secretive fictions is discontent with its own privacy; yet all are outward-bound. From the stock or received poetising of The Voyage Out, to the completely absent poem in Orlando, the concern in various ways is with what to 'do' for readers. Verbal play (particularly the punning of formal experiments) presents surfaces, much as the drama, in its use of token, offers to our view interactive exteriors.

II

Woolf's sense of the delicacy of staging texts for audiences is inscribed in her reflections upon Henry James, upon Congreve, and upon the Renaissance drama. To take these in turn, beginning with the more contemporary: the case of James showed how excluding the audience, even if thought to be compatible with a writer's need for securely literary art, disabled that same literariness as dramatic form. To 'retrieve the failure' of The Bostonians and The Princess Cassamassima, James strove 'strenuously, and ... disastrously, for success upon the stage'. After this fiasco, one might detect in the middle and later James traits prefiguring Woolf's own. James's fictive interaction with the drama was intense. Leon Edel has said of it:

> he was equating drama and fiction ... The effect of this method on his later work was extraordinary, for in applying his drama-working methods to the novel he gave to his fiction the qualities of the play ... The theatre had taught him rigid economy and how to allow a situation to unfold without the intervention of the narrator; how to obtain intensity from a given situation by extracting all the elements of drama it contained.

James's experiments with voice therefore hope to intensify the reading-experience.[12] There is much attention to scenic structure and to unsupported dialogue. Action increasingly approximates to ever purer spectacle; and some female sensibility is at times the controlling intelligence. For example, James had particular reasons for giving, in What Maisie Knew, a central female intelligence. He wanted a sensibility fitted to abide the muddle: 'little boys are never so "present," the sensibility of the female young is indubitably, for early youth, the greater, and my plan would call, on the part of my protagonist, for "no end" of sensibility'. Maisie herself sees through, and in, that moral muddle which, though a '*constant* force', 'has often in fact a broad and rich comicality'.[13]

However, it must be said that the expatriate man's spectatorship is not, in Woolf's view, quite the same as the disadvantaged woman's. What is more, James practises a rather thorough exclusion of his readers:

> A spectator, alert, aloof, endlessly interested, endlessly observant, Henry James undoubtedly was; but as obviously, though not so simply, the long drawn process of adjustment and preparation was from the first to last controlled and manipulated by a purpose.

The all-manipulating purpose is reminiscent of Wagner; but those wishing to inquire into it are 'blandly waved outside'. The reader's solitude, which is enforced, proves parallel to - and so unable ever to meet - that profound writerly aloneness. Seceding from society to compose, his mind from pleasure less withdrawing into its happiness, James draws Woolf's 'momentary malice. The seclusion is so deliberate; the exclusion so complete. All within the sanctuary is so prosperous and smooth'. This pure privacy damaged his critical voice: 'now and then we are warned by something exacting and even acid in its tone that the effects of seclusion are not altogether benign'. Woolf ought to know: her own acidities grow from exclusion. To be just to him (she says), those cutting tones form 'the apex of a formidable body of criticism'; but the malice and injustice are put on record anyway. Mock-religious metaphors continue the satire of her sneer at Wagner's audiences. Her mockery of James takes up a religious rhetoric common in early modernist formulations. Joyce's 'epiphanies' are an obvious example. In the present context, James's 'divine principle of the Scenario' is more to the point.[14] Woolf is able to work such images and nuances, dear to James, for all they are worth:

> there remained something incommunicable ... as if ... it was not to us that he turned, nor from us that he received, nor into our hands that he placed his offerings.

What she calls 'the final seal ... of artistic form' sanctifies 'the object thus consecrated'. We are to receive from this priest what he has first made holy; but we will find that it is not to us that the gift is made. Yet if not to ourselves, then (to cite the concerns of Clarissa Dalloway and Rhoda) 'to whom?'[15] In answer, Woolf hears how, 'at midnight ... alone on the threshold of creation, Henry James speaks aloud to himself'. This dramatised being senses the numinous nearness, the parousia as it were, of his 'poor blest old genius', and 'bend/s his/ lips to passionately, in /his/ gratitude, kiss its hands'. Woolf, having taken his confession, adds,

> So that is why, perhaps, as life swings and clangs, booms and reverberates, we have the sense of an altar of service, of sacrifice, to which, as we pass out, we bend the knee.

The 'service' is, emphatically, not to James's readers, but to that presiding spirit brooding on the face of the waters, namely his genius.

Jamesian literary art, it seems, is liturgical in feeling. We may concede, following from this, that like all liturgy it asks for some audience participation; but we must also remember that, again like all liturgy, exact response is prestructured by scripted form. We will have to do our part by this sacerdotal text, and it must be a reverential part, for it does not regard us as equals, but as laity. Woolf does not despise the Jamesian text's commitment, but neither can she find it in her to be simply the contented spectator of these 'manipulations', or of this 'dictated style'.[16] James's need to ordain our response came of his theatrical failure as the source of novelistic dramaturgy. In Woolf's own praxis, the audience is not told to keep its lay distance. The life she would like to portray swarms when, 'stepping from the cathedral dusk, the growl and boom of the organ still in the ears, and the eyes still shaded', one makes to 'breast the stir of the street'. James is prickly with freethinkers ('How, Henry James may be heard grimly asking, dare you pronounce any opinion whatever upon me?'), but it does not deter Woolf. She gives Wagnerian and Jamesian solemnity their due, a genuflection on the way out. Her instinct about James is accurate enough. James's feeling about audiences and readerships shows in a letter to his publisher William Heinemann, quoted by Edel: 'Forget not that you write for the stupid - that is, that your maximum of refinement must meet the minimum of intelligence of the audience - the intelligence, in other words, of the biggest ass it may conceivably contain'. This judgement is also expressed in other places, for instance in the Preface to The Awkward Age, where he talks of 'the clearness required by the infantine intelligence of any public consenting to see a play'. The Preface to Daisy Miller, too, refers to 'the original grossness of readers'. After explaining how theme is intimated in the interstices of scenic construction, how value is a function of scenic contrasts and synergies, James concludes his Preface to What Maisie Knew with a gesture of resignation over this apologia: 'I shouldn't really go on as if this /fineness of appreciation/ were the case with many readers'.[17]

The relative privileging of text through a marginalising of the audience long predates James, however. Woolf appreciates the 'superb hard English' Congreve wrote, and finds 'exhilaration in reading these masterpieces' (emphasis added).[18] This pleasure informs her late essay 'Congreve's Comedies'. Here, however, she is interested not only in Congreve as reading-experience, but in his disdain for the public:

> The last play held more than any audience could grasp at a single sitting. The bodily presence of actors and actresses must, it would seem, often overpower the words that they had to speak ... He had written, as he says in the dedication, for 'the Few', and 'but little of it was prepar'd for that general taste which seems now to be predominant in the palates of our audience.' He had come to despise his public, and it was time therefore either to write differently or to leave off.

Congreve's superb English was not written so that players and general audiences could share its power. He abandoned writing; and Love for Love remained - as reading.[19]

It is not that Woolf cannot, herself, be withering about audiences (she describes 'the savages of the twentieth century watching the pictures').[20] But she is finally less wary than Congreve of popular taste. Hence she is interested in the audience of the comedienne Marie Lloyd - as was Eliot, who would go on consciously to attempt the restoration of verse drama, and to express his poetic personae more literally as onstage characters. Eliot praised Lloyd for 'giving expression to the life of /her/ audience', and for 'her understanding of the people and sympathy with them'. He also associated the decline of music-hall with the advent of the cinema, a form which did not require 'that collaboration of the audience with the artist which is necessary in all art and most obviously in dramatic art'.[21] Lloyd's audience, says Woolf, is 'much closer to drink & beating & prison than any of us', her act being pitched appropriately.[22] Nevertheless, the drama is not music-hall, nor inert spectacle flickering onscreen. It is text, and may, obviously, be known as literature. Scripts could even work best as such, although novels aspiring to the drama's state could easily end up talking to themselves.

To trace further Woolf's engagement with dramatic literature: it is both good and bad, she thinks, that 'half the work of the dramatist ... was done in the Elizabethan age by the public'. Ellen Hawkes has described Woolf's reading notes for the period 1909-1911, showing her intense interaction with Shakespeare's women characters. Of course, this is framed by Woolf's vivid assimilation of Renaissance drama as a whole.[23] Unlike Wagner's, the Renaissance audience does cheer and hiss. Its drama could not be less like 'the deliberate drama of the Victorian age' which 'has for audience ticking clocks and rows of classics bound in half morocco' - a censure wide enough to catch in its sweep the theatrical James, and suggesting, incidentally, that a culture which has built 'acting' into its mores is not best situated to produce a vital dramatic art. The pervasiveness of nineteenth-century aspirations to drama draws this comment from Steiner: 'We can hardly refer to a poet or novelist of the nineteenth century without finding somewhere in his actual writings or intent the image of drama'. (Steiner's 'actual' is good here, though unintentional.) Muriel Bradbrook has exactly the same impression: 'During the nineteenth century ... few writers realised that a novel in dialogue was not a drama'. [24] This, despite the dramatic poverty noticed by Woolf, suggests a whole period's pressure towards the one form which could tell it what it was, the rise of the novel notwithstanding. For what it was, was a bourgeois culture given to 'acting', to putting on an act in the manners of daily life. It could not let itself go sufficiently, to act convincingly onstage; yet its writers could sense what had absented itself from their imaginative worlds, and they yearned after it. Precisely the moral relaxation of the post-Victorian period leads Woolf to want drama - the drama, at that, of an age still unsullied by the institutionalisation of puritanism. This powerfully reinforces her existential and gender motivation, which will be explored in due course.

However, Renaissance and Victorian dramas do share one feature, whatever their evident differences. They both produce peculiar boredoms: the one, of violent excess, the other, of tedium. Renaissance audiences demanded (and mostly got) endlessly sensational complexities of plot quite at odds with any depth of characterisation:

> the greatest infliction that Elizabethan drama puts upon us /is/ the plot ... Nobody can fail to remember the plot of the Antigone, because what happens is so closely bound up with the emotions of the actors /she means the personae/ that we remember the people and the plot at one and the same time. But who can tell us what happens in The White Devil, or the Maid's Tragedy, except by remembering the story apart from the emotions which it has aroused? ... Outside Shakespeare and perhaps Ben Jonson /and this last mention is an indicator of Woolf's flexibility as to what constitutes characterisation/, there are no characters in Elizabethan drama, only violences whom we know so little that we can scarcely care what becomes of them. (Emphasis added)

For Woolf, Greek tragedy is still genuinely classical, then, but the Shakespearean and Jonsonian drama receive honourable mention. As to the seduction of dramatic 'violences' for the Wagnerian nineteen-thirties, this will be elaborated in the final chapter. Meanwhile, that idiomatic fusion of parts with actors noted above is worth bearing in mind. So is the way in which carelessness tends to beget carelessness. Woolf can call Ford's Annabella an 'English girl' despite her being (in 'Tis Pity She's A Whore) a typical stage Italian. In trying to think-through, and make sense of, the Renaissance clamour for ever more complication, Woolf's attention to Ford's anti-heroine as existing on her own literary terms is distracted. But that was precisely the argument's whole point, which Woolf unwittingly instantiates.

Revealingly, Woolf is not to be found 'ruling off one form of literature or decreeing its inferiority to others': egalitarian as the statement is, it discloses the bias towards the literary. In an apt conceit, therefore, we are ourselves Renaissance script, for that period's drama 'will not suffer itself to be read passively, but takes us and reads us'. In so doing, it 'splits us into two parts as we read'. The whole assumption here is that one reads that drama. We become, on so acting as readers, partisan spectators for or against: we spectate between the acts, and act between our more passive moments of spectation. It is a far different experience, this, from the Jamesian reader's enforced solitude and passive onlooking. What spectators tended to think of James's productions is summed up by Edel in these words:

> He laboured for three years over his [definitive] edition and, when it had been completed and was appearing volume after volume, he learned that it was having an extremely limited sale. He had offered the world his lifetime of work, or what he deemed to be the quintessential portion of it, only to discover once again, and for the last time, that he remained unread.

By contrast, the emergence of a Woolf readership continued to gather speed during her lifetime, and with each book.[25] James paid the price for absolute attention to form as against audience. How though, is one supposed to read Renaissance drama? Woolf advises:

> hear words as they are laughed and shouted, not as they are printed in black letters on the page, see before your eyes the changing faces and living bodies of men and women - put yourself, in short, into a different but not more elementary stage of your reading development and then the true merits of Elizabethan drama will assert themselves. The power of the whole is undeniable.

Once more, one cannot help noticing that the Renaissance drama's 'true merits' are accessible to a reader who has not seen the plays. It is an ancient contention. For Aristotle, the test of mythic force is one's experience of pity, terror, and catharsis merely upon hearing the essentials of the mythos.[26] Woolf adds: 'Theirs, too, is the word-coining genius, as if thought plunged into a sea of words and came up dripping'. The sheer importance of diction to Renaissance drama is summarised and given confirmation by Bradbrook, who says,

> The essential structure of Elizabethan drama lies not in the narrative or the characters but in the words ... Through their unique interest in word play and word patterns of all kinds the Elizabethans were especially fitted to build their drama on words.

This is helpful to an understanding of Woolf's prose lyricism, which in part appropriates an older dramaturgy through abolishing the decorous verse-prose distinction that separated the elevated from the nugatory, and tragedy from comedy. James, too, had mocked 'so minor a distinction, in the fields of light, as that between verse and prose'.[27] Woolf does not say so, but any reader split in two by the script with its vast verbal resorts, might detect a consonant logic in all this word-coining, if by that broad term Woolf means to include lexical play in general, and therefore punning. One needs to be as much audience as reader, to key oneself into unhierarchised, lateral reading modes, to see and hear, and (no doubt) cheer and hiss. Extending this metaphor, one is to become immersed in the script's lexical behaviour. And Woolf, in discussing Renaissance drama, has never far from mind some literary form 'yet to be devised'.

It is not as though she idealises that drama, let it be noted. Great artists are 'above the shifting scenery ... above life'; but if Congreve and James thought themselves rather too far above it, others there are who, on the contrary, are not spectatorial enough. Elizabethan drama responds to a false communality which reinforces its push for society. Steiner concedes: 'the Shakespearean audience seems to have constituted a community', which 'made it possible for the dramatist to rely on a common body of imaginative response'. This would be fine, if the response were always in fact imaginative. But, he goes on to admit, this same audience 'had within itself no quality of silence'. [28] This is also Woolf's point: if there is no genuine solitude, there can be no true community. For what this drama denies is,

> solitude. There is no privacy here. Always the door opens and someone comes in. All is shared, made visible, audible, dramatic. Meanwhile, as if tired with company, the mind steals off to muse in solitude; to think, not to act; to comment, not to share; to explore its own darkness, not the bright-lit-up surfaces of others.

The pejorative 'dramatic' puts us on notice, here, that Woolf's desire for dramatic modes is not all-out or uncritical: the drama is tolerable if it respects one's solitude or privacy. Deprived of this, because forced into total engagement solely on the script's terms, the mind withdraws into its dark happiness - not in any formal intervals between acts, but between acts onstage. This loud drama, which gorges itself on the outcry for sensation, has not the faith to return any less. The mind will accordingly abandon acting for thinking - also a danger for the literary form 'yet to be devised'.

How shall an audience be coerced into society it does not want? It must be offered space which is not insisted upon. Readers' minds may not be brought, officiously, into wordy community with the writer.[29]

The mind in need of solitude could be peculiarly alive to the falseness of some kinds of community wishing to pass themselves off as the artist's true audience. Society could wear disguises too, and take its own posturing for real. While composing Mrs Dalloway, though, Woolf is aware that 'people scarcely care for each other'.[30] Individual isolation only superficially resembles welcome solitude. It is even dangerous, since, in its aftermath, 'there comes ... the community feeling: all England thinking the same thing - this horror of war - at the same moment'. That was in April,1939. The year following, Woolf is still brooding, with regard to 'our communal feeling':

> I dont like any of the feelings war breeds: patriotic; communal &c, all sentimental & emotional parodies of our true feelings

- these parodies classifiable as 'the communal BBC dictated feeling'. But it was an old, 1918 feeling, this 'horrible sense of community which the war produces'. For, after the Great War's end, 'instead of feeling all day & going home through dark streets that the whole people, willing or not, were concentrated on a single point, one feels now that the whole bunch has burst asunder & flown off with the utmost vigour in different directions. We are once more a nation of individuals'.[31] Neither this isolated individuality, nor this apparent communality, were in truth a healthy solitude or an authentic community. The switch from secular social fragmentation to sudden, scared togetherness is of course no help to anyone, nor to the literary artist's self-definition - as Auden, Spender, Day Lewis, and Isherwood, among others, would find. Such pseudo-communities demanded, and got, action. But it was a delicate matter, how to court, rather than merely appease, such an audience.

Solitude, which Woolf's 1925 essay on Elizabethan plays understands as the privacy which that drama refused to grant, is not simply the absence of society, any more than community will result automatically from everyone's feeling the same at once. If Woolf's sense of these processes was fine, it was meditated upon from early in the century, through the nineteen-twenties, down into the later nineteen-thirties, as noted, and represents a standing interest which could handle Renaissance and Restoration drama, the modern novel, and also Musikdrama, seeking their essential procedures.

Woolf, it was argued earlier, 'acted' in her 'Bayreuth' essay; but the act was true to her original perception. Masquerading for her audience, it is herself she discovers. This overall, strategic honesty can, even so, accommodate some quite comical untruth. The phenomenon appears in her encounter with an unpleasing production of Twelfth Night. Righteously she had once complained to her 1924 diary about Eliot's duplicity over another Renaissance play, namely King Lear:

> we both jeered and despised; & now he comes out in the Criterion with solemn and stately rebuke of those who jeer & despise. I taxed him, lightly with this: he sat tight & said that he meant what he wrote: then what does he mean by what he says? God knows.

One must not do this, it seems, saying one thing in private, another publicly. Eliot is here accused, somewhat puritanically, of putting on an act.[32]

Matters are altered in 1933, after Lydia Lopokova asked Woolf to review her performance in the Shakespeare comedy. This request had the effect of throwing Woolf into a panic. All the other reviews were 'scathing', she admitted to Quentin Bell, pleading: 'what shall I say? ... Pity me'. She confides the nature of her agony to Ottoline Morrell:

> Oh how I hated writing that tough little article! Poor dear Lydia asked me to do it - she attached great value to her acting - and the whole thing was a dismal farce.

Some women should not take to the boards; or at least, their doing so does not guarantee the result.[33] The evasive product of these conflicts is 'Twelfth Night at the Old Vic'.[34] In this review, Woolf retains her unspeakable privacy by hiding between the acts of staging and reading. The review being itself an act (not free from farce, either), its truth is not so much propositional, as aesthetic - proof of the social value of literary acting. It is a masquerade, and only an occasional persona; yet it is not for those reasons any less real.

Should one (Woolf wonders) enjoy Twelfth Night in one's readerly solitude, as punningly productive text; or should one really demand that it be staged, in deference to the fact that it had been written for performance? Staging, she concedes, has its advantages. Once visible and audible, Shakespeare's script changes, revealing 'crevasses and precipices' of wordless implication, such as that 'silent ecstasy of recognition' between Viola and Sebastian, which depends entirely upon producer and players. The actors' task lies in 'solidifying and intensifying our perceptions'. These are, interestingly enough, Jamesian idioms. One example among many would be James's statement that 'intensity' and 'objectivity' are 'the most developed degree of being anyhow thinkable' for Ida Farange and Beale in Maisie.[35] Still, we conserve 'our own' private idea to 'compare' with that of the players. What then are we to do? We should 'read Twelfth Night again' - and this (one assumes) is preferable to seeing Lopokova again (emphasis added). 'The fault', Woolf oozes in exoneration, 'may lie partly with Shakespeare', whose rapid-tongued verbal sleights outstrip the capacity of mortal mouth. One must be fair here, however. Speculating in 1940 or 1941 on Allardyce Nicoll's 1925 work British Drama. An Historical Survey from the Beginnings to the Present Time, Woolf wonders to herself, 'When is the reader born? With Shakespeare?' So her 1933 redemption of Shakespeare through reading need not be thought perforce facile, and may, if one wishes, be taken as read.[36] For players frequently become 'too highly charged with individuality', she says, to give us more than a collage of 'very brilliant fragments'. How then _could_ Lopokova (that brilliant fragment) be reasonably expected to afford 'the sense of all things conspiring and combining together which may be the satisfying culmination of a less brilliant performance'? This is hypocrisy: Woolf falsely compares possible performances. Her comparison of reading with staging has longer-term truth. In explaining how the reading mind saves Shakespeare from himself, she can even sound silly, but not in the broader, and also propositional, conspectus untrue to her aims:

> The mind in reading spins a web from scene to scene, compounds a background from apples falling, and the toll of a church bell, and an owl's fantastic flight which keeps the play together.

Because of Lopokova's brilliance, this preciosity intones, 'that continuity was sacrificed'. If one had been freer just to read! In that case, the playwright would have been saved by dropped fruit, a far clang, the foraging of a peckish bird. To laugh at Woolf's sore predicament is not to deny that the point is itself sound: reading the drama as literature may produce more than any theatrical spectatorship could, which is, she rightly says, necessarily a degree more dependent. This proposition is respectable enough, and is no posture.[37]

The valuation of reading over performance reappears in a 1935 letter to Angelica Bell, where, discussing _Murder in the Cathedral_, Woolf even seems willing to deprivilege _The Years_ as script: 'what is so bad' about Eliot's play is,

> the complete break between the acting, the words and the scenery. Thus you lose all feeling of harmony. Why dont you make a play all in one? Thus it is much better to read plays than to see them. I am almost dazed with writing my book; and think it would be better acted. I shall make the end into a play for you to act.

Drama is Woolf's 'end' in more than one sense.[38] But if the play should be read, the novel staged, Barthes notices similar interchanges of drama and non-drama in Baudelaire when he observes: 'It is ... a general fact of creation, this kind of marginal development of the elements of a genre - drama, novel, or poetry - within works which nominally are not made to receive them'. James's own to-ings and fro-ings are described by Edel:

> During /1894/ he made the first note of the theme that was to flower into The Wings of the Dove, conceiving it first ... as a play ... The two plays which saw production during the 1890's never saw publication. Four comedies written during this period which never reached the stage were issued in book form ... a one-act play was converted into a short story; a scenario was converted into a novel; and much later a three-act comedy into a novel.

Both James and Woolf are proof of Barthes' point.[39]

Eliot's play is again murdered (as James's cathedral had been) in a letter to Julian Bell:

> We went to Toms play, the Murder ... What was odd was how much better it reads than acts ... we went two nights ago /to Romeo and Juliet/; and how it curled up Toms Cathedral, and dropped it down the W.C.! Do you appreciate Shakespeare?... acting it they spoil the poetry.

These remarks yield perspective on the nonsense about Lopokova.[40] One cannot ascribe literal truth to the particular theatrical judgement of Woolf's Twelfth Night review; but it does reflect her secular jealousy for the literary over the theatrical.

Genre is also fluid in the opposite direction, since Woolf has no objection to acting out in 'public' a scene she is developing in The Years, provided the audience is next to nonexistent, in extremely good mood, and unknown to her:

> Kingsley coming at eleven of our first fine morning & staying till 6 has completely taken away any *power* I may have had over the art of fiction. In order to ensure myself two hours of *silence* & air I went off to Moggery Poke. I passed 2 *really* happy women sitting on the slope of Itford Hill. As they smiled at me, I thought I would act the scene of Eleanor & the builder - went to them & said Did you speak? No they had not spoken. But they were very happy. I then went on. (Emphases added)

Dramatising one's own text in one's own way, arose from rediscovery of that solitude which reverses the ebbing of fictive powers. No stage production could guarantee replenishment of this sort.[41]

III

Apart from the question of whether dramas should be read and not seen, there is a related problem of what it is (and here gender counts) that actresses actually do. Lopokova is enough to make one wonder. How shall one explain Woolf's 1908 enthusiasm over Sarah Bernhardt's memoirs? For she is ready and eager to confess 'unusual interest and excitement', and to own 'an exceptional gratitude and an interest that is more than usually complex'.[42]

The prospect which so stirs Woolf, is that of sounding 'this contrast' between the woman who 'lives before us in many shapes and in many circumstances', and that same woman who sits 'in passive contemplation some little way withdrawn, in an attitude which we must believe to be one of final significance'. The said contrast 'gives meaning to' an actress's most trivial doings, 'additional poignancy' to more stately actions. Towards its own self-definition, this finally-significant 'unseen shape', with its withdrawn posture of passive spectation, will gather deposits, which are the sediment of its many roles, although it is in itself 'complete and distinct from its creations at the same time that it inspires them with life'. Bernhardt promises her memoirs will 'show us what manner of woman this has become'. Woolf finds this kind of prospect sufficiently exciting to make her want to explore, in stories like 'The Journal of Mistress Joan Martyn' (1906) and 'An Unwritten Novel' (1920), or in pieces such as comprise 'Lives of the Obscure' (1924,1923,1919), the contribution of role, token, and the gestural to that knowledge which is assumed in biography, historiography, and fiction. These will be encountered in a later chapter.

This powerful notion of panoramic contemplation is still with Woolf in 1940, when she considers - for the exploration of readers, audiences, and anonymity within community in 'Anon' - 'my mountain top - that persistent vision - as a starting point'. In 1941, too, she plans to 're-enter one of my higher lives'. Her 'higher life /is/ almost entirely the Elizabethan play', she explains to herself; and this is associated with her further memorandum: 'Finished Pointz Hall, the Pageant: the Play - finally Between the Acts this morning'. The posture of spectator accorded with her longstanding assessment of herself as 'fundamentally ... an outsider'. As a corollary, her readership too is at a performance, in what is more than dead metaphor:

> It struck me that one curious feeling is, that the writing 'I', has vanished. No audience. No echo. Thats part of one's death.

Audiences are not there to be passive, but to return the sound of the novel to its writer, modified, as a contribution to authorial reality. As for 'Anon', it may be taken to confirm a profound tendency in Woolf's thinking about dramaturgy in the novel. What the audience does is revealed in the following passage:

> We have lost the sound of the spoken word; all that the sight of the actor's body gives through the eye to the mind. We have lost too the sense of being part of the audience. We miss a thousand shades that the dramatist conveyed by inflection of voice, by gesture, by the placing of the actors' bodies.

Audience-echo makes the writer feel, then, that she is part of a community to which she answers, that her choreographies have found the rhythms of a general truthfulness. [43]

Bernhardt's invisible woman-shape, passively contemplating, of final significance, 'lives before us' as its audience; and it can be surmised that Woolf's 'writing "I"' is its literary analogue, equally in need of echo. This 1908 fervour, therefore, is stimulated by the knowledge that the actress's hidden spectatorship is essentially like Woolf's own female writerly situation. Nor is that situation an easy one. Sometime between 1931 and 1933, Woolf quotes in her journals a passage from Eric Robins' 1932 book Theatre and Friendship. Some Henry James Letters: 'But we had further seen how freedom in the practice of our art, how the bare opportunity to practice it at all, depended, for the actress, on considerations humiliatingly different from those that confronted the actor'.[44] It was a professionalism requiring careful negotiation. Gordon says of Woolf (as she was in 1909), that she 'spoke in her own voice' in her essays and other critical writings, a voice noted for its 'humorous concern'; and that she now 'approached her subject with a kind of attentive passivity'.[45] Woolf's putative 'own voice', however, is audible in the 'Bayreuth' and the 'Twelfth Night' pieces, where we know what she is suppressing. What is really to the point about her voice is that it should be hers in the sense of being the voice she chooses to adopt as role; and we cannot identify her with it, to the extent of forgetting the hidden, accrued woman-shape behind it.

Woolf's 'exceptional gratitude' to Bernhardt, it follows, is the result of her having seen, dramatized, a predicament changed into an aspiration. For a woman whose life must anyway be a series of masquerades, one more might not hurt: it could leave a deposit. The question of interest becomes the female artist behind these roles. The meaning for fiction of any and all theatrical residues comes to matter too:

> Queer, when its so tame after all, a book coming out, why one writes them? How much part does 'coming out' play in the pleasure of writing then? Each one accumulates a little of the fictitious V.W. whom I carry like a mask about the world.

Almost certainly in this diary entry, the 'playing of a part' is dead metaphor. But the way in which books, as they are published, fictionalise their author in the public perception; and that same author's acceptance of this disguise as she moves through life, are redolent of what Bernhardt did as a matter of course.[46]

How though, does a woman like Bernhardt view life? For there is a 'way in which it is natural for an actress ... to see things'. Bernhardt will habitually compress her feeling 'into some gesture perceptible to the eye'. Steiner is pithy on this: drama, he says, 'is language under such high pressure of feeling that the words carry a necessary and immediate connotation of gesture'. This is a useful remark, for it conflates Woolf's notice of Bernhardt's bodily gestures with anticipation of an idea to be developed later in this thesis, namely the notion of phrasal gesture. Eliot's praise of Marie Lloyd had also noted 'the perfect expressiveness of her smallest gestures'. But this is an admiration of gesture in its function as expression, rather than of gesture as compressed character in token.[47] The actress, says Woolf, guesses what is in other minds 'from the same tokens also', knowing them as significant surface. Woolf analyses, and commends, Bernhardt's way of perceiving: the memoirs,

> are clearly the productions of a very literal mind. She will accumulate fact upon fact ... in order to achieve her effect.

This connection of the 'literal' and the 'fact' should be borne in mind, pending later discussion of biography, historiography, and Jacob's Room. Literal-mindedness is in no serious sense a handicap:

> It is for this reason that her gaze is so narrow and so penetrating ... She shows [a capacity] for keen and sceptical vision where character is concerned; she is under no illusions.

Obviously, these traits would be an asset to the literary artist too. Bernhardt had the dyer's hand here: as Barthes says, 'absolute literality ... is the fundamental status of language in the theatre'.[48]

Because of the scepticism accompanying this literality, what the actress does is not to be compared with Ethel Smyth's 'seeing herself, dramatising herself instead of being anything'. Suzanne Raitt tells us that, 'For Virginia, Ethel was a masquerade, something to watch'.[49] But incongruously, Smyth could not in truth see herself the way Bernhardt did, which would have asked for a scepticism Smyth lacked.

Gordon reproachfully attributes literal-mindedness to Woolf as she was in 1906. But as the 1908 comments on Bernhardt suggest, Woolf knew literal-mindedness when she saw it; much admired it; and might well, in emulation, tenaciously pursue gesture and token, insisting on a naive scepticism, which could bring nearer the desired comprehension of character that is under no illusions. Tactical adherence to surfaces could, it is true, produce easy caricature of the kind Gordon says Woolf tossed off; but one should not ignore the faculty of which caricature and characterisation are alike the expressions, nor slight its excitement on being confronted with Bernhardt's thespian secrets. Woolf praises the 'hardness and limitation' of the actress's 'unflinching stare', and one recalls the stares at Bayreuth. Stare for stare, Woolf finds, this contrasts with a general cultural dissipation. Bernhardt will therefore 'sparkle for many generations a sinister and enigmatic message' - which, it is true, may be felt as menacing, but only through its difference from the common inauthenticity. She returns each and every one of the 'innumerable rays' of the audience's Renaissance eye-beams striking her personally. The continuous recoil helps her accrete a self.[50]

In 1940, Woolf mourns:

> No echo comes back. I have no surroundings. I have so little sense of a public ... Those familiar circumvolutions - those standards - which have for so many years given back an echo & so thickened my identity are all wide & wild as the desert now.

At that terrible pitch, we are back with the readership as a 'public' rather than as an audience, as on the other side of private experience rather than as listening or watching with interest. Because there is 'no public to echo back', Woolf dares hope that 'the protecting & reflecting walls ... if violently beaten against, will finally contain me'. Hawkes remarks that 'in Woolf's version of female history, rebellion against feminine stereotypes requires some rather violent acts. Not only acts of homicide /'killing the angel in the house'/ but also smashed crockery /'I should certainly have ... smashed a tea-cup'/ litters the path towards becoming an artist'.[51] This is histrionic over-reading of strong Woolfian metaphor. Yet if Woolf's violences are in reaction to the gross audience, to the public as an accidental pseudo-community, there is indeed a risk that the craving for lurid action (understandable during war) might translate into violent novelistic sensation of just such a kind as to diminish, not only Woolf's characters, but her character.

So it is heartening to read her, late though it is (1941), on Ellen Terry. Occasionally, she believes, 'Nature creates a new part, an original part' differing from any other role. Terry's acting acknowledges, behind numerous personae, 'a self she did not know, a gap she could not fill'. Her motto admits this: '"Why, even I myself ... know little or nothing of my real life"'. In practice, this consciously deep self-ignorance means Terry cannot, after all, just enact 'the stock parts', since it has fallen to her 'to act a new part'. But as to 'which ... of all these /stage/ women /was/ the real Ellen Terry', Woolf's opinion is: 'Ellen Terry is remembered because she was Ellen Terry'. In a dual sense, Terry's acting is self-discovery: it finds out what was never known previously even to the actress, then reveals this finding to an audience. The actress acts herself.[52]

This late perception may not have helped Woolf ultimately, but it was long anticipated, as far back as 1911, in Woolf's review of a memoir of the celebrated French actress 'Rachel', which will receive fuller attention in chapter three. Rachel's 'real life' was also a symbiosis of the unknown, hidden woman along with the various roles she adopted.[53] Woolf likewise remains too sceptical as to what, exactly, constitutes the 'real', to be drawn into glibly acting the stock parts. In a sense it could be said to be the saving of her: a weathervane like Woolf, able unconsciously to take on, chameleon-style, the colouring of the age in this most violent century, and mediumistic in temperament, needs some deeper principle of judgement if she is not to be simply the creature of her milieu. Nevertheless, relation between an artist and the Zeitgeist is, as Orlando says, delicate. Privately, Woolf frets that the audience response which would confirm her artistic selfhood (and she knows of no other) must come through some sort of violence in a violent decade. Her periods of terror and loneliness heightened her sense of 'reality' as 'something abstract' monistically residing in Nature. This vision, whatever it saw in substance, was one of extreme objectivity; might it not become, under unbearable strain, pathological rather than comforting? Conversely, it has enough of salvation in it to save a wiser person, in a pathological period. As for art's violently reflecting real-world violence, this was an old tendency. According to Bradbrook,

> It has always to be remembered [of Renaissance drama] that in real life action was so much more violent, that the kick bestowed upon the patient wife, or a frenzied foaming at the mouth, might only mean that the actor was holding the mirror up to nature.

Despite that drama's loudness and its denial of silence, this mirroring could be curiously passive in the final analysis. Pursuit of a more strenuous contemplation, lyrically realised, might amount, however paradoxically, to a profounder stir of activity. Just such choices are those Woolf is drawn into inner debate with.[54]

The depth of Woolf's Bernhardtesque scepticism cuts surface in a 1937 letter, discussing The Years, to Stephen Spender. She does not, she explains, bring the Great War into that novel,

> partly because I think action generally unreal. Its the thing we do in the dark that is more real.

What we do in the shade is here contrasted with belligerent masculinist action; in keeping with which, and couched in telling terms, she continues:

> the thing we do because peoples eyes are on us seems to me histrionic, small boyish.

This seems to damn acting, but really it does not. It deplores social pressures towards uncongenial role playing. It is one thing to take to the stage, quite another to be forced to perform against one's grain. So, 'women ... have to be more active at parties', for example, 'have to throw themselves into it' (emphasis added).[55] What attraction, Woolf in effect queries, is a grown woman supposed to find in acting small-boyishly? Not that it cannot be done. But will miscasting on that scale deposit anything towards a creative shape? She begs to differ. Concerning this inversion of the Renaissance boy player with his female roles, and demure as it seems, Woolf's demur is not unreasonable. Lisa Jardine persuasively argues:

> 'Playing the woman's part' - male effeminacy - [was] an act for a male audience's appreciation. When the noble ladies of the drama dress their pages in women's dress in an idle moment, they draw attention to his availability as an object of male erotic attention.

This kind of acting toyed with received fetishes, and entailed 'theatrical representation - not "real" (female) feeling'. Similarly in Woolf's view, for a woman to adopt aggressively visible modes of action was, however undisguised her literal sex, further to ensconce the usual objects of male fetish. Maria DiBattista makes the obvious cross-reference: 'Orlando's mischievous first line ... is conventionally allied to the transvestitism common to Shakespearean comic romances'.[56] The difference between voluntary female acting, and little-boy histrionics will be worth recalling when, later, Three Guineas is considered.

The Great War is not in The Years, Woolf tells Spender, simply because 'fighting isnt within my experience, as a woman'. Yet fighting, or some not dissimilar mode of action, was increasingly within the experience of that wider readership Woolf is hoping to gain:

> in the Years I wanted to catch the general readers attention: perhaps I did this too much.

Unwilling to seem to endorse the popular craving for immature male action (implying as it would that such action is somehow definitive), Woolf wants her more popular audience and knows very well that, to attain it, she will have to offer what approximates ever more closely to action and spectacle.[57] It becomes for her a matter of finding ways in which to present surface, gesture, token, all sorts of evidential exteriors - but emphatically not in praise of the masculinist histrionic style with its incapacity for secrecy, and its denial of solitude. The real Bernhardt or Terry are not identifiable with roles and actions in the way that, say, so many of Conrad's creatures only become real, resolved fully, essentially revealed, in their acts or failures to act. Living behind their postures, the actresses inform these; though this is never exhaustive, even when acting is self discovery. The problem for The Years is how to engage a general readership in the life which hides between acts. The novel is itself a public enactment which tends to the dramatic, and needs to act-out, in open view, enough to induce awareness of the 'writing "I"' animating its voluntarily adopted parts - of what it is, in short, that is dramatising and being dramatised. It will never be able to concentrate like Bernhardt, or ever be able to return all of the readers' eye-beams, unless it holds this something in reserve, unless it shows respect for its own, and their, solitude.

IV

Woolf's familiarity with the concept of verse drama is such that she can - as, for instance, in following the common usage by calling Aristotle a theorist of poetry - speak of drama and poetry in the one breath. She explores this genre in her 1927 lecture-performance 'The Narrow Bridge of Art'.[58] It was intended for (even jocular) delivery to undergraduates: 'I am excited about my article on Poetry & Fiction. Writing for an audience always stirs me. I hope to avoid too many jokes'. (Emphasis added)[59]

If it should seem from Woolf's initial approach that she will in fact lecture on poetry as having been crippled by contemporary inability to believe, her theme turns out to be poetic drama. Individualism, and the loss of communal feeling, have meant the forfeiture of all social sensation. Isolated psyches may well be aware of everything, but still they are not in possession of clear emotions. Poetry has now lost its older contact with a common life that had long been passing away. The 'modern poetic play' cannot help, for it is too 'afraid of the present' (the usual realm of dramatic immediacy), and it worries fastidiously over 'the poetic decencies'. As Eliot would have agreed, there is no Renaissance 'attitude' which unifies experience, and so poetics is not confident. Byron's Don Juan had pioneered useful formal elasticity, with due speed and dash, but nobody is following this example (though Auden does go on to attempt it in his Letters from Iceland, co-written with Louis MacNeice). So it is that 'we remain without a poetic play', she says - a 'form' which once sprang from the mere presence of a 'general shaping power'. Since by 1927 verse drama is, by way of contrast, stilted, self-conscious, and uneasy, there are 'grave doubts that any force on earth [can] now revive' a genre so terminally unfitted to address the life of common readers.

However, a younger form awaits, to assimilate poetry, especially as exampled in weak verse drama. The latter's resources might hybridise with this newer form:

> it is possible that there will be among the so-called novels one which we shall scarcely know how to christen. It will be written in prose, but in prose which has many of the characteristics of poetry. It will have something of the exaltation of poetry, but much of the ordinariness of prose. It will be dramatic, and yet not a play. It will be read, not acted ... it ... may serve to express some of those feelings which seem at the moment to be balked by poetry pure and simple and to find the drama equally inhospitable to them. (Emphasis added)

The purposes of any future poetic dramatist turn on the question, 'can prose be dramatic?' Woolf admits, 'it is obvious ... that Shaw and Ibsen have used prose dramatically with the highest success'. But she qualifies her praise in saying that 'they have been faithful to the dramatic form'. Indeed they had. And why should they not? Because,

> This form is not the one which the poetic dramatist of the future will find fit for his needs. A prose play is too rigid, too limited, too emphatic for his purposes. It lets slip between its meshes half the things that he wants to say.

The future artist is still called, here, a poetic dramatist. But both verse drama and the prose play are ruled out as formally useless for what he wants to say. In retaining the description of this literary artist as a poetic dramatist, Woolf therefore means to foreground the importance, to the proposed form, of a dramatic lyricism. She also goes on to imply that dialogue in the novel entails acute audience-awareness. Keir Elam confirms the importance to drama of dialogue, saying, 'the dialogic exchange ... does not merely ... refer deictically to the dramatic action but directly constitutes it'.[60] Woolf's novelist wants dialogue, then, because he currently,

> cannot compress into dialogue all the comment, all the analysis, all the richness that he wants to give. Yet he covets the explosive emotional effect of the drama; he wants to draw blood from his readers, and not merely to stroke and tickle their intellectual susceptibilities

- somewhat as James might be thought to have done. To recast Woolf's point in Elam's terms, the future artist wants a dialogue that will directly constitute the dramatic action wherever it occurs. Woolf also wants this to be environed within a dramatising prose lyricism. Her language is violent, if theoretical. In reality, there might be most compelling reasons, as she entered the decade of Hitler, Abyssinia, Spain, Three Guineas, and the Second World War, to abandon this rhetoric of blood and explosion, and find other ways of thinking about how to render novels dramatic. Indeed, the future form is in many respects 'exacting'. Woolf invokes in its interest 'the generalizing and simplifying power of a strict and logical imagination', and, ethically, 'courage'.[61]

These strategic thoughts are the same as underlie that comic debacle over Lopokova. Woolf asks Vita Sackville-West in 1929:

> How could they go on with poetic plays after Shakespeare? It is one brain, after all, literature; and it wants change and relief. The text book writers cut it up all wrong ... Literature is all one brain.

Genre, then, is only change and relief.[62] As the nineteen-twenties closed, that brain had long since had quite enough of verse drama, and Eliot's grey matter could certainly not turn the process, given Woolf's 'doubt that Tom has enough of a body & brain to bring off a whole play' anyway. For herself, though,

> The Pargiters ... is very interesting to write out ... My idea is to ... contrast the scenes; very intense, less so: then drama; then narrative. Keeping a kind of swing & rhythm through them all.

What Eliot is insufficiently embodied to do, Woolf will incorporate in the novel's body of utterance.[63] Eliot she calls 'a lyric not a dramatic ... hes not a dramatist. A monologist'. This may be compared with another remark about James: 'His genius was dramatic, not lyric'.[64] Obviously, the prose lyricism which moves towards distillation in The Waves attempts fusion of the lyric and dramatic, of a kind and on a scale unachieved by James and Eliot. Strict generic separation was at any rate not to be binding on The Years: 'rather think it tends to a play'; 'It tends more & more, I think ... to drama'; 'I am now almost within sight of the end, racing along: becoming more & more dramatic'. And although Eliot, that authoritative male artist, could inhibit and distract, he was not in the event to be a hindrance:

> Reflections on Tom week end: that /The Years/ is too long. Cant write. That he is more masterly ... that he means to write modern verse plays: that he is self confident ... I'm very fond of Tom, & at last not much knocked off my perch by him. That is, not as I was when he came here & I was writing Jacob's Room. Now he cant much disturb The Years, though he makes me feel that I want to write a play.

This is notice of Woolf's desire to assimilate Eliot's apparent forte to her own narrative purposes, and also of her sometime nervousness that The Years might not be worth attempting at all, if the masterly Eliot really did start to bring out successful verse dramas.[65]

By 1938 Woolf is referring to her projected work, Between the Acts, as 'my Play (Pointz Hall is to become in the end a play)'. But she is anxious about its audience: 'it wont please anyone, if anyone should ever read it'. If there was concern that The Years might prove rather 'too long', it still showed Woolf how to 'use all kinds of "forms" in one book'. Length was not to be a problem for 'the next' (a reason for the contrasting length and brevity of The Years and Between the Acts will be suggested in the next chapter). That next novel,

> might be poem, reality, comedy, play. narrative; psychology, all in one. Very short. This needs thinking over.

One may ask, with the help of some extracts from diaries and from letters, how the novel can be thought to embody a precedent verse drama? One also queries what is meant by 'reality' in the quotation given above. In the case of Terry's and Felix's 'real life', and of the objective 'reality' anonymously but comprehendingly resident in Nature and to which one belonged, the real could seem inward. The Spender letter definitely called masculinist 'action' 'generally unreal', that which is 'more real' being unobserved, in the dark. But 'reality' in the passage above seems entirely of the surface. Woolf does not ultimately privilege or valorise inwardness over and against externality, as though inwardness were the truest reality.

That would be false to her scepticism, and, not least, false to the truth of acting.[66]

Woolf tells Hugh Walpole in 1932: 'one of the things I want to write about one day is the Shakespearean talk in Scott: the dialogues: surely that is the last appearance in England of the blank verse of Falstaff and so on! We have lost the art of the poetic speech'. She here concentrates on discursive rather than spatial dramatic acts, and novelistic dialogue is seen as a vestige of the Renaissance verse drama's lyric address. The idea is fecund, and so she expands upon it to George Rylands in 1934, in a passage which requires quotation at length:

> My feeling, as a novelist, is that when you make a character speak directly you're in a different state of mind from that in which you describe him indirectly: more 'possessed', less self conscious, more random, and rather excited by the sense of his character and your audience.
> I think the great Victorians, Scott (no - he wasn't a Vn.) but Dickens, Trollope, to some extent Hardy all had this sense of an audience and created their characters mainly through dialogue. Then I think the novelist became aware of something that can't be said by the character himself; and also lost the sense of an audience. (I've a vague feeling that the play persisted in the novelist's mind, long after it was dead - but this may be fantastic: only as you say novelists are fantastic.)
> Middlemarch I should say is the transition novel: Mr Brooke done directly by dialogue: Dorothea indirectly. Hence its great interest - the first modern novel. Henry James of course receded further and further from the spoken word, and finally I think only used dialogue when he wanted a very high light.
> Perhaps we must now put our toes to the ground again and get back to the spoken word ... I wish you'd read the hated Antiquary and see whether you can't discover the last relics of Shakespeare's soliloquies in some of the old peasants speeches.

The indeterminacy of this very broad theorising is caution against attributing any programme to Woolf; but the movement is towards a greater inscription of phonocentrism, for dramatic purposes.[67] The approach owes something to Aristotle, in that the writer having a true sense of audience is thought to mime in her own person the characters to be created (one may recall that earlier idiom which fused actors with personae). To those ends, the artist is expected to be more literal and concentrated of mind. Aristotle recommended, for tragic composition, the tragedian's 'seeing everything in the clearest light as though he were actually present when the events happened ... for the most persuasive poets are those who have the same natures as their characters and enter into their sufferings'. Woolf's first-quoted paragraph to Rylands is almost a pericope of Aristotelian mimesis, with her 'something that can't be said by the character himself' amounting to choric narration, and her 'rather excited' genteelly proximal to the famed afflatus of divine madness. James likewise thought prose fiction should 'lend itself to *vivâ-voce* treatment' under 'pressure of the attention articulately *sounded*' - though Woolf denies him practical success here, considering him to have 'receded further and further' from the ground under him. For if 'the spoken word' is 'the ground' beneath literary art, one would want to put, if not one's feet, at least one's 'toes' upon it, so as not to float away from literature's ancestral basis. When composing *The Waves*, therefore, Woolf proposes to herself to 'go on pegging it down, arduously, & then re-write, reading much of it aloud, like poetry'.[68] Against Hemingway, Woolf argues in 1927:

> when fictitious people are allowed to speak it must be because they have something so important to say that it stimulates the reader to do rather more than his share of the work of creation.

If the novelist cannot be as self-forgetful as this, he will to that degree lose his sense of the audience of sharers with whom he is in provisional community.[69] James distrusted the stage-delivered word after his theatrical failure, Woolf sees, and so retreated into those rare and exclusive dialogues which talk in the one idiolect. The modern novel, starting with George Eliot, must, Woolf thinks, avoid this alienation from the drama. Its essential contemporaneity is *linked* to a major incorporation of audience-oriented 'speech', so that James's modernity is more canonical than real. Post-Renaissance, there is little point in expecting anything of verse drama; but the novel admits no formal bounds. Brenda Silver concisely says:

> For Woolf, literature resides not just in the written word but in the presence of the living men and women who hear or see or read a work when it first appears, and who later keep it alive through *the act of reading* ... In fact, literature for Woolf was almost always "spoken" ... The reader, she declared in 1941, "acts the play in the theatre of his own brain." (Emphasis added)

For the next chapter's argument, it will be useful, though, to draw a distinction of 'the act' from plural 'acts' of reading, the better to think about what happens *between* such acts.[70]

The idea that novelistic characterisation owes something to an antecedent text-based literary-dramatic tradition, a debt which shows in the very desire for dialogue in the first place, is intriguing. S.W. Dawson has arrived at a similar interpretation:

> The novel was the irregular offspring of the essay and the drama, and the nineteenth-century in particular owes more to Shakespeare and the Greek tragedians than has ever been fully acknowledged ... it is not a quibble to say that the novel is not a narrative form with dramatic moments, but a dramatic form within a narrative framework.

Nor is it a quibble to say, in live metaphor, that major writers have a sense not so much of a readership or of a public, as of an audience.[71] A female writer, using something like mixed media, is taken by Woolf for the shape of things to come. The novels Woolf wrote subsequent to these 1934 speculations might profitably be read in their light.

In that same year, Woolf enters in her diary what amount to still more radical proposals about novelistic dramaturgy:

> An idea about Sh[akespea]re
> That the play *demands* coming to the surface - hence *insists* upon a reality wh. the novel need not have, but perhaps should have. *Contact with the surface. Coming to the top*. This is working out my theory of the different levels in writing, & how to combine them: for I begin to think the combination *necessary*. This particular relation with the surface is *imposed* on the dramatist *of necessity*: how far did it influence Shre? Idea that one cd work out a theory of fiction &c on these lines: how many levels attempted. Whether kept to or not. (Emphases added)

Three years later, to Spender, it is histrionic masculinist action which seems unreal to Woolf, rather than the superficiality of theatrical roles, which is a 'necessity'. Here, 'reality' inhabits 'the top'. The fin must rise, cut, and dip, if the spectator is to remember that depth must surface somehow and become visible. These formulations, however, are merely beginning to find a theoretical language for something towards which Woolf had long felt. Between 1909, when she is herself a creature of the surface, and 1934, when she theorises like this about superficiality, a single, if inchoate, preoccupation is discernible in Woolf's wish to render fictionally meaningful the outwardness, and the privacy, of the female life. Her notion of the 'real' is not situated exclusively either with the idea of depth and darkness, or with the exterior that can be seen in public. Eric Warner believes that, in 1927, Woolf is to be found 'suddenly reach/ing/ out to dramatic form' with 'the new idea of merging a novel and a play'. Prior to that date, he concedes, nevertheless, that her characters' inner lives had been 'effectively dramatized'. Indeed, he cites Hermione Lee on 'the dramatic tension Woolf had achieved' before The Waves, and mentions, too, 'the dramatic intensity of her former work'. Hence either Warner's rhetoric, or his substantive argument, require modifying: Woolf's desire to absorb dramatic form into her fictions long predates 1927, and one must not mistake any sudden idea, just because it is newly formalised, for something genuinely new.[72] The same could be said of her remarks in apparent definition of the 'real'. They are late, but typical; and their oscillation of inner and outer has long been implicit. The strong verbs in the diary passage quoted above do, however, speak of struggle and manoeuvre, and the dramatic form is conceived as imperious in its limitation. Some ground must be cleared for fiction between its usual modes, and the drama's imposing demands. Dramatic form easily makes its force felt. But the crucial question of writerly and readerly liberty is left open: there is, she implies, a choice as to whether this imperative dramatic superficiality should be 'kept to or not'.

It is worth referring more fully to Conrad's preoccupation with external action - with, as Heart of Darkness says, 'the mere incidents of the surface'. Speaking of what the steersman does, Marlow mentions his guiding of the vessel upon the river-water's surface. This resolves him. It is therapeutic, and has salvation in it: 'there was surface-truth enough in those things to save a wiser man'. Action is well-advised superficiality: 'the reality - the reality, I tell you - fades. The inner truth is hidden - luckily, luckily'. Reality or inner truth as 'meaning' is as much of the surface as of the arcane. As the narrator says on behalf of Marlow's approach to the narrating of a fiction: 'the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine'. The diction will bear comparison with Woolf's own in 'Modern Fiction' (1919): 'life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end'. In this formula as in that, the thing itself, whether called 'meaning' or 'life', is outwards, enveloping and surrounding. Meaning is always expressive, and seeks instantiation in actual forms. There it lives, at least as much as inwardly. Literary form must forever be token, then; it must have an expressivistic bias towards the gestural and, broadly, towards the dramatic. Hence Kurtz's crisis: 'I had never imagined /Kurtz/ as doing, you know, but as discoursing ... And I was right, too. A voice. He was very little more than a voice'. Kurtz, a man among men, wants to act but can only talk. It does not save this man who is all discursive form and no acting content. His particular mode of doing will not stand in token of a replenishing solitude, but of desolate interior darkness. The expressiveness is an end to itself. Kurtzian discourse does not do. The reasons for this, as Woolf experienced them, will be analysed in the next chapter.[73]

The Secret Sharer is another good point for reflection, worth some attention for its development of the psychology of action immanent in earlier tales.[74]

This story concerns the captain of a first command who assumes the night watch aboard his ship - and finds Leggatt swimming to oblivion, seeking expiation by swimming or sinking, whom only action can save. Leggatt has murdered a crewman who irritated him during a serious storm, and had been imprisoned on his own ship. He escapes and is heading for the horizon. Before this murder, he arranged the foresail, and arguably saved the crew: Leggatt - killer and saviour - acts on the instant without two thoughts. The captain hides this 'second self' in his own quarters, his 'other self' or 'double', whose existence is secreted at some expense of nervous energy. Of the two selves dramatised, there is a public self hesitant in its situation and potentially active - tentative, neophyte, only theoretically in command of identity and circumstance; and a secret, double self, impetuously mono-visioned, polarised, resolved owing to its failure to reflect, incapable of self doubt. For the public self, the problem is, 'how far I should turn out faithful to that ideal conception of one's own personality every man sets up for himself secretly'. The captain was 'trying to clear /his/ mind of the confused sensation of being in two places at once', because he 'felt dual' in 'the dual working of /his/ mind' needful in order to hide Leggatt from the crew: 'I was constantly watching myself, my secret self, as dependent on my actions as my own personality'.

Leggatt's dependence on the captain's surrogate action creates in the captain the fusion of public and private selves. To give the murderer a chance of escape, he must steer his new ship as close as he dares to land, giving Leggatt a swimming chance: he must rally his own resources, those of a disparate and distrustful crew, and those of the vessel. The action succeeds admirably: a new selfhood appears, shedding all secrecy. Leggatt departs his intolerable privacy. The newly assertive, confident captain is genuinely in charge of self, hands, and boat.

There is another nuance to the captain's still unachieved activity, in the Kurtzian substitution of wording for acting. That 'ideal conception of one's own personality' which he feels drawn to yet unable to realise, is something to speak about, or, so far as it is embodied in Leggatt, to speak to. Had anyone come into the captain's cabin, he would have been 'treated to the uncanny sight of a double captain busy talking in whispers with his other self'. The furtive dialogue is Unheimlich, giving rise to a 'queer sense of whispering to myself', these whisperings related to a man's sanity as evinced in his willingness or ability to act, and to the contrast of reality and fiction:

> Whoever was being driven distracted, it was not he. He was sane. And the proof of his sanity was continued when he took up the whispering again ... 'We are not living in a boy's adventure tale,' I protested. His scornful whispering took me up. 'We aren't indeed! There's nothing of a boy's tale in this'.

Public and secret selves agree that what is occurring is unromantic, not histrionic or small-boyish; but an urgent need for action, unlike the easy melodrama of those narratives that once, perhaps, pleased unformed juvenile tastes. Adult deeds are required. Yet the sanity of this thought, as of that action, are things the captain attributes not to himself but to Leggatt. The prospect subsists in words, and in whispered words at that.

Once the captain has, without too much Hamlet-like indecision, done the necessary and scared his awed crew almost to death in the process, he knows himself unified. The word of command, fused with its intended meaning, results in action. He has achieved parousia: 'Already the ship was drawing ahead. And I was alone with her. Nothing! no one in the world should stand now between us, throwing a shadow on the way of silent knowledge and mute affection, the perfect communion of a seaman with his first command'. This result - the kind of creative/destructive action on the instant hitherto more like Leggatt than the captain - accompanies spiritual states expressed in mute silence, not words, not even in words about actions. The captain's earlier fears were unjustified: 'how afraid I was of ... putting my feeling of identity with the other to the test!' Leggatt-style acts bring to the surface what the captain knew before, that the other man 'was not a bit like me, really'. It is a newly powerful, and unimpetuous, man who tells himself this. Leggatt's brave, saving act, and also the rash murder, were alike pure actions done with no eye to consequences. The captain's act is dangerous and done from secret motives, and more considered. It is proof against glamour, against the fictive whispering of words about deeds; and is the working of a unified, not a polarised, self.

This salvation through the ability to act as surface is, in much of Conrad, a peculiarly male prospect in a man's world. Not women, but men it is who suffer terribly from the thwarting of activity, or from the mistaking of romance for the real. Winnie Verloc in The Secret Agent, Kurtz's 'Intended', Peter Ivanovitch's downtrodden secretary in Under Western Eyes - all these suffer passively from the acts men do or fail to do; but they are not creatures in need of some similar expressivity, which is uniquely a male need, a masculinist crisis. However, the fiction exists. It is a suitably superficial discursive activity in the real world. The texts are narratively active - at Conrad's worst, luridly so. They may seem to marginalise an entire sex. Yet merely by being, they suggest a unifying activity open to the female writer, to whom the virility of real-world action is foreclosed. Conradian 'silence' succeeds refreshing action, where female silence in the real world precedes action, coexisting with comparative inaction. For Leggatt and the captain, there is secret trouble about personal maturity, resolved by adult deeds. For Woolf, precisely such deeds, arising from just that motivation (the need to be seen, and not to be in secret, in the dark), may be histrionic and juvenile. Even the public act of writing, Woolf is aware, will have to see to its own solitude, enveloping and surrounding what it secretly shares.[75]

If then there should seem to be an unease in Woolf's excitable applause for Bernhardt and Terry, it comes from the disturbing shadowing of their voluntary, by most other women's obligatory, role-playing. Their work needs redeeming for and from the mass. Like the younger Virginia, they are able to turn the meaning of their gender situation inside out.

The truth of their acts on the boards lies of course in its externality. But this exteriorness is art, and it clothes the unknown with metaphor. Within the one broad semantic field, it also reveals the existence of other, enforced ways of being external, inimical to the private female self. At the top or surface of that female discourse which constitutes the novel form, as between the characters', or the narrator's, acts, there may subsist a betokening of the secret real. Woolf's leitmotif 'between the acts' persists in letters, in the 'Bayreuth' essay, and across many years to the final novel, where it is not innocent, but calculated. Wagner's operas could survive their intervals, if his egotism produced an illusion sufficiently strong to last across the breaks. The auditorium contained and manipulated; the audience was exclusive. If anything, the nineteen-thirties would remind Woolf not to seek any quasi-Wagnerian control. If a literary Gesamtkunstwerk sited itself between the acts of narrating, where readers must perforce break off to do any number of things, and if it could as it were befriend the irruptive outer world in the creation of a flexible readerly space, nothing like Wagner's compositional egotism would be incumbent on Woolf. She would not be looking for his kind of audience, nor succumbing either to his humourless symbolic grossness. But her fictions are superficial like the drama. Surfaces implying depth, they sport in combination of inner and outer, shifting with audience need and writerly ends, adopting dramatic modes as well as staples. The reading audience becomes conscious of its powers - powers which, earlier in the century, compound exclusions awarded to Woolf. The new genre is inclined to insist upon surface with tenacious literalness of mind. It does not so much masquerade as lively: rather, it acts life. Spectatorial, what it wants of its readers is a productive watchfulness, passively intent and humorous.

SCRIPTING NOVELS

I

Woolf's longstanding, and partisan, interest in appropriating dramaturgy for the novel is evident. As early, even,as 1906 she is to be found complaining of one drama that it,

> was written primarily for the stage, and ... the authors have not considered how crudely their work reads in the paler light of the study.

Forster took exactly an opposite view: 'is it not extraordinary', he asks, 'that plays on the stage are often better than they are in the study?' But even in antiquity, H.C. Baldry points out, 'some new plays, according to Aristotle (Rhetoric III, 12), were written for reading rather than performance'. And Steiner says that Byron's plays Marino Faliero, The Two Foscari, and Sardanapalus 'are what the Germans call Lesedramen, "dramas to be read"'. Woolf's instincts in the matter have credentials as ancient, or as modern, as any other.[1] Some social bases for her interest have been suggested.

That discussion's usefulness emerges more fully when applied to a reading of The Years (1937) and Between the Acts (1941). But this may be prefaced by invoking various stances adopted in Three Guineas (1938), not just because, say, the incident of Crosby's dog Rover migrates from The Years (168,169) to Three Guineas (147), nor because (in another transference) both books find uses for the Antigone of Sophocles (Y 104,105; 3G 94,161) - shared fictive and dramatic concerns. Rather, it is because the 'feminist' polemic (a term with which Woolf seems to have felt little patience) calls woman an outsider, and women a whole society of outsiders (36,37;43;122,123;126; 137).

Outsiders like these have immunity (95;115;155,156), even foreignness (123,124). They wear masks, and are spectators describing 'your /masculinist/ world as it appears to us', to whom the male is,

> not ... a pleasing or an impressive spectacle. He is on the contrary a ridiculous, a barbarous, a displeasing spectacle (74,22,25).

They take, these excluded spectators, a 'bird's-eye view of the outside of things', and observe life 'sidelong from an upper window' (26,71). Not 'by nature more disinterested' than men, they are what they are through their forced uninvolvement in male business (115). Yet (inverting Milton, a male activist forced into inactivity),

> to be passive is to be active; those also serve who remain outside. By making their absence felt their presence becomes desirable.

In this special sense, women are 'not passive spectators' at all (136,163). This critical dissolution of the common action/passivity distinction has consequences for Woolf's fictional apprehensions of tragic pathos. In recent years, H.A. Mason admits to having met 'formidable opposition' to his idea that 'what arouses tragic pity is not the fate of fighters' in wars, so much as 'the fate of those who are war's helpless victims'. Hecuba, not Priam, he thinks, affords 'the right rule for pathos in Tragedy'. Therefore, to engage our empathy, 'Hecuba must howl', he says. The resistance to this notion is 'against allowing passive suffering to be included among the heights of Tragedy'; and Mason feels like conceding this view, in whatever tragic situations allow even a little to be 'done' by the personae. But what of those other cases, he queries, 'where the cue is for passion', yet we are asked to participate 'in the plight of a helpless victim'? This problem, for Woolf, vanishes with her refusal to permit the conventional passive/active polarity: helpless and apparently passive characters (war's helpless victims, thus mostly women and children) can be authentically tragic in bearing, provided (to revert to Mason), 'the focus [is] never ... on the grief expressed ... [and] we ... [are] aware of being moved on ... the movement [being] away from the particular to the general'. If then we accept Three Guineas' redefinition of what constitutes action and non-action, we are drawn into a broader understanding of what can be properly tragic or pathetic in Woolf's fiction. At the very fountainhead of Woolf's major novelistic characters, is Rachel Vinrace, who does nothing, finally suffers for nothing, and is tragic. One might add to Rachel, with varying degrees of passivity or helplessness, the characters of Katharine Hilbery, Mrs Dalloway in the novel of that name, Betty Flanders, Mrs Ramsay, Rhoda, Isa, and others. Woolf's characterisation undoes the older notion of the tragic as a noble but fatally flawed praxis; and this comments, too, on the ancient Aristotelian theory of the drama as 'doing'. Woolf's are dramas of being, narratively and lyrically active.[2]

As social criticism, Three Guineas can seem essentialist: all censorious men (Axis or Allied, as they would become) are alike fascist (61,62;70;107). Woolf also has an inkling, in her opening chapter, of why the bourgeois woman broke from her purdah into the Great War effort - the histrionically belligerent acting of a most uncongenial part, owing to previous repression. On this point, Jane Lilienfeld quotes J.S. Mill:

> Women are schooled into repressing /their aggression/ in /its/ most natural and healthy direction, but the internal principle remains, in a different outward form. An active and energetic mind, if denied liberty, will seek for power; refused the command of itself, it will assert its personality by attempting to control others ... Where liberty cannot be hoped for and power can, power becomes the great object of human desires.

Although this approximates to Woolf's own insight in Three Guineas, it may be noted in passing that, according to Mill, it is the 'active' female mind which, repressed, seeks power and control; and if this bid for dominion represents compromise, and Woolf thinks it does, that may be because of an original, unexamined internalisation of conventional masculinist modes. Doubtless a difference exists between female minds which are active and those which are passive; but Woolfian scepticism would query the criteria for distinguishing them. Michael Holroyd thinks that Bloomsberries had a 'compelling interest in power without the capacity for action', and that this led them inevitably into 'the romantic living of a double life', but not, be it noted, through any 'indoctrinating /of/ political men-of-action'. Perhaps Woolf's humanity is most evident in that real personal impotences, and the absence of certain freedoms, are not transmuted into an urge to power over readers, Woolf not seeking an active mind in that sense. Power to write is attractive to her only in tandem with continuous empowering of the reader. And if in the process Woolf came to seem passive to many readers, then so be it.[3]

Woolf, then, is an outsider, and also an outsider to activist feminism. The female outsiders' society might prevent male action rather than adopt its modality. It might segregate itself from that false community, the audience in the theatre of war:

> For psychology would seem to show that it is far harder for human beings to take action when other people are indifferent and allow them complete freedom of action, than when their actions are made the centre of excited emotion. The small boy struts and trumpets outside the window: implore him to stop; he goes on; say nothing; he stops. (3G 125,126)

The terminology and metaphorising here resemble those of her 1937 letter to Spender. What women have it in them to do, is, to neutralise the male actor by their non-reaction: for he has to have, in order to be able to do anything, his audience. If it cannot cheer and applaud him, he would at least like it to silently watch. Either way, it is not an active audience he wants, but essentially a passive one, being uncritical. Woolf merely suggests that this desired passivity be taken a degree further, into a true, and this time genuinely essential, non-reaction. Her concern with the essential is typically a dramatic concern, in contrast with the belligerent theatricalities being enacted by male-dominated military establishments. What the men are doing is a pure spectacle to the judges of this melodramatic scene with its idiot posturings. And if it is women who are the craved audience, whose assent is desired and taken for granted, then they are the real source of power, being the ones to define action in their capacity as arbiters of the dramatic. The core idea, of course, occurs earlier in A Room of One's Own, where, in the famous mirror metaphor, 'mirrors /women, that is7 are essential to all violent and heroic action'.[4] This illustrates Woolf's whole tendency between her last acts of novel-writing. In judging whether female minds are active or passive, and in deciding whether a passive female audience is or is not an audience at all, the real power of the female spectator is not to be structured or grasped according to the dominant masculinist idea. Three Guineas itself she describes as a 'role in the public eye', for which she would 'dash off scene after scene' of 'the script'. So it is with justice that Catherine Smith observes: 'In Three Guineas, ideas are imaged and dramatised. Mental forms act ... her visionary forms /are7 dramatic'. This acting, which grasps the essential situation by immediate sensitivity to the tokens of social pathology, is polemic and discursive. But again, it is only the manifestation, the gesture, which compresses and distils what has long been inherent in Woolf's thought. Promptly in 1906, Woolf linked male immaturity to (even defensive) belligerent romantic action: 'Jeremy is a boy, & would like to defend us all with his bow & arrows'. Three Guineas, written 'with such violent feelings to relieve ... immense pressure', is as near as Woolf can comfortably approach to styles of action that bear a superficial likeness to the masculinist.[5]

II

Speaking of 'the next' novel after The Years, Woolf thought it perhaps should be 'very short'.[6] Health apart, there was a special reason for this. It is implied in The Years itself:

> A deep gulf had been cut in the talk, it was true. She could not remember what they had been saying. (291)

Here is North reciting Marvell to Sara:

> The words going out into the room seemed like actual presences, hard and independent; yet as she was listening they were changed by their contact with her. But as he reached the end of the second verse -
>
> Society is all but rude -
> To this delicious solitude...
>
> he heard a sound. Was it in the poem or outside of it, he wondered? Inside, he thought. (259)

Sara next hands him a play to read to her. 'Always before reading he had to arrange the scene'; but, 'then there was a sound behind him; a presence - in the play or in the room?' (264) The question of whether a sound is in or out of Marvell's poem, of whether another sound is in or out of the play, has occurred before: were the fields, streets, and human business of Bayreuth part of Lohengrin and Parsifal, or, had Wagner's operatic expressiveness been successfully confined within his intention as made explicit in that formal auditorium? If an artifact sustained itself through interruptions, becoming art, that was because what happened between the moments of its realisation somehow belonged to it. Lengthy pauses might be fatal - in which case (but no guarantees existed) the shorter the work the better. Few readers will complete The Years at one sitting, though many could manage this for Between the Acts. It seems Woolf wanted a short fiction which might be read uninterruptedly. The last novel at least offers an act of reading (in the singular) whose illusion is concentrated.

It differs here from The Years, which offers hiatus within and without the book, so that its length seems allied with the outer world against the sustaining of illusion. Much in The Years reads as though figurative of this:

> 'What a dirty,' he said, as he sat still in the car for a moment - here a woman crossed the street with a jug under her arm - 'sordid,' he added, 'low-down street to live in.' (237)
>
> 'These staircases are not adapted...' she paused, as she advanced what was probably a rheumatic leg, 'for old people who...' there was another pause as she descended another step, ''ve been kneeling on damp grass killing slugs.' (301)

Narration mimetically interrupts monologue; but some intrusions are less congenial to mimesis. In 1932, Q.D. Leavis found To the Lighthouse 'especially calculated to baffle the general public of the twentieth century ... a public ... /for which/ the style of To the Lighthouse is formidable in the extreme'. Leavis went on to warn: 'A novel that cannot be taken in at one reading stands little chance of a public in the twentieth century'. This well-informed cynicism, typical of the Scrutineers, was not altogether shared by Woolf. Her own reasons for concentrating the reading experience on an audience's behalf are more on, than against, that audience's side.[7]

The Years is therefore preoccupied with the gesture which defines character, and sets this over against the hiatus that destroys memory. Milly's, and Eleanor's, fraying of the wick with their hairpins is one such (10,116). Abel's growlings about little ruffians and about Eleanor's broodiness are phrasal gestures (12,15,98,26,29,121). Morris's lawyerly flourishes are recognisable tokens (85,86). Eugénie 'threw out her hand' (95,101,109,118,228). Celia's turns of phrase are predictable (160). Delia too is known by 'her gestures', by 'her dramatic gesture' (272,303). Edward 'had a way of putting his hand to his head that North remembered' (310). Some of the minor personae are in fact comic-pathetically caricatured by such essential phrasal gestures:

> 'Chew, chew, chew,' he said as he sat down.
> And Milly said, 'Tut-tut-tut,' North observed.
> That was what it came to - thirty years of being husband and wife - tut-tut-tut and chew-chew-chew ... Tut-tut-tut and chew-chew-chew. (286)

'Certain words and gestures brought /Sir William/ back' to Eleanor, which was just as well for him, since 'he wanted an audience' (154, 155). All these gestures are 'ordinary actions, ordinary words, expressive of the whole being' (emphasis added). So, 'there was the pump-handle gesture; the wringing-wet-clothes gesture' (266,308). Their source is often a pathetic repression:

> 'What awful lives children live!' he said, waving his hand at her as she crossed the room. 'Don't they, Rose?'
> 'Yes,' said Rose. 'And they can't tell anybody,' she added. (123)

Baffled needs and energies leak into repeated phrases and actions, which then bear a signifying weight, becoming dramatic. The Years is full of them. They link across both the narration's chronological gaps, and the reader's experience of this novel as something told between necessary interruptions.

To facilitate discussion, an inquiry such as this, it is becoming obvious, may consider the novel as being both 'fiction' and 'narration'. These terms serve a useful purpose. By 'fiction' is meant (here and in other chapters) 'what happens in the story itself', things characters say and do. By 'narration' is meant the manner of telling. Something related as having been said or done is, in this usage, an instance of narration; the substantive thing done or said in invention is the fiction. These two modes frequently share the same textual space. The terms 'fiction' and 'narration' do not seem to belong to any theoretical programme. Following Saussure, Segre isolates from each other 'discourse', 'plot', and 'fabula' as a progression from the signifier to different kinds of literary signified. Other theoreticians speak of 'narrating narrative' and 'narrated narrative', or of 'tale' and 'subject'. Genette distinguishes 'narrative' from 'story'; Todorov, 'story' from 'discourse'; and Ricoeur, 'statement' from 'utterance'. This thesis adopts the terms used by John Mepham in an essay on *To the Lighthouse*, because of their comparative lucidity.[8] One might look, then, at ways in which *The Years*, as fiction, enshrines Woolf's interest in dramaturgy, and do the same with the novel's narrative behaviour.

The Years is replete with theatrical metaphors, as *The Voyage Out* brimmed with water-images. Yet they do not insist on being noticed. Scenes change and people talk as if in 'a scene in a play' (81,129). Some interiors have 'the effect of a stage', while outdoors, people may sit 'as if they had taken seats at a play' (161,181). Hyde Park (with its 'orators' and their 'audience') was just such a 'scene, as if somebody had designed it', with 'a mixture of comedy and tragedy in the scene' there (184,185). Martin 'was behind the scenes. The screen was down; the lights were up; and he too was behind the scenes' (194). North is at one point 'actor and critic' (313). These are all *fictive* metaphors: it is fictional spectators, not any narrator, who

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perceive in this way. Eleanor, also, 'felt ... a spectator' (83).

> We're both acting, Delia thought to herself /at her mother's deathbed/, stealing a glance at /her father/, but he's doing it better than I am. (31)
>
> You did that very well, Delia /silently/ told him as he passed her. It was like a scene in a play. (38)

Similarly for Kitty, undergraduates and academics 'were all like people dressed up and acting parts' (58).

As to who is seeing all this:

> 'Would there be trees if we didn't see them?' said Maggie. 'What's "I"?..."I"...' She stopped. She did not know what she meant. (108)
>
> What would the world be, /Martin/ said to himself ... without 'I' in it? (185)

Without 'I', of course, there would be no scene, play, acting, gesture, or audience with its echo; and vice versa. That is as much true of everyday life under theatre-metaphor, as of whatever it took to spectate at Siegfried, where,

> He, /Kitty/ thought, looking at the handsome boy, knows exactly what the music means ... /while/ here and there a sharp pin-point of light showed as some one followed the score with a torch. Edward's fine profile again caught her eye. He was listening, critically, intently. (141,142)

He understands the libretto and score; Kitty is musically uncritical. This is a long echo from Woolf's 1909 ridicule of,

> the scholarly Wagnerians, detecting 'motives' by the flash of their electric lamps, and instructing humble female relatives in the intricacies of the score.

This resonant satire finds its way across the years from Woolf's 1909 piece 'The Opera', into the later thirties.[9] Kitty does indeed watch young Edward between the acts onstage, and judges. Unlike Martin, who is on another occasion,

> trying to get the whole of the cathedral clear ... /with its/ gust of organ music ... The faint ecclesiastical murmur ... vaguely impressive, and the dark space of the Cathedral

visible to him, Kitty, though outside Wagnerian high art, is competent spectator of other, not unrelated, events (175). Yet women have to act too, 'to make believe you're amused when you're bored' (270). That is what Peggy finds:

> She was left alone. She was glad to be alone. She had no wish to talk. But next moment somebody stood beside her. It was Martin. He sat down beside her. She changed her attitude completely. (271)

The female 'I', it is expected, will attend to men, and not be a spectator on its own terms, especially on social occasions.

Women are often no less inclined to act when in female company. Kitty 'did not like being alone with women after dinner; it made her shy ... It was a battledore and shuttlecock talk, to be kept going until the door opened and the gentlemen came in. Then it would stop' upon the arrival of that implied audience, for audiences there must be (196-198). Yet they can inhibit. Martin and Sara cannot talk too freely in the restaurant, for fear of audiences ('there were people listening' (176-178)), also through similar fear of each other: 'He began to hum his little song - and then stopped, remembering that he was with someone' (179). In a society so given to acted manners, the audience is a tyrant: 'you can say whatever you like' only if 'nobody's listening' (181). Short of that, one will have to act, and, stage fright or no, the unsaid will out: 'She was talking to herself ... Here a lady passed them, talking to herself ... "People don't like being looked at," said Sara, "when they're talking to themselves"' as an audience of one rather than orating in Hyde Park (182-186). But the need for audience as such is irreduceable, a classless tendency, since for Crosby also, 'there was nobody near, so that she could talk aloud ... She had got into the habit of talking aloud. There was nobody in sight' - a pathological spectacle, both touching and funny (231).

Fictionally, The Years pursues the explicit repeated gesture (phrasal or physical); the stage production of life, or, life under theatre-metaphor; the controlling spectatorships of key characters, even private within public spectatorships like Kitty's at Siegfried; and the need for an audience, even if only oneself. It is interested in the compulsions gathering between, and issuing in, acts, though these acts are as much discursive as spatial. Indeed, for the most part they are spatial only in the special sense that they take up text-space which, processed by the re-creating reader, yields an acting discursiveness, or, monologue and dialogue that directly constitutes action rather than referring to action.

This is a good moment to introduce Woolf's 1929 idea that women might turn being 'excluded by ... sex from certain kinds of experience' (read 'activity') to use, given that 'a woman was trained to use her mind in observation and in the analysis of character ... trained to be a novelist'. In that respect, said Woolf, 'the best part of Conrad's novels ... would be destroyed if it had been impossible for him to be a sailor'. In keeping with this, we might mark the contrasting of that passive spectator Sasha Latham with the loquacious Bertram Pritchard in 'A Summing Up': 'Bertram chattered on, he being among the voyagers, as cabin boy or common seaman - someone who ran up masts, gaily whistling'.[10] The male mariner's talk is set against a watchful female silence. In 1924 Woolf conceded that Conrad has the 'double vision' which combines 'the sea captain' with Marlow, 'one of those born observers'. In this synthesis, 'Marlow ... comments, while Conrad ... creates'. But Conrad is not at his best in those fictions where 'Marlow ... was the dominant partner', these not being, in a Conradian borrowing, at 'the heart of literature'. So it is that the finest 'earlier books' are thought by Woolf to include 'Youth, Lord Jim, Typhoon /and/ The Nigger of the 'Narcissus''.[11]

Shirley Neuman suggests as one possibility among others, that this omission of Heart of Darkness may represent Woolf's 'decision not to direct any flash of light on her own work', which, nevertheless, offers Conrad the 'tribute' of 'allusion, debate, and transformation'.[12] The Years alludes to Conrad's novella twice, and Between the Acts, once. In addition, Alex Zwerdling speaks for a number of readers in observing that The Voyage Out's 'echoes of Conrad's Heart of Darkness are surely not accidental', since it too portrays an up-river encounter with the unknown in an unknown continent.[13]

Though Neuman's essay is productive,a different emphasis may be offered. What people do, Peggy sees, is 'toiling, grinding in the heart of darkness', and this insight makes her 'say over Eleanor's words' about happiness sceptically (296). The heart of darkness, the theatre of futile acts, induces disbelief in blithe utterance. North feels similarly. To return to him as being 'actor and critic', it may be noted how,

> He felt he had been in the middle of a jungle; in the heart of darkness; cutting his way towards the light [but using what?] but provided only with broken sentences, single words, with which to break through the brier-bush of human bodies, human wills and voices, that bent over him, binding him, binding him. (313)

This dense allusiveness actively binds Conrad to Eliot and Marvell. The relevant lines from Marvell are these:

> Bind me ye *Woodbines* in your 'twines,
> Curle me about ye gadding *Vines*,
> And Oh so close your Circles lace,
> That I may never leave this Place:
> But, lest your Fetters prove too weak,
> Ere I your Silken Bondage break,
> Do you, *O Brambles*, chain me too,
> And courteous *Briars* nail me through.

Eliot's lines are as follows:

> We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
> By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
> Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

Kurtz wanted his jungle as the Marvell persona wanted that Fairfacian wood, and as the lingering Prufrock longed to be wreathed with weed. Kurtz's voice, though, was itself a thicket, trapping him, whereas the Marvellian voice could recreate a notional solitude. Prufrock's romantic lyricism does not survive the intrusion of real voices, any more than Marvell's male solitary avoids embarrassment when young Maria Fairfax comes upon the scene. Woolf's own creature is unlikely, by discoursing, to escape the forest of discourse. The performative text itself shifts between discursiveness, and phrasal gesture which binds in the very effort to be free. [14] It is not a discourse to let

North hack his way out of that dark-heartedness.

Kurtz had, at the last, degenerated into nothing but discourse. Granted that female observers are, as such, spectators for whom the typical male activities are impossible, the novel being their natural form, it follows that the female novel too will be spectatorial, and its action discursive. The Voyage Out is as actively lyrical, then, as Conrad often is; and Woolfian lyricism, when it becomes overly purple, as sometimes happens, resembles Conrad's own lyricism when it is trying to do too much for itself and its readers. But another way of being discursively active is evident in Night and Day, whose personae merely talk, or in The Waves, which behaves as a set of monologues. Increasingly for Woolf, the novel is drama, because its action is constituted in discourse. Heart of Darkness is a very pure, and mythic, expression of Conrad's concern with in/action , discourse-as-activity, as essentially revealing and hence dramatic. As Douglas Hewitt interestingly says: 'The English novel has a considerable tradition of action and adventure, often violent. We find it in Fielding and Scott and Thackeray and Dickens and in this century most strikingly in Conrad'.[15] We are not given Kurtz's speeches by Conrad, any more than Orlando gives us 'The Oak Tree'; but we guess it is, as with all else done by Kurtz, a violent attempt to possess experience by talk. Kurtz's idealism is quite inhuman and its action-talk histrionic, with that melodramatic note of horror. As a small boy might, it trumpets its gendered failure outside the window. Ignore Kurtz, however, and he goes away. But what would comparable female failure be like? As Three Guineas is aware, war may seduce inactive women into uncongenially masculinist action; for if making war should be a male essential, it reveals men, in the Conradian, and dramatic, sense.

By contrast, Woolf's novels are female discursive actions. She had long been capable of dismissing the later Conrad as 'stiff melodrama', calling herself 'infallible' in that opinion although the 'chorus' of other critics 'praise unanimously ... when the plays over'.[16] If Conrad stiffened into melodrama, he had once been supple and dramatic. Woolf salutes his creative despair about mere saying as a mode of doing, discourse as enforced action. But that had long been woman's lot. Her fictions are more intent upon seeking their own kind of peculiarly female discursiveness, their own non-Marlovian way of being an observer.

In itself, then, the female heart is not regarded as dark. Its voice is dramatic not histrionic. It is not that Woolf is dismissive of Marlovian spectation as such; more that Marlow,

> splendid in soliloquy ... did not take into account how, if Conrad was to create, it was essential first that he should believe.

If spectation acceded to action, we could blame Conrad's loss of faith: Marlow was not unblinkered in the Bernhardtesque sense, but was merely Conrad when Conrad is not acting. So the actress's disbelief proves an enabling disengagement, where Conrad's shortcoming is not fully to live his parts, watching himself, dramatising himself through Marlow's gaze instead of being anything.[17] Female truth is different from this, at its most authentic. Woman has never run up masts, gaily whistling; so her writing is hardly surrogate action in that sense. Yet she has always been a species of Marlow, and her writing needs creatively to valorise that enforced spectatorship. Should she pursue discursive action in the novel, it needs to be an act of belief even if grounded in a scepticism. Between the token acts of her novels, she gathers the force which can make each of them essential to her and thence dramatic. Giving the pargeting reader gaps to fill, discursive surfaces from which to surmise the unsaid, and - necessarily in view of length - a sequence of reading-acts punctuated by what is external to them, are all ways in which the requisite belief seeks to narrate itself in The Years. Incorporating a fictional audience, and giving as form a prompt-copy which might be read in one act, is another token of faith, such as one finds in Between the Acts.

Although Woolf finally succumbed to illness and war, her unfinished novel is as much a shaping act, biographically, as the suicide. The search for form , or its discovery, is also necessary to Sally in The Years, who 'would let herself be thought. It was easier to act things than to think them'; but who immediately finds, 'it was impossible to act thought. She became something', and who therefore saw outside 'the actual tree' (102,103). So too, writing cannot but become actual in form; and this is easier than abstraction if the form is native and significant. One need not 'act' in any strained sense: Eleanor 'would have crumbled a piece of bread to show /Nicholas/ that she was at her ease; but as she was not afraid, the action seemed to her unnecessary' (221). There is little need to masquerade as lively, when mimetic art grows from one's situation.

North experiences 'scenes which obliterated the present moment' (285), and that is what The Years would like to provide: a fiction whose scenes persist across narrative gaps, even as the narration can, as noted, interrupt with mimetic staccato a fictive monologue's fragmentation. Hiatus in this novel is used, as it was in Jacob's Room, to invite supposition (32,45,169). The narration can stop, undo its invented fiction, then resume, privileging the reader: 'It was March and the wind was blowing. But it was not 'blowing'. It was scraping, scourging' (113). Hackneyed phrase is not allowed to get carried away with itself: readerly imagination is nursed. The narration may mimic the fiction, in mock confirmation: '"Shall we leave the gentlemen to their politics," she said, "and have our coffee on the terrace?" and they shut the door upon the gentlemen and their politics' (156). It can turn up small scenes like the one which concludes '1917', with its emphasis on woman as staring and inspecting, and then follow it with '1918', a slightly longer scene whose intensity and objectivity owe much to the repetition of phrasal gesture by the narrative voice: 'Her legs were paining her ... Her legs pained her ... her feet pained her ... Her legs pained her ... The guns went on booming and the sirens wailed ... The guns went on booming and the sirens wailed' (230-233). These incantations filter Crosby's essence, and their energy becomes distributive, affecting the surrounding fiction.

For much of the time, characters' lines are predictable like a script, owing to this repetitiveness. The bedroom conversation between Lady Pargiter and her daughters, in which she re-enacts a dance and defers the tale of her romantic youth, has occurred before, we know, although at no point are we told this, the exchange being scripted (108-111). Maggie and Sara, awaiting the younger Rose, expect that, '" ... she'll say ..."', followed by what '"You'll say ... " ... "And then?" ... "And then she'll say ... "' (127). In the event, Rose and Sara simply repeat themselves, so that Rose for one feels 'an old fool ... She blushed slightly' (129). For she 'had been saying the first thing that came into her head. "All talk would be nonsense, I suppose, if it were written down," she said, stirring her coffee. Maggie ... smiled. "And even if it isn't," she said' (132). Eleanor too, is well aware of what Celia will say. Celia hates bats and Sir William likes them. 'Now Celia will say, They get into one's hair, Eleanor thought. "They get into one's hair," Celia said' (160). When with Nicholas, Eleanor,

> knew exactly what he was going to say. He had said it before, in the restaurant. He is going to say, She is like a ball on the top of a fishmonger's fountain. As she thought it, he said it. (282)

All of these tragicomic phrasal gestures, delivered right on cue, make character and even society possible, within a culture as given to acting as this one; but they also suggest a scriptedness, The Years being prompt-copy. All novels are scripted, it is obvious; but actors must deliver dramatic text predictably in its actual words, even when they interpret pace, volume, and inflection. We who read The Years, are simultaneously reading the characters' lines for them while we spectate at their delivery, our copy open upon our laps, our eyes and ears moving between page and stage. We live in and out of the fiction.

What happens outside of the script belongs to it therefore; and any noises off-stage are in the play. The Years naturalises this process, by appearing to fall back upon received realistic conventions, more than The Waves had done or set out to do. The personae of The Waves are all of them actorly in that they consciously adopt roles in which they must believe. Characters in The Years are nowhere so self-aware. But the words in which they come short, shorn of lyricism, are more common, active in another sense; and they afford us, outside of the novel, more points of entry.

III

At the very last, in Between the Acts, Giles and Isa 'spoke'. Fictively, this is a Conradian action-mode, all part of that couple's being obliged to 'fight ... in the heart of darkness' (158,159). Narratively it is something else. Giles earlier found of luridly violent exertion that such 'action relieved him' (75), even as it refreshes Razumov to beat up Ziemianitch in Under Western Eyes, and much as Woolf flirted with the false comfort of beating against the pseudo-communality of her audience. Giles's impotent violence reveals something essential about him, so that, narratively, it is dramatic. But what it reveals is histrionic and small-boyish. The fiction itself is melodramatic, and this is a temper worth comparing with La Trobe's.

That artist's mood (as one - failed - actress unable happily to share house with another (46)) is unsympathetic. Decisions as to venue hers to make, when 'she commanded ... It was done' (49). Her nickname is not 'Bossy' for nothing; yet 'someone must lead', and 'hadn't she given orders?' - concerning, among much else, 'the very place for a pageant!' (50,59) But she cannot control or foresee everything: 'exiled from its festival, the music', for instance, 'turned ironical' in unplanned ways (66). Those 'rapid decisions' of hers 'barked out in guttural accents' are powerless to modulate all that can possibly affect production (50). Therefore she 'growled' and 'prompted'. That was because Hilda's natural-born and socialised self (not, like Bernhardt's, the literal force accumulating behind roles, nor, like Terry's, itself a role, nor again, like Felix's, a real life discoverable onstage) is much too incongruously intrusive, as were those of Bottom's mechanicals, to admit dramatic illusion (62).

La Trobe's direction can never render her venue 'the Globe', whether theatrically or, in a pervasive Woolfian idiom, as rounded, solid achievement. The sounds of '"Curse! Blast! Damn 'em!"' are La Trobe 'in her rage' at having had to 'cut the play' because of being 'a slave to her audience' (72). Congreve and James may be recalled, with their peremptory view of audiences; but also Wagner's attempt to oversee everything down to venue, props, and production, the Gesamtkunstwerk being exclusive to him. Woolf could not be ordered about by Wagner: some of the operas failed, and those that succeeded tended to spill over the edges of his theatre of control. Likewise, La Trobe's audience is incongruous, not just there for her ersatz activism to manipulate. Her violent repressions issue in fictive comedy, not in humour, although the overall narrative end is humorous rather than comic (these are distinctions which the next chapter will seek to clarify). La Trobe's active expressiveness alternates with a Bernhardtesque feint, the denial of illusion, and is like Renaissance audience-pandering, an action which relieves her.

Those 'trees ... like ... the spaced pillars of some cathedral church' (132), the very reason La Trobe chose this place, are therefore bathetic, suggesting self-answering liturgy and inner murder. The La Trobe drama's murdering of inwardness is broadly related to its being staged primitively, out of doors, rather than in, say, Pointz Hall. Jackson Cope reminds us: 'The world is a theatre, but Cusa had said that man knows himself through seeing and being seen - as spectator and spectacle, as audience and actor at once'. Cope expands: 'this probing concentration upon the actor rather than the action ... was responsible for the fact that the "hall" drama of the first half of the sixteenth century neglected spectacle for speculation'. Jonson's 1620 News from the New World Discover'd in the Moone, says Cope, 'once again placed the emphasis in hall dramatics upon the audience interacting with actor and author' (emphases added).[18] La Trobe, who would have to be more sceptical, to see herself as spectacle, has a comic absence of any sense of humour; hence she lacks self-knowledge, and cannot really know that audience of which her satire pretends to special understanding. Out of doors is the proper forum for her dramatic primitivism, for what the 1925 essay 'On Not Knowing Greek' calls 'the lightning-quick, sneering, out-of-doors manner'. Woolf's own, intensely speculative interior dramas are analogous to a tendency in Renaissance hall dramatics which was concurrent with that period's movement of the drama from outdoor to indoor venues. But if the 'hierarchy' inscribed in La Trobe's arboreal cathedral should be troublesome, the military is never far away.[19] It is the fact of the military which, for Three Guineas, exposes the essential situation. The pending war, drummed up by fascist males barking their commands, threatens communality in Between the Acts. La Trobe's envy of what passes for action means she cannot counterpoint the danger through appeal to her audience as to an alternate commonwealth, her shouted orders too like certain other shouted orders. The problem cannot be summarised any better than Judith Johnston has done: 'Miss La Trobe addresses the audience directly, exhorting them ... just as Mussolini and Hitler did in their radio speeches ... she sounds like an authoritarian peace-monger ... Even though she articulates a different message, she, like Mussolini or Hitler, encourages hostility, panders to her audience, and seeks to manipulate their sympathies'.[20] So La Trobe can achieve pageant, but so can the army. And where she produces comedy and burlesque, Woolf herself seeks drama and humour. There is some difficulty for the fictive audience. Seeing the roles, it tries to guess who's who, which can seem the centre of interest. It is itself a company of role players (Giles and Isa, for example), along with others who are as they seem and as their names would have them be (Mrs Manresa, 'woman of action' (83)), who, though they could not act if they tried, do have Ibsenian life-illusions (like that of being a 'wild child of nature' (40)). The audience also holds others still, for whom the merest suggestion that roles exist, that there are different ways of being, is liberating (thus Mrs Swithin). But Mrs Swithin might infer as much from any drama. La Trobe wants to matter more than this.

Then there are the dangerous intervals (73,109,126 - three in all): is the pageant sustainable across those breaks? Art can live in the breaks by comprehending them in its praxis. Or it can, by Wagnerian fiat, impose a powerful illusion which impinges upon and masters the interruptions, so that the music is never exiled from its festival. However, if art is to figure the countering of social dispersal, it cannot be merely a matter of imposition. It must be metaphoric, or a joining. 'There must be society' (31). Giles though, can find within himself 'no command of metaphor' (43). Quite so: he is not joined to Isa except in the active Conradian sense, nor is he joined to the surrounding company.

What is more, one does not altogether 'command' metaphor, which has a habit of rising unbidden like pond fish. Ann Lane, for one, misunderstands Woolf's lyricism in Between the Acts. She finds this novel 'unnaturally passive' in its 'uncritically allow/ing/ ... Miss La Trobe to speak/her/ "poetry" at length'. Apart from that flaw, she thinks, 'there is a problem generally with the "poetic" parts of Between the Acts, the entire pageant included. Woolf takes their "significance" for granted'. In so doing, the author 'mistakes the real direction of the novel's exploration', which is 'not lyrical, but dramatic ... When Woolf's prose works dramatically rather than lyrically, the combination of its various intonations becomes clear'.

Lane allows no irony to La Trobe's bid for poetic command, nor does she grant Woolfian lyricism its deconstruction of the generic binary of dramatic verse and prose narrative. Because Woolf does not seek to command, does it follow that she is passive in portraying La Trobe? Because she is indeed passive, need she be thought lyrically inactive? Lane perpetuates the inscription of the old active/passive polarisation, though Woolf had served notice on it long before her final novel. As for La Trobe's verbal play, even if she thinks her punning 'the first step away from the transparent word, the first step toward the achievement of symbolic metaphor', it must be conceded that she does not pass beyond a very primary expressiveness, so that metaphor and society remain outwith her command. But Woolf socialises this misfit by comprehending her within a generous lyricism that says for her what she herself is dumb to say. La Trobe's incipient sense of the lyric is real enough secretly and in private; but it cannot be an acting lyricism, owing to her disdain for its audience. Woolfian lyricism therefore acts for La Trobe, in token of what she could be. It adopts a vivid life to itself, somehow detachable from the novel's paraphraseable content, and persists as after-image. One is reminded of Bridget Riley's paintings, of which Laurence Marks writes: 'Her luminous stripes and discs and waves and dots and triangles and zig-zags dance and flicker on the walls, often creating a curious bloom of incandescence that seems to shimmer an inch or two in front of the canvas'. Riley traces what Marks calls her 'wonderful lyricism' to a Cornish childhood like Woolf's own, and recalls 'the oval saucer-like reflections dipping and flashing on the sea surface ... the golden greens of vegetation on the cliffs ... the red-orange of seaweed on the blues and violets of the rocks ... the entire elusive, unstable, flicking complex subject to the changing qualities of the light itself ... the glitter of bright sunlight and its tiny pinpoints of black shadow ... as though one was swimming through a diamond'.[21] La Trobe would give much to talk like this, but is insufficiently generous.

Woolf's passivity, then, gives La Trobe dramatic life; and her lyric activity comprehends this failed playwright's more secret wishes. The dramatising lyricism shimmers an inch or two above the page, and its truth may be judged by whether it leaves behind it any experience of a formal beauty tending to engender in readerly solitude a sympathy for La Trobe.

Those thinking 'peremptorily' cannot produce audiences, if such audiences are a kind of society (91). Unless members of audiences are (like Wagner's) exclusive units delighted to be overruled, grateful just to inquire obsequiously after the textual finer points, something from the artifact must unite them as it sends them on their way, something (art, that is) surplus to Mr Streatfield's reductive moralising. Only failure can come of despising the audience. Woolf is looking for that more general readership which, thanks to the climate which would culminate in war, was fast becoming (again) falsely communal. La Trobe shares the objective. 'The audience was assembling', but dissembling within itself, the actors (it might be hoped) figuring the dissimulation into being properly socialised, whilst old social fabrics disintegrated, and a second (and with tragic irony, global) war neared (58,59). Much depended on the artifact's ability to render itself art. But that depends on the artist's sense of an audience. Woolf's readers may feel congratulated: she has deictically included them in this fiction. La Trobe's audience have a right to feel discomfited, because clearly she has an active dislike for them.

The fictive audience does not want an incomer to 'expose' it to itself as a bundle of broken-up isolations. Doubtless that would be clever; but it would also be uncongenial, and the spectators would catch the whiff of hostility ('she damned the audience' (130,131)). Nor does it want to be moralised at, which will not necessarily get the playwright loved. La Trobe not unreasonably feels excluded, yet she does not know how to turn this to effect. Instead, what she craves is 'to write a play without an audience - the play' (130). It is not as though losing one's audience-echo were part of one's death. Far from it: 'death' is having an audience which finds it just cannot respond to her refusal to go a-wooing, for La Trobe confuses courtship with appeasement (131).

Phrase as essential gesture is not so present in Between the Acts as it had been in The Years. There are moments when this is so, when characters do talk as scripted, like actors, almost Pinteresque:

> 'I've been nailing the placard on the Barn,' she said, giving him a little pat on the shoulder.
> The words were like the first peal of a chime of bells. As the first peals, you hear the second; as the second peals, you hear the third. So when Isa heard Mrs Swithin say: 'I've been nailing the placard to the Barn,' she knew she would say next:
> 'For the pageant.'
> And he would say:
> 'Today? By Jupiter! I'd forgotten!'
> 'If it's fine,' Mrs Swithin continued, 'they'll act on the terrace...'
> 'And if it's not,' Bartholomew continued, 'in the Barn.'
> 'And which will it be?' Mrs Swithin continued. 'Wet or fine?'
> (20)

Isa is onlooker here, and we are looking at Isa. But this is rare. One may pass, then, to ways in which the narration of Between the Acts, as text, prefers to oscillate between conventional narrativity and a quasi-dramatic scriptedness, even, momentarily, to becoming stage direction.

La Trobe's verse is, as Lane says, delivered en bloc. But a voice intrudes to remind us that this is narration and not drama:

> Come hither for our festival (she continued)
> This is a pageant, all may see
> Drawn from our island history (60)

Narrative acts punctuate (and puncture, hence deflate) the fiction, though never so as wholly to destroy the illusion of spoken verse. Where fictive stanzas are indeed seriously broken (Phyllis Jones, for instance, forgetting her lines), this comic narration saves and thus recuperates. Also, although what the village chorus sings is always half lost, its crude punning, which is at best a purely notional verbal richness, engages, since it is clear that La Trobe could never realistically think to control our response to this overdone verbiage:

> *Cutting the roads...up to the hill top...we climbed. Down in the valley...sow, wild boar, hog, rhinoceros, reindeer...Dug ourselves in to the hill top...Ground roots between stones...Ground corn...till we too... lay under g-r-o-u-n-d...* (61)

The punning fiction finds its comic echo in the narration: 'Then at last the machine ground out a tune!' But the exclamatory, overly explicit irony judges the poetry's 'warriors' and their mode, as well as its over-assertion of licence (60,61). It is rather obvious what kind of company La Trobe would like to be in. Walter Redfern has said that 'it is indeed the poets (Shakespeare, Donne, Hood, Hugo) or the writers of 'poetic' prose (Nabokov, Joyce, Flaubert) who have been most responsive to, and prolific in, punning'.[22] But self-indulgence breeds more of the same: Isa retreats during the breaks into a private poetry suggested by, but unrelated to, that comic tedium onstage (64).

Eliza Clark's Elizabeth I monologue will also stand up as given in La Trobe's script. But, again, narration keeps on intruding:

> *Mistress of ships and bearded men* (she bawled)/ ... *Down on the jetty, there in the west land*, - / (she pointed her fist at the blazing blue sky) / *Mistress of pinnacles, spires and palaces* - / (her arm swept towards the house) / *For me Shakespeare sang* - / (a cow mooed, A bird twittered) / *The throstle, the mavis* (she continued) (65)

Comic-pathetically, it is this drama which in La Trobe's intention is meant to recoup a society. The sly narrativity lives between her fictive acts, but generously as well as subversively, adopting her enjambements. Nevertheless, La Trobe's command is seriously trifled with. It is necessary, here, to differ from Sandra Gilbert and Judith Johnston. Gilbert thinks that 'to be different - that is, to be female ... is simply to be in command of oneself and one's words, as Miss La Trobe is'. How the spluttering disdainful playwright may be said to be in command of herself, is not easy to see. That she would like to control her words is more evident. That Woolf should aspire to her state is not a serious proposition. Johnston believes La Trobe's last act 'suggests an alternative to most drama, in which the playwright fills the time with action and dialogue, thereby maintaining control', La Trobe by contrast 'repressing her egotistical self at the beginning of the fourth act'. Admittedly, 'the ten minutes when she is not in control are painful to her', so that it is with some relief that she resumes 'total control of her drama'. Nor does Johnston firmly distinguish Woolf from this behaviour: 'Virginia Woolf's final novel demonstrates the power a woman can control even with only the end of an old inky pen'. This slightly mawkish comment confuses Woolf with the critic.[23] Doubtless it is gracious of that little Hitler, La Trobe, to relinquish total control for ten agonising minutes. But by forcing unprocessed truth upon her audience, how is she in fact anything but, as usual, 'Bossy'? Her motivation merely borrows, for the nonce, another (and in reality a shriller) method. Therefore old Mrs Otter's delivery, while well able to work as dramatic script, is significantly interrupted (68,69). And similar liberties intrude into the priest's benediction over dead Elsbeth, where their modus operandi comically reveals the action's closeness to La Trobe's text (70,71).

'The audience was assembling ... The audience was assembling' (58,89). This phrasal gesture puns its way into saying what any audience must do which has to sustain illusion during intervals. In the second act, Woolf's narration does something for which the reader had not been looking. 'Reason' speaking almost unbrokenly, any intrusion is in the conventional narrative past (92,93). Concerning verb tenses in drama and narrative, P.J. Rabinowitz states: 'Drama, unlike fiction, takes place in the present tense ... In fiction ... the narrative audience reads of the events after they have taken place'. And Louis Marin agrees: 'the basic characteristic of the narrative enunciation is the exclusion of ... the present tense. On the contrary, it uses a well-defined past tense'. Juliet Dusinberre reminds us, too, of 'Woolf's parody of the "-ing" termination in Orlando', which, though it 'was finished before she had read "Ash Wednesday"' in the summer of 1928, 'may have had in mind Eliot's predisposition towards the present participle'. Eliot's habit is understandable, perhaps, in a poet of such profound dramatic interest. But Makiko Minow-Pinkney takes Woolf's praxis still further:

> A profuse use of present participles [is] another characteristic of Woolf's writing [which] loosens the binding function of syntax. Its effect is to attenuate human energy: contrast 'she looked at the flowers' with 'looking at the flowers' [in Mrs Dalloway], where activity is reduced to contemplative stasis.

These participles redefine action away from the discrete and towards simultaneity: 'thus writing can to a certain extent go beyond its essential linearity' (emphases added).[24] In other words, this sort of stylistics wants to appropriate, or at least figure, immediacies more commonly encountered in the drama, and Woolfian lyricism is active in the interest of larger dramaturgic ends. It is therefore of interest to see what Woolf does with verb tenses in Between the Acts.

The playlet within the play (Where there's a Will there's a Way) is humorous in the Jonsonian sense, reminiscent of much Renaissance and Restoration comedy, and particularly like the latter in its sexual cynicism (93). Its lunatic nomenclatures - Sir Spaniel Lilyliver, Sir Smirking Peace-be-with-you-all (94) - are no less summary than the global fiction's own dalliance with character as name - Dodge the homosexual; Page the reporter; Manresa the man-raiser. We get La Trobe's script as script (94-99,100-102,105-109). The playlet ends with a conventional-past narrative act: 'Good people all, farewell. / (dropping a curtsey, Lady H.H. withdrew)' (109). But throughout the script as given, parenthetical narration behaves as dramatic-present stage direction:

> LADY H.H. (gazing in the glass) ... DEB ... (going to the door); (Enter Sir Spaniel.) ... (He sweeps his hat off.) ... (He strikes his breast.) ... SIR S.L. ... (singing) ... LADY H.H. (flirting her fan) ... SIR S.L. (aside) ... (Aloud) (94,95)

La Trobe's script is foregrounded, seeming to change the narrative past into a present: '(She wrings her hands, turning from side to side.)' (100) In a Sternean flourish anticipated by *Jacob's Room*, even the explicit narration keeps to stage-direction's present-time:

> (She reveals herself)
> VALENTINE...*O Flavinda, O!*
> FLAVINDA...*O Valentine, O!*
> (They embrace)
> The clock strikes nine. (102)

The lineation and positioning of this last sentence, with its roman script unparenthesised, let it exist graphically between stage direction and narration. The conventional past then resumes between fictive acts: '*Digging and delving* (they sang)' (103). This shows what Woolf has just done, and intimates what she will do when La Trobe's fictive acts are again presented:

> SIR S.L. (trying to pull on his jack boots) ... (He hobbles up and down, one boot on, one boot off) ... (She pushes a cushion under his leg) ... (She proffers her hand; he strikes it from him.)

And so on, until 'the scene ended. Reason descended from her plinth ... [and] passed across the stage' in resumption of the usual narrative tense (105-109).

In act three, the publican Budge delivers a framing music-hall monologue which Woolf does not hesitate to interrupt with past-tense narration: '(He waved his truncheon) ... (He flourished it magnificently from right to left)' (117,118). In the Edgar and Eleanor scene, however, she returns to the dramatic present, stage direction 'doing' for narration, though at the last, the narration asserts its own mode over that of dramatic script (120-125). The reader has been used to the present tense of stage direction, when this is offered: 'MR H. ... (he fumbled with his fossil)' (124). Nor is it accidental:

> EDGAR (winding up the procession with Eleanor) *To convert the heathen!*
> ELEANOR *To help our fellow men!*
> (The actors disappeared into the bushes.) (125)

That is the graphic opposite of what happened earlier. There (102), free-standing narration had adopted the dramatic present. Here, parenthesised past-tense narrative, again standing substantively free of the fiction - lineated (but not spaced) so as to signal difference - poses as stage direction, but is really a case of narrative being itself. Woolf will not have it looking as if either her own, or La Trobe's, voice has *absolute* control. One is being conjured, not talked at. It is an arranged appearance; but the more general reader, whether or not too engrossed to notice, might still feel the effect.

La Trobe is most attached to her script just when hostility to her audience is rising. 'Miss La Trobe stood there with her eye on her script':

> 'After Vic.' she had written, 'try ten mins. of present time. Swallows, cows etc.' She wanted to expose them ... douche them, with present-time reality. [Surely, dramatising with a vengeance, a *forcible* assertion of the dramatic present.] ... Audiences were the devil. O to write a play without an audience - *the* play. But here she was fronting her audience ... she damned the audience ... This is death, death, death, she noted in the margin of her [entirely scripted] mind; when illusion fails. (130,131)

But it was no one other than herself who eschewed illusion, by her mirror-device of *forcing* the audience to front itself. If her ploy fails to work its work in present-time, it is because she has in a sense abdicated her drama as story, refusing to allow it, at the last, due narrativity. The pageant is her adopted action-mode, but she perversely declines to put on, finally, any act, or even to seem to appease her audience's need for action. To that audience, therefore, she remains 'Miss Whatshername', an outsider in all the wrong ways (143).

Accepting their metaphoric roles, Woolf's fiction and narration unite: 'he dropped her hand; and she gave him an arch roguish twinkle, as if to say - but the end of that sentence was [the tense matters] cut short' (146). The more general reader is likely to notice this, and to join with the artifact as it moves between the acts of reading and writing. As for La Trobe, 'Nature had somehow set her apart from her kind. Yet she had scribbled in the margin of her manuscript: "I am the slave of my audience"' (153. Again, the tenses are significant). To an extent, so is Woolf as she seeks her more general readership. But it took faith to give back to that audience less than the sensation it might want. In offering something of a foregrounded script, Woolf good-naturedly pleads that we ought not to forget that this is no more nor less than artifice. Giving her audience what may be read at a single sitting, she sides with their distractions, and minimises the intervals between reading-acts. It all serves to privilege the reader.

Yet to forgo a purely Conradian fight in the heart of darkness, or a belligerent narration in the heart of the second world war; to say ultimately of Giles and Isa, letting metaphor join with discursive action, that 'the curtain rose. They spoke' (159), was to affirm metaphor's capacity for joining fiction to narration, and reader to writer. The last sentences lead us into that secrecy which underlies discursiveness as action. It is a fit conclusion to what is, in reality, the scripted rehearsal for something Woolf was not yet ready to produce publicly.[25]

HUMOUR

I

If, as *Three Guineas* implies, a compulsory spectatorship was binding upon the bourgeois Victorian, Edwardian, and even Georgian woman, it was bound to make her feel a surface-phenomenon. Abroad, among foreigners with their unfamiliar language, and listening to operas whose form one was technically unable to grasp, but surrounded by knowledgeable devotees, and accompanied by male experts, such a woman might well feel excluded. Yet the experience, brought to order, could be useful in reading a life. As part of this bringing to order, Woolf's Bayreuth caricatures came easily to her: their energy arose from repression, their edge that of pure witness. Her satiric bent is too obvious to need labouring: *Freshwater*, *Orlando*, *A Room of One's Own*, *Flush*, and *Three Guineas* all express this side of Woolf. 'I want (& this was serious)', she wrote of *Orlando*, 'to give things their caricature value ... The vein is deep in me'; and yet she queried, shrewdly, 'but is it not stimulated by applause? over stimulated?' But conversely, Woolf's father, Leslie Stephen, had written in 1868: 'We have an unconquerable suspicion that a great deal of satire will have to be expended before women cease to be extravagant'.[1] There was, Woolf well knew, an audience for any extravagance, but also, for that very reason, a question of how far to rise to the demand. Nor was it entirely a matter of what the audience insisted on. Demand could in fact flow the other way. Susanne Langer connects audience-command with the comic: people, she says, have 'a spontaneous emotional interest [in comedy], yet a dangerous one: for it is easy and tempting to command an audience by direct stimulation of feeling and fantasy, not by artistic power'.[2] The easy response to easy applause is manipulation; and in that case, popular demand would merely produce facile authorial control, in a mutual power-relation of writer and readers.

Woolf said she 'discovered in writing The Years ... that you can only get comedy by using the surface layer'. But she had been turning surface-life to comic effect for a long time, so she means that the formal principle is no longer just instinctive, and that it is newly explicit to her mind. If then Woolf sought creatively to transform her spectatorial predicament, we would not expect her to rest content with that satiric vein which came with the speed of a reflex. It might be laudable, on reflection, that Ann Stephen 'thinks for herself, or has the youthful point of view naturally that we acquired through satire' in a comparatively less open milieu. Granted that this was perhaps the least malign end satire could be thought to serve, no one, even so, stays young forever, and perception comes to be more complex. This, in 1935, was among 'Ideas that struck me', namely,

> That the more complex a vision the less it lends itself to satire: the more it understands the less it is able to sum up & make linear. For example: Shre & Dostoevsky neither of them satirise.

Alex Zwerdling puts this rather well: 'A character into whose consciousness we enter fully and without intermediaries cannot be a satirical target'.[3] Understanding of complexity would grow from the spectator's increasing spiritual competence - a development concurrent with the way that literary powers continued to take confirmed precedence over those associated with the stage and all its emphases. Caricature does require creativity, Woolf thinks in 1939, albeit of a lower order:

> I read about 100 pages of Dickens yesterday, & see something vague about the drama & fiction: how the emphasis, the caricature of these innumerable scenes, forever forming character, descend from the stage. Literature - that is the shading, suggesting, as of Henry James, hardly used. All bold & coloured. Rather monotonous, yet so abundant, so creative: yes: but not highly creative: not suggestive ... Nothing to engender in solitude. (Second emphasis added)

Of course, Dickens's fictions were to some extent written for him to perform on his reading tours. But as a result, Dickensian character has its roots, which it never outgrows, in caricature, emphasising where the literary would suggest. The peculiarly Jamesian literariness, here contrasted with the theatrical, is absent.[4] But then, Dickens's fiction behaves like the minor Renaissance drama, being extremely active, and the spectators get no peace or quiet - the result, an abundant monotony. The spectating Woolfian mind loses attention after only a hundred pages, and, quickly typing the author, goes off to look for itself between Dickens's onstage acts. For to caricature is really to tell the audience what they are to think. Despite his populous fiction's talking of and to a society, it bespeaks a not entirely healthy communality, this ongoing confirmation of Dickens's audience in its lower creative demands. It is interesting to see how, in commenting on Orlando, J.J. Wilson seems to connect the comic mode in particular with this penchant for forcing to think:

> Anti-novelists ... are against not form, but formula ... No wonder they so often have recourse to the comic muse ... the anti-novel can be an important experience in the novelists' development and, they hope, in their readers' too ... Oh, it is a highly manipulative genre, the anti-novel, forcing us to think for ourselves.

Admittedly, we are made to think 'for ourselves'. But this coincidence of manipulation, force, and the comic seems important enough to remark. Conflating Wilson's and Langer's perceptions with Woolf's reading of Dickens, one begins to see satire and caricature as theatrical coercion, as an imposition on readerly solitude. Woolf's formal interest in, but faint praise of, Dickens points us towards her assessment of what the '*highly* creative' fiction would be like: an appropriation of dramaturgy that chooses to forgo rooting character in caricature, as being overly manipulative, or disrespectful of solitude.[5]

Because of her vision's emergent complexity, her wish to court but not appease, and her sense of the audience as a sharing of community, it is clear why satire or caricature, despite the guaranteed audience for it, could not be Woolf's end. This was the worrying thing about The Voyage Out, that she 'must go down to posterity the author of cheap witticisms, smart satires & even, I find, vulgarisms - crudities rather - that will never cease to rankle in the grave'.

Part of that novel's deplored wit was 'the satire of the Dalloways'. But Woolf proves unwilling to leave Clarissa Dalloway satirised. She proceeds to create, later, a sympathetic fiction for Clarissa as a character, and this symbolises a movement away from caricature and towards comprehension, rather than a use of caricature as the grain of characterisation. 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street' (1923), while seeing Clarissa as a philistine patriot, also gives her inner, and impulsive, compassions, imaginative limits, and self-judgement. Yet another instance of this trait, but in a shift from drama to non-fiction, is the empathic piece on Ellen Terry, which may be contrasted with the Terry burlesque of Freshwater. Against the comic vein, one may note Woolf's return from Rodmell (where 'we are a community') to Richmond, when she asks, 'why is life so tragic', admitting to 'a feeling of impotence' and 'melancholy', since 'life ... in our generation [is] so tragic', and so filled with 'agony ... violence ... unhappiness ... [and] stupidity'. Again, when 'reality ... was unveiled ... there was something noble in feeling like this; tragic, not at all petty ... I felt lonelier ... I'm an outcast'. 'I always feel pursued' by 'death & tragedy', she wrote in 1924. This sadness is not without its relevance to the pathetic comprehending of Mrs Dalloway. Zwerdling too addresses the question of why Clarissa migrates between books, but with incoherent results. He puts the problem succinctly: 'Why does Virginia Woolf take the fully satirized Clarissa Dalloway of her first novel ... and treat her with such loving charity in the later [novel]?' He says this movement shows Woolf's 'deep reluctance to reject a social system that - for all its gross inequities and moral blindness - had nurtured [Woolf] and was still sustaining [her]'. If that is so, then less than a hundred pages later in Zwerdling's line of argument, Woolf's reluctance has vanished, since Mrs Dalloway shows Woolf,

> not only fulfilling her ambition 'to critic ise the social system, and to show it at work, at its most intense,' but also contributing indirectly to its replacement by one less hostile to the buried life of feeling in every human being. She knew that even the most fundamental institutions and forms of behaviour could be altered.

For Zwerdling, then, the move from satire to comprehension is an act of charity towards a social system that was charitable to her, at the same time as it is an attempt to replace that same system through criticism. Zwerdling does not explain how both impulses are, or can be, resolved. James Gindin gives a good account of the formal facts, although he does not go far enough:

> Woolf's satire was generally colder, more snobbish, more obviously social and political, more direct and eviscerating, earlier in her career before the development of her ironically handled interplay of voices that qualified judgment or attenuated the satirical skewer.

Those are indeed the literary-aesthetic facts. But the present chapter wishes to ascertain just what it is that is finding expression in this significant form.[6]

1925 sees that much-quoted aside about the form of the novel: 'I will invent a new name for my books to supplant "novel". A new -- by Virginia Woolf. But what? Elegy?'[7] Comedy, caricature, satire - might they not appear culpable, given the terribleness of contemporary life? Zwerdling mentions as an 'important innovation', Woolf's challenging of 'the familiar distinction between objective and subjective observation. The tissue separating inner from outer becomes wholly permeable' (emphasis added). What this meant for any definition of the usual action/passivity nexus, and thus for tragic pathos, has been noted already. Zwerdling's permeableness resembles Mason's porosity: 'the truly tragic soul ... is like the chameleon in being responsive to all the winds and airs ... in the world of spirit. The essential condition for this tragic soul is that it should be porous'. This in turn evokes Woolf's own, Coleridgean speculation that 'the androgynous mind is ... porous'.[8] Woolf's negative capability, and its prefigurative verbal automaticity, will receive attention in due course. But to note her passivity before the tragic, is to deepen one's sense of her humour's active achievement. For tragic sense is not exclusive of comic truth: Sydney Waterlow, for one, saw 'clearly & comicly, but intimates that there are depths beneath'. Comedy need entail no avoidance of truth, but can proceed from rare perception of how matters stand. Kierkegaard insists that comedy is just as aware of incongruity as is tragedy: 'wherever there is life, there is contradiction, and wherever there is contradiction, the comical is present. The tragic and the comic are the same, in so far as both are based on contradiction; but *the tragic is the suffering contradiction, the comical, the painless contradiction*'.[9] Woolf's acute awareness of the real grounds for a sense of tragedy, did nothing to destroy her comic intuitions. It will not be adequate, therefore, to account for her movement away from caricature and towards comprehension as though this were an adoption of wholly tragic or elegiac vision, or an abandonment of the comic.

Seeing tragic truth comically would produce what, onstage, would be recognisable as tragicomedy, but Woolf's preference for the novel leads her to seek its literary realisation. Because the audience for it required entertaining, though not quite in the same way as James acknowledged a need for 'amusement', the comic medium of truth is retained as leavening a purely tragic vision. This valuation of the comic is very different from that of Friedrich Dürrenmatt, who says: 'Comedy is a mouse-trap in which the public is easily caught and in which it will get caught over and over again. Tragedy, on the other hand, predicated a true community, a kind of community whose existence in our own day is but an embarrassing fiction'. Even if we accept these latter remarks about true communality being rare in our century, we will still not find Woolf jettisoning the comic for an unmitigated tragic sense. As for that Jamesian 'amusement' or '*ground for interest*', it is not in itself specifically comic. But it is broadly useful as a reminder that for Woolf to seek an audience's entertainment through her regaling it with the comically true, is not for her to compromise herself, nor is it a grudged sop. It is important to notice, here, that for James, 'technical amusement' is what the *writer* must feel: the audience suffers 'extraordinary benightedness' and is 'infantine'.[10] Woolf is less aloof. Tragicomedy is provisionally more interesting to an alert audience than that which is readily recognisable as comical or tragic, not to say truer to life.

As if in symbol of her increasing tendency, Woolf hovers between the distilled satire of *Freshwater* and the pathos of the novel she was writing simultaneously with the farce, *Mrs Dalloway*:

> I wish I could write The Hours as freely & vigorously as I scribble Freshwater, a Comedy. Its a strange thing how arduous I find my novels; & yet Freshwater is only spirited fun; & The Hours has some serious merit. I should like though to get speed & life into it. I got tempted, a week ago, into comedy writing, & have scribb/l/ed daily, & trust it will be done tomorrow. Yet I feel some reluctance to screw myself to The Hours again.

The generic speed of farce would be desirable within the novel, but *Mrs Dalloway* has business too serious for that. However, something else is happening here. *Mrs Dalloway* is associated with Woolf's 'tunnelling process, by which I tell the past by instalments, as I have need of it. This is my prime discovery so far'. What Woolf hopes will be gained by this procedure is revealing:

> I should say a good deal about The Hours, & my discovery; how I dig out beautiful caves behind my characters; *I think that gives exactly what I want; humanity, humour, depth.* (Emphasis added)

The association of 'humour' with what is conventionally of the very greatest generality ('humanity') and most fundamental ('depth'), of course means that we are not likely to confuse *Mrs Dalloway*'s 'humour' with what is found in *Freshwater*.[11] It was Clarissa in *The Voyage Out* who was caricatural; Clarissa in *Mrs Dalloway* is not. The process is one of *comprehending* that character, and it grows from an increasing complexity of vision. Decanting dashing and reckless burlesque into *Freshwater* during the novel's composition evidently relieved the more serious effort.

This is so far only a partial account. For when Woolf mentions 'humour', it cannot be always taken for granted that she uses this word in its commonest meaning (though frequently she does), namely as synonymous with 'comedy'.[12] 'Humour' could be for Woolf a very high calling, as appears from the following diary entry on Violet Dickinson. After a while in company, Woolf notes, Dickinson,

> becomes humane, generous; shows that humorous *sympathy* which brings everything into her scope - naturally; with a touch of salt & *reality*; she has the range of a good novelist, bathing things in their own atmosphere too ... She ... has somehow *the allround imaginative view which makes one believe her* ... I kept looking at her large pleasant blue eyes, so *candid* & *generous*. (Emphases added)

Where in Woolf's world of values 'humour' ranks is obvious from the company it keeps. Nor is the coveted novelistic note absent: almost by definition, any novelist must want a vision whose comprehensiveness can induce the reader's believing assent. In this transaction, Conrad latterly began to fail, when he ceased to believe. It is clear, then, that Woolf's own intensely objective scepticism is tending to clear greater scope for a knowing generosity. The most humane sympathies; a sense of what is real, which is respect for the resident natures of things and persons, but also, like salt, surplus to that, the grace-note; panoramic imaginative scope; and noteworthy candour - it must be admitted that these faculties are rather more grand, and less easy to achieve, than satire or caricature. Woolf's brother Adrian has been mentioned earlier, and his resented exclusivity's effect upon his sister. But she could praise him for what he was worth, and her praise is the more convincing for appearing in her private diary. Adrian, she says,

> need not protect himself by any illusions. *He sees things as they are*. He is humorous, contented ... he *has this distinguished, cool, point of view*, *which always makes him good company, & admits him to any society* - if he wished for any society, which needless to say, he doesn't. (Emphases added)

He is like Bernhardt in this freedom from illusion. For a novelist who wants to be read, the attraction of a like conviviality with readers is clear.[13]

The creating of illusion in fiction is not best done, therefore, by those who need illusion, or comedy, to protect them from the tragic. Nor does it best come from those too much in need of their audience's approval or notional company. 'Humour' is in all cases the enabling state of mind. Hence it was complimentary for the *Times Literary Supplement* to call *The Common Reader* 'humorous, witty & profound', and judicious of it to separate wit from humour, however this may have been meant.[14] This 'humour' was not incompatible with tragic sense. Of certain poor Italians she encountered in 1933, Woolf (romanticising, no doubt) said they were 'impoverished ... sad, wise, tolerant, humorous'.[15]

Those peasants, even if sentimentally glamourised, were still spiritually superior to the philanthropists Samuel and Henrietta Barnett. That pair only repelled Woolf, with 'the peculiar repulsiveness of those who dabble their fingers self approvingly in the stuff of others' souls'. These Barnetts were, as might be expected, 'unquestioning & unspeculative', their 'coarseness' apparent in 'the smug vigour of their self-satisfaction' with its 'insensate' drive towards quantifiable spiritual success. In particular, they maintained this status of theirs by thriving on 'the adulation of the uneducated, & *the easy mastery of the will over* the poor'. That, Woolf could not help but find, was most provocative. She was moved to record her loathing of '*any dominion of one over another; any leadership, any imposition of the will*'. (Emphases added) Henrietta receives a special censure, as though more could have been expected of her sex: 'could any woman of humour or insight quote such paeans to her own genius?'[16] Irresistably, James comes to mind, and his adoration of his visitant genius, the object of his devotions. But two things need registering in Woolf's anti-Barnett remarks. One is the way in which 'humour' naturally aligns itself with personal and social truth. The other, equally important, is the implied non-authoritarian nature of this faculty. If caricature is in the habit of indicating to audiences what they are to think, then 'humour' is inclined to abdicate the bid for mastery and dominion, and to rescind the use of force or coercion, secure in its generosity. Karlheinz Stierle feels that 'new reading procedures required by modern experimental fiction' help to increase our 'given repertoire of reception'.[17] Humour, in Woolf's special definition, would require of us just such an enhanced receptivity, and that this 'humour' should seek its significant narrative form might be anticipated. The desired receptivity is not regrettably passive. It is, instead, a porous readership which submits to Woolf's stylistics, pathos, and comedy in a single act of absorption, letting these pass through the mind towards an end in which they exist undifferentiated, as in Chekhov. If this readerly passivity is simultaneously a readerly act, which it must be, the old dualism is undone, too, in the person of the reader, who comprehends by such reading the fiction's ends. No matter what the narrative techniques to which Woolf resorts, the aim is to realise humour in its appropriate form.While some readers remain insufficiently humoured, others, seeing Woolf's tragicomic spectacle mediated by her acting lyricism, feel that her vision is not only comic and sad, but also true and beautiful. These readers are likely to think less peremptorily, and to be more tolerant, towards experimental writing, to be patient of that which is not easily resolved.

So it is evident what Woolf means, by aspiring to bring into Mrs Dalloway 'humanity, humour, depth'. She fondly wished the writing of Freshwater might transfer by contagion some kind of dramatic immediacy to her novel. The segregation of quick farce, at any rate, did leave to her the more arduous task of rendering the novel humorous in the senses discussed. It should be clearer from her quoted remarks, that when she says in 1930, 'I am making up The Waves ... humour is what it lacks', the worry is not necessarily a concern for comedy.[18] It is manifest, too, that notions of genuine communality, as distinct from imposition or command, are interinvolved with the concept of humour. Woolf's intentions for Between the Acts can, on that reading, come as no great surprise therefore:

> why not Poyntzet Hall: a centre: all lit. discussed in connection with real little incongruous living humour; ... but "I" rejected: 'We' substituted ... "We" composed of very different things ... a rambling capricious but somehow unified whole.

'Humour' here is probably synonymous with 'comedy'; but the reader guesses this precisely because of those adjectives 'little' and 'incongruous', which do not attach easily to any larger meaning. Whatever the case, it is taking communality very far, for the 'writing "I"' to exchange itself for a 'writing "we"'.[19] This helps illuminate Woolf's ready willingness to foreground La Trobe's script, along with her declining to allow the playwright total control of it as a matter of dominion within that work. La Trobe, ungenerous to her audience, can produce any amount of caricature and satire which will instruct their response explicitly, telling them what to think, a case of easy mastery. She could not offer humour, because that would remain definitively beyond her empire. Of course, it is Woolf who arranges all this, so the question of control remains, and will resurface in discussion of her punning. Yet it is in the nature of novels to be figurative. The more general readership Woolf courts will likely feel involved in a shared production. Organic to that overall aim, La Trobe herself, surely among the easier targets of Woolfian satire, is more than comic, and we feel this character's pathos. She is not ultimately ridiculous, since Woolf's treatment of her opens out into 'humour'.

II

So far, it has been easier to say what 'humour' is not, than what, for Woolf, it is. We can more closely approach an understanding through returning for the moment to her words in praise of Adrian. To recapitulate: he is noteworthy, she says, for his 'distinguished, cool point of view', which she thinks of as a social grace: it 'always makes him good company, & admits him to any society'. This is high praise - of anyone. But how high a praise it is of someone of the male sex, will come into view after a reading of Woolf's seminal 1905 essay, 'The Value of Laughter', in which men are as a class relegated to solemnity, buffoonery, and commonplace, while women and children represent what is essential in humour and comedy.[20]

Woolf's piece made its appearance eight years after the publication of Meredith's 'An Essay on Comedy and the Uses of the Comic Spirit' (1897).[21] Meredith there theorised that comedy within a society was possible only alongside 'some degree of social equality of the sexes', which were, he said, not essentially dissimilar, merely conditioned to be so. To the extent that they were not in practice partitioned, to that degree comedy would be favoured:

> the gradual similarity of their impressions must bring them to some resemblance. The Comic poet dares to show us men and women coming to this mutual likeness; he is for saying that when they draw together in social life their minds grow liker; just as the philosopher discerns the similarity of boy and girl, until the girl is marched away to the nursery.

Without this assimilation, what becomes of comedy? Meredith thought that,

> where [women] have no social freedom, Comedy is absent: where they are household drudges, the form of Comedy is primitive: where they are tolerably independent, but uncultivated, exciting melodrama takes its place and a sentimental version of them ... But where women are on the road to an equal footing with men, in attainments and in liberty ... there, and only waiting to be transplanted from life to the stage, or the novel, or the poem, pure Comedy flourishes.

Comedy diminished with sexual inegalitarianism: where the comic could find a place, it was thanks to sexual equality. This state acknowledges men and women as two of a kind: Meredith is not for androgyny, but for sinking differences. Nor does he advance any metaphor of this comic joining, which will result from the sexes' being co-observers who 'both look on one object, namely, Life'. Observation must obliterate difference; and the comedy naturally produced would infiltrate the literary and performing arts. Marginalising women only guaranteed its disappearance.

The tenet which Woolf's own essay opposes is that,

> women ... may be tragic or comic, but the particular blend which makes a humorist is to be found only in men.

Kierkegaard's approach to this problem, though accented differently from Woolf's, bears interesting comparison to hers. He says, 'humour has its justification precisely in its tragic side, in the fact that it reconciles itself to the pain' by means of its using 'the comic aspect'. But if women are capable of such perceptions, then just why they cannot naturally be aware of the sometimes cruel distance between the comic and the tragic, seeing this ironically, is not clear. For, Kierkegaard asserts, 'in women one often finds humour but never irony ... a purely womanly nature will regard irony as a kind of cruelty'. It rather goes without saying here, that it is not women who will be suffered to ascertain just how womanly or otherwise they may be. The bachelor Kierkegaard has figured that there are degrees of purity in the matter. C.I. Glicksberg's point is sounder: 'Fundamentally irony springs from the knowledge that comedy and tragedy emanate from the same existential source'.[22] Pace Kierkegaard, it is possible to assume without strain, that the womanly humorist is capable of even cruel irony. She need not, to return to Woolf's summary, be merely comic 'or' tragic. She may well be both, and at the same time fully aware of the cruelly comic pathos expressed in the tension between these conditions.

So Woolf is having none of those masculinist distinctions. Men, she counter-claims, are habitually anti-humour, since tragedy, which is 'a necessary ingredient' of humour, has in their custody degenerated into 'the spirit', not of comedy, but 'of solemnity'; and there can be no mistaking this spirit's gender, which is 'masculine'. Faced with this risible being come a-wooing in his 'chimney-pot hat and long frock-coat', it is hardly surprising if 'irresistible laughter comes over /the feminine 'comedy'/'. Unable to control her fit of hilarity, she 'flies to hide her merriment'. In this way, comedy, and what passes for the tragic, are driven to opposite poles. The metaphor suggests itself: if this courtship is deferred, there will be no union, and so - inevitably - it will be true that 'humour very rarely comes into the world'. Quite in keeping with the climate of comparatively greater sexual frankness growing in the nineteen-twenties, Woolf can later, in A Room of One's Own, put a finer point on this imagery, suggesting that the man and the woman within the androgynous mind have fertile intercourse if the mind is to be 'fully fertilized' to the limit of its capacity.[23] If ever imagery of this kind occurred to Meredith, it is certainly not one which the acted manners of his time could have allowed him to utter openly. Indeed, it may be doubted whether anything of the fecundity Woolf has in mind could arise from the erasure of sexual difference. In Woolf's language, we reach the interface of metaphor and the literal. But it is symptomatic, that Woolf finds a metaphor for her meaning where Meredith does not, or rather, that her grasp of the literal processes involved needs to be perceived through metaphor. For the general dearth of 'humour' in the world, then, male pretence is responsible, not to say portentousness.

So, humour is 'too serious to be comic, too imperfect to be tragic', and one will frequently find, that 'what is superficially comic is fundamentally tragic, /and that/ while the smile /is/ on our lips the water ... stand/s/ in our eyes'. Distinct from this laughter which humour induces, Woolf discriminates, 'the laughter of comedy has no burden of tears'. Against the view of Dürrenmatt noted earlier, may be set that of R.G. Collins, who tells us, 'Comedy as a control on emotional response, and as an index to a self-awareness of essential human absurdity, can go to thoughts that lie too deep for tears, at the same time that it does a pretty good job on tears'.[24] This is roughly what

Woolf means when she separates tears from the notion of the comic. But the connection of comedy and control over audience response, as in Langer and Wilson, is once again noteworthy. To sign away a relatively crude author-reader transaction such as the comic-control mechanism affords, would take both writer and audience further into the realm of the unjudgeable, and would best be served by fiction's inhabiting of Chekhovian ambiguities while letting its characters live apart from writerly or readerly formula. Obviously, that is far more than comedy itself could be expected to accomplish, especially if the comic is understood to be, as Woolf appears to have thought, that hilarity triggered by the ludicrous or the ridiculous. To aim for 'humour' will entail abandonment of a certain desire for mastery over, first, the texture of life itself, and, second, the rendering of that fabric mimetically in literature for a readership.

Nevertheless, humour simply must have its comic element, because 'directly we forget to laugh we see things out of proportion and lose our sense of reality', of the comic surface - Sir William Bradshaw more damnable there than Septimus Smith. What it takes to laugh, is, 'to be able to see' anyone 'as he is', like the child in Hans Andersen who, as sole honest spectator, sees th Emperor is naked. If 'women and children ... are the chief ministers of the comic spirit', it is owing to an original literality, a clear-sightedness: 'their eyes are not clouded ... nor are their brains choked ... so that men and things still preserve their original sharp outlines'. As is understandable, therefore, 'children are feared by people who are conscious of affectations and unrealities', like that audience for the unintelligible children's song in The Years (327). For children are nothing if not literal. Women too, 'are looked upon with disfavour in the learned professions', Woolf says.

Humour is consequently chaste of perception, a matter of the keenest possible literalness of mind compatible with an authentic maturity. It comprehends tragedy, but will not admit solemnity on any equal terms. In fact (and here one could not ask Woolf to be more forthcoming on the point),

> Humour is of the heights; the rarest minds alone can climb the pinnacle where the whole of life can be viewed as in a panorama.

It is an advantage greatly to be wished. From some such height, Adrian Stephen and Violet Dickinson, master and mistress of pinnacles, looked upon life. This panoramic overview is also associated, for Woolf, with what Bernhardt does, and with the spectatorial, discursive activity of that whole sex which is so often obliged to be an onlooker, turning exclusion to effect. Literal-minded women and children laugh at the sanctuary's solemn exteriors. Woman, tragically an outsider, has a sharp sense of the absurd. Comedy is therefore possible, even under strain, in sexually inegalitarian societies. Woolf does not explicitly break with Meredith's view; but she would not have concluded that sexual comedy in a culture is proof that equality exists or is pending. She would have endorsed Ian Donaldson's modification of Meredith when he explains: 'We write comedies about Our Betters when Our Betters have real power. If such comedies depict an inversion or levelling of the social ranks, this need not mean (as Meredith supposed) that a society is in fact egalitarian'.[25] For example, Lisa Jardine's reading of the Renaissance boy player has already been referred to, in which plots, while seeming often to celebrate comic female triumphs, actually reinscribe the reign of male privilege. Yet the fact that such levellings are so often handled comically may imply a tacit link between comedy and the uses of power. This, in turn, is why Woolf will not pursue her comic power to the very limit, namely because to do so, to write comedy about those who, for the female sex, are Its Betters, is to enter upon an exchange of power for power, to be constantly responding and never initiating, to be active in a powerful sense easily recognisable as conventional, and *never to rise above* these lock-steps into a greater humanity. But if this is undesirable, then woman, compelled as it were for long enough to be satiric, is also provisionally the custodian of humour within that same competence which made of her an arbiter of dramatic action. Relegation increases satiric force, but it makes humour problematic, since 'humour' is consummated courtship, the joining, as in metaphor, of female with male, and the offspring of this union. Obliged to remain virgin, comedy will indeed have 'a hard time of it'; but humour will enter the world only through the success of that dramatised wooing, only by embodying in experience the literal premises of the sexual metaphor, as all metaphor must refer finally to the world. Without this, one is left with mysticism, and with endorsement or denial of sexual difference as mere melodramatic gesture. If men, empowered in a myriad ways, will not, because they need not, rise literally to true tragedy, what are they doing, but abetting and helping exaggerate female satiric powers? So the painfully clearer-sighted, and more literal-minded, sex will have to climb to that breadth of vision describable as 'humour'. Men are not tragic enough to be humorists. It is women's experience, rather than the master-sex's, which is grievous merely by virtue of gender. So that experience hones their satiric and caricatural faculties. But it also affords them, in this all-too-literal suffering, a requisite grounding. In token of their gift for amelioration and fusion, Woolf furnishes what Meredith does not - dramatic metaphor.

It is for woman to cross the literary kinds, then, in redaction of an unsuccessful courtship, as humour synthesises quite contrary states. It is understandable, that any move away from pure caricature and towards character, or away from the simply comic in favour of the humorous, will be able to express dramatic sense whilst absorbing Woolf's satiric and tragic visions, holding them in the poise of an emotional and mental androgyny; or, put otherwise, that dramaturgy should be crucial to humour's significant literary form. These proposals explain more than do Maria DiBattista's. She finds Woolf's work 'always straining to approximate the intensities of dramatic form'.

This she understands in terms not dissimilar to those of Gindin, namely, as a matter of imagination and of realised vocal complexity. 'In her bid to return to a more inclusive, impersonal narrative mode, Woolf rightfully saw the play, with its dramatic displacement of the imaginer into the imagined, the single speaker into many voices, as the generic model best suited to her needs and best understood by her audience'. DiBattista grasps this process as reaction against the modern novel's 'attempt to deal with the postromantic legacy of subjectivity' which had led to an 'egocentric and ... exclusionary point of view', and as being concordant with a 'philosophy of anonymity' evident since Mrs Dalloway. These insights, valuable as they are, do not situate the formal development within Woolf's existential or gender experience, and so they do not elucidate that development as personal and artistic achievement. For example, if we take Roger Henkle's comment about 'the readiness of the Victorians to oscillate directly between humour [he means comedy] and pathos', and concede that Woolf provides a like oscillation, nothing in DiBattista's account seems to explain the differences between these Victorian and post-Victorian praxes.[26]

Of the typical contemporary and near-contemporary male humorist Woolf says, by way of deflation:

> in trying to attain the humorist's point of view - in balancing himself on that pinnacle which is denied his sisters - the male gymnast not infrequently topples over ignominiously on to the other side, and either plunges headlong into buffoonery or else descends to the hard ground of serious commonplace, where, to do him justice, he is entirely at his ease.

To expand, here, upon Robert Baker's earlier point in chapter one, namely that Meredith for one did not manage in practice to bring off his balancing act between thoughtful and malignant comedy, the comic and the satiric, Kierkegaard may again be quoted:

> Humour has the comical within itself, and is justified in the existential humorist; for humour once for all in abstracto is as illegitimate as everything else that is in this manner abstract; the humorist earns his justification by having his life in his humour.

This resembles Woolf's idea which, incidentally, reduces the male humorist to a caricatural spectacle. The reason why so many of these descend quickly to buffoonery and commonplace is that they do not have the comic within themselves, do not *live* the comic. That is because, as the empowered sex, they are not in gender terms of an order which knows itself to be absurd, not seeing themselves as they are, being seen, instead, by women, whose lot is indeed absurd and a living-through of the ridiculous. Male and female comic sense is often at a certain mutual expense. It is not enough that men are ridiculous to watch and listen to. They do not *know* they are ludicrous; they are not existentially comic as are women, who feel almost too keenly the bitter stupidity of their idiotic situation in life. Thence it is that men, unable to rise to true tragedy because they are overly empowered as a gender, are likewise not able to produce true comedy, because they have no inward comic resource as a class. They cannot produce the balance of what they simply do not have. It falls to that other sex, only too aware of *being* ridiculously placed within the tragic, to achieve humour's pinnacle. But this entails an emphasis on, a commitment to, being, rather than to power, whether to masculinist power, or to the power of satire.[27]

III

The pungently 'smart satires' of *The Voyage Out* surround a tragic blank, Rachel Vinrace. In echoing off those walls, she receives back what sounds like a self once removed, the new role which she lacks. That she never arrives is surprising and pathetic. Yet her posturings en route need not be thought unreal, since they drape upon naked and secret female reality the socialisation of metaphor. This novel's metaphoric structuring, however, unconsciously caricatures the amplitudes of poetic control. It is, like the metaphoric logic of Hardy's *The Return of the Native*, a greatly overdetermined code, hermeneutically intent on telling us what to think. Christine Brooke-Rose may be allowed to explain what sort of problem this is:

> A code is overdetermined when its information (narrative, ironic, hermeneutic, symbolic, etc.) is too clear, overencoded, recurring beyond purely informational need. The reader is then in one sense also overencoded, and does in fact sometimes appear in the text, dramatized, like an extra character: the Dear Reader. But in another sense he is treated as a kind of fool who has to be told everything.

Woolf's own hermeneutic overencoding of The Voyage Out's governing metaphors probably stems from the common anxiety of a new novelist. But the frequency of these water-metaphors and images does tend to the caricatural, borrowing too much of that taint from the personae who are themselves mostly caricatures.[28] That being so, and regardless of where the fiction tends, the narration is somewhere short of generous, and does not achieve a narrative humour as defined in Woolf's terms.

The novel's central water-images, of which there are too many of too viscous a texture where they might have been more given to fluidity, evoke Woolf's quotation from Charlotte Brontë's impression of the great French actress Elisa ('Rachel') Felix (1820-1858), who is 'Vashti' in Villette. Lucy Snowe,

> had seen acting before, but never anything like this; never anything which astonished Hope and hushed Desire; which outstripped Impulse and paled Conception; which, instead of merely irritating Imagination with the thought of what might be done, at the same time fevering the nerves because it was not done, disclosed power like a deep swollen winter river, thundering in cataract, and bearing the soul, like a leaf, on the steep and steel sweep of its descent.

Despite what Rachel's Vashti had 'done', her praxis was entirely lost on that 'cool young Briton', Dr John, who sounds like an ancestor of St John Hirst. He told Lucy 'his opinion of, and feeling towards, the actress: he judged her as a woman, not an artist. It was a branding judgement'.[29] This strict separation of woman from artist is opposed by Woolf when, commenting on the angle of approach adopted by Felix's biographer, she calls him 'bold' for separating 'her "stage life and her real life"'. Woolf counters with a minor polemic against marriage:

> But what, after all, is one's 'own life'? Why should we draw these distinctions between real life and stage life? It is when we feel most that we live most; and we cannot believe that Rachel, married to a real man, bearing real children, and adding up real butcher's bills, would have lived more

> truly than Rachel imagining the passions of women who never existed /a fair summary, too, of Woolf's own, authorial praxis/.

The truly felt stage life was as real as any life offstage; perhaps, indeed, the more so, since,

> A great deal that is not felt comes into the life; there is a great deal of pose and bad art.

No pose, however, was Felix's melancholy. Its cause is cautionary:

> Scarcely anyone could be less trained or supported to stand the blaze of sudden and violent celebrity. But that was her fate before she was twenty. (Emphasis added)

Here, character is fate, as it is in Hardy; but so is publicity. As for the ontological and artistic status of what Rachel did, it was, in summary,

> not that she had been an actress, leading an unreal life, but that she might have been a greater actress, leading a still more real life.

The tone here is strongly partisan, in keeping with Woolf's excited and major interest in actresses. If one's latent power was a river-flow, its due outlet was authentic feeling, not premature and uncongenial posturing: it was the finding of a truly felt role. But marriage might not be that role. One might well be wholly untrained to abide married, as any other, publicity. Whatever the part one was to play, it must not be miscasting but must ideally flow with the current of one's being. 'Rachel' ought to be the stage name chosen by oneself, rather than one suddenly or violently imposed.

The tragedy of Rachel Vinrace, likewise, is that of a young woman passive and porous, choosing little or nothing for herself, drifting instead of having 'done', having great choices made for her. Marriage is a public role for which she is sexually untrained by her elders: the undertow of true feeling has not brought her naturally to this as yet unreal act. Judging this woman as artist in life, we might, if we were so minded, fault her for merely putting on, and for failing to *be*, her turn. But resignation affects the will to live of one who is not at any point exactly Rachel *felix*. Kierkegaard is illuminating here, if not always elsewhere, in clarifying the comic seriousness of marriage, and the earnest, personal telos (not fin) which imparts to it that comedy. He generalises:

> marriage is ... but a jest. This I perceive from the fact that when I bring marriage into relationship with the absolute telos, with an eternal happiness, and in order to be sure that it is the absolute telos I am thinking about, permit death to come between as arbiter, then I can say with truth: it is indifferent whether an individual has been married or not married ... Marriage is ... a jest which should be treated with all seriousness. This earnestness does not lie in marriage itself, but is ... a reflection of the husband's relation to his absolute telos, and of the wife's absolute relation to her absolute telos.

Marriage or singleness - both fall hilariously short of an eternal happiness, which for Kierkegaard is God-oriented. But on those very general grounds, marriage would indeed be fin, comic for Rachel, a somewhat ridiculous act, and something dissembled or feigned, even were Hewet woman enough to facilitate humour, and no matter how many scripted-sounding words about loving and marrying she mouths. Her non-orientation towards her own end, means that the conjugal looms with quite the wrong sort of seriousness, that it is too earnestly earnest. Painfully awkward and incongruous, it engenders just the kind of ardour which is comically absent from The Importance of Being Earnest. Rachel's play, after Kierkegaard, would need to be The Importance of Being. The choice, as it were, of death or marriage is a choice of ends, neither of them properly Rachel's. Interestingly, Kierkegaard himself, for whom marriage was no end to be consummated, is no stranger to acting, since he expressed his existential dialectics dramatically, through a series of personae.[30]

Had Rachel Vinrace been ready for the sudden publicity of marriage and fertile sexuality, her act would have been no less real for being an acted role. It would not have been histrionic. External it would have been, and all done in the public eye. She would then have shed some inwardness, and borrowed a useful exteriority from the surrounding caricatures, in a voyage out to endorsement of surface-life. This would have meant her rising to conscious sexual absurdity;

but not to the kind of awareness Dalloway inflicts, which in its villainous melodrama may strike readers as being both comic (for sheer spectacle) and sad (as comment on se xual manners) - for this expresses nothing of Rachel's choice. Susan's and Arthur's stock courtship is the sort of comedy to which Rachel and Hewet might attain. Beyond that, perhaps, they might borrow something from the playfully satiric and sexually mature Ambrose marriage.

Readers of The Voyage Out are always recalled to the top or surface of its world's imagined corners. The metaphorising is emphatic to that end, and adopts a mannered discursive action unready to appear publicly on its own terms, not like the verbal and imagistic surfaces Woolf would later inhabit. There are no doubt a number of reasons for Rachel's eventful and poetically overdetermined decline. None of them is inconsiderable or a matter of mere inability. Madeline Moore suggests one: 'the resolution /Helen/ triggers has about it the inevitability of Greek tragedy' with its 'social fate' and its 'terrible fatality'. The classical mythos was indeed inexorable, one can readily agree. This model, its metaphorising frequently marshalled towards catastrophe, was intimately, and early, known to Woolf. More generally, the approach of the Great War was perhaps also influential. The kind of rhetoric which echoed around Europe found the British public (in 1914) positively willing war. This might have induced anxiety to render a narrative 'active' in compensation for its as-yet-uncourageous tableau of meaningfully tragic passivity, and its distancing from the English. Activity was in the air, earthed through Woolf, a natural sensitive. By contrast, the absence of conventional poetising from Night and Day may express a wish to be done with even the appearance of any role in the least assimilable to approved ways of being active, the bankruptcy of which had become grotesquely obvious. Night and Day's way of being poetic is concerned with the personal and societal bases of metaphor as a 'joining' - newly aware, as it seems to be, of the need to produce communality. If this should be thought plausible, then Woolf's fictive decisions anticipate her much later polemic against the privileging of the conventionally active mode. Night and Day's length and stillness require another order of attention, even while Woolf (as the final chapter will mention) is becoming conscious that she has a readership.[31]

Lyrically, then, The Voyage Out over-acts somewhat, and its bloom glows towards the purple end of the spectrum. But the Euphrosyne's voyage to Santa Marina gives passengers opportunity to behold from afar the strangeness of the English. We share this spectatorship:

> A glance [but whose? ours as much as anyone's] into the next room revealed little more than a nose, prominent above the sheets. (104)

The objects of our glance, namely all those caricatures - Pepper, Ambrose, St John Hirst, Vinrace, the Richmond aunts, Miss Allan, the Dalloways, Susan and Arthur, Evelyn M., Mrs Flushing, Mrs Paley, among others; the satirising spectator Helen; and the abstract spectator Rachel, are singly, and cumulatively, incitements to outwardness. For 'the eyes of Rachel beholding [life] were positively exhilarating to a spectator' (267).

A fat woman squeezed into tight clothing passes at the dance, and Helen exclaims, 'What sort of shape can she think her body is?' The shape in question is then mercilessly detailed; and what the Helen of fiction was content to imply, narration renders explicit. For one thing, this woman's companion has 'globular green eyes set in a fat white face'. Her own 'upper part ... hung considerably in advance of her feet'. To say the least, her physicality is drawn to our notice, and in no nuanced terms:

> her short neck was encircled by a black velvet ribbon knobbed with gems, and golden bracelets were wedged into the flesh of her fat gloved arms. She had the face of an impertinent but jolly little pig, mottled red under a dusting of powder. (159)

Woolf found this sort of thing easy. Yet the surface animosity applauds the woman's depth of ignorance of the standards of that audience (us) beyond the immediate one for which she had dressed up. Even this account of Woolf's caricature, however, must defer to some observations of Pirandello's. Eric Bentley makes use of them, saying,

> Pirandello clarifies the old distinction [of wit and humour] in his essay, 'L'umore', when he remarks that if you see an old woman with dyed hair and too much make-up, and she strikes you as ridiculous, you have only to go on thinking about her to find her sad. 'Humour' in writing is to include both these elements, where 'wit' would rest content with the first.

In that case, the spectacular shock of this woman is an intimation of pathos.[32] Whatever the truth, Rachel's essential lack of shapeliness is all the more painfully evident when set alongside this woman's loud form. Hence the bid to marry against her drift comes to grief. She can never become as public as this woman, but sinks to where no one will follow. Hewet's misery is pathetic. But The Voyage Out gives us two chapters beyond the death of Rachel, and one of these contains that hilarious scene where deaf Mrs Paley has to have news of the tragedy repeatedly bawled at her (368,369). This could not be considered a comedy having no burden of tears. One is witnessing a final effect not comic or tragic, but unresolved and blended. Woolf's movements answer to Mason's pertinent reminder: 'We lose the tragic if we try to exploit pathos to the limit. It is the work of a superior poet to make the listeners do all the work ... it is far more effective to make the audience think you have been crying than to present them with streaming tears'.[33]

Rachel's marriage, had Hewet been its sole motive force, might have attained to humour. This is hinted in Evelyn's saying of Hewet: 'There's something of a woman in him' (253). Woolf's 1905 essay had observed that laughter 'seems to belong essentially and exclusively to men and women' as against animals and angels, neither sex precluded. But the masculine spirit of solemnity (a poor 'decorous substitute' for tragic sense) alienates the comic by being itself a standing caricature, so that the synthesis of humour is rarely brought to birth. Some man with a little of the woman in him might help restore the androgynous economy. Rachel rises, in our eyes, to a comic sexual pathos she does not know she has, the spectacle moral without being moralistic, but she does not advance to sexual humour. This is tragic for her, and The Voyage Out attempts to see the debacle humorously or tragicomically. In part it does so through a final reticence about Hewet, that projected novelist of Silence (220). The suffering of his continuing loss lies secret behind the hilarity of the Mrs Paley farce. As for Rachel, she could hardly have remained callow and been humorous. Of Sheridan's comedy Woolf wrote in 1909: 'The most profound humour is not fit reading for a girls' school, because innocence is supposed to ignore half the facts of life, and however we may define humour, it is the most honest of the gifts'.[34]

IV

Hewet's infertile wish for a fiction about the unsaid (and The Voyage Out's silence about him after Rachel's death), alerts us to the life offstage, again as in Chekhov, and foregrounds that which is tragically unsayable. Concurrent with the obituary shouted at Mrs Paley, this characterises The Voyage Out as ludicrously sad, and as disastrous comedy with a burden (load/proffered meaning) of tears. As 'An Andalusian Inn' (1905) shows, however, satire of the unsayable precedes Woolf's arrival at humour.[35]

This extended anecdote is, to steal the words of Bottom's mechanicals, a most lamentable comedy, and it relates Woolf's efforts to find a night's lodging in a small rural Andalusian town. Directed by a Granada hotelier to his crony's cottage some distance off, the farce begins on disembarking at the recommended town, which clearly lacks any inn. 'We produced the careful arrangement of Spanish words in which we signified our desire' for quarters, says the self-mocking genteel Englishwoman abroad. But this care was every bit as misdirected as the travellers themselves: 'At length, after much Spanish, French, and English had clashed unprofitably, it dawned upon the natives that we did not speak their language'. All is not lost, all the same:

> Presently an official appeared who informed us that he could speak French. Our request for an hotel was joyfully translated into that language. "The train goes no further to-night," answered the interpreter. "We know that, and therefore we wish to sleep here," we said. "To-morrow morning, at 5.30." "But to-night, an hotel," we insisted ... We ... vociferated "hotel" first in French and then in three different kinds of Spanish.

The official 'could speak French, but did not think it essential to understand that language', much as Bottom et al could stage drama, but thought it unnecessary to grasp the nature of dramatic illusion. They were given an anteroom in the cottage where, at last, 'we fell asleep ... and dreamed that we had found the Spanish word for "inn"'. A dream is the cure for everything. The foreign unsayable also yields satire in Woolf's Bayreuth correspondence. True, it can possibly exclude - as Sophocles' Greek script, or even, for some readers, the untranslated French might in The Years (292,315). As with the English in South America in The Voyage Out; Orlando when abroad; the Australian Louis in England, in The Waves; or the homosexual Nicholas in London in The Years, alienness has its natural distancing effect, creating spectatorships useful for differing fictive purposes. But in 'An Andalusian Inn', the lingua franca's failure is unadulteratedly comic, although what is portrayed is no less than the impossibility of community. This can never be tragic, so long as one may find the lost word in a night's dream. Comedy of the unsayable such as this, causes an uncomplicated laughter which is not at all tearful.

It could be characteristic of Woolf to seek expansion of such comedy into humour, which in this case would be a humour of the unsaid. Such a treatment, already present in The Voyage Out, becomes more prominent in Night and Day. Notably unsaid is the titular metaphor, which occurs once only in a very long novel, but which is implicit, subtextual in the symmetries and asymmetries of character and situation (306). Night and Day denudes itself of any received or stock poetry of that kind which washes through The Voyage Out. The case for metaphor is entirely re-grounded in its social bearing: it is the expression of joining, of bringing into community, so that this novel, less ostensibly given to metaphor than its predecessor, is in fact more profoundly committed to it, only now it becomes a poetry of scene. The incomplete poem which Denham cannot write for Katharine, who is anyway not a willing audience, figures Woolf's chastening of her facility:

> he began to write on a sheet of draft paper what had the appearance of a poem lacking several words in each line ... /but/ he threw away his pen ... violently ... and tore the paper ... This was a sign that Katharine had asserted herself and put to him a remark which could not be met poetically. Her remark was entirely destructive of poetry, since it was to the effect that poetry had nothing whatever to do with her. (440)

Lyricism as active indulgence recedes, and we are left contemplating groups of figures (going in and out of rooms changing their minds about whom to marry) whose action is purely discursive.

Countering these talkative surfaces, is Katharine's only too palpable silence. Five or six chapters into Night and Day, this begins to exert itself as a narratively active silence. It is in comic contrast to her mother's volubility (275,276). 'You know how silent Katharine is', says Mrs Hilbery, and indeed we do (127). But her daughter's is a complex silence, at once voluntary and enforced, 'both natural to her and imposed upon her', 'a habit that spoke of loneliness and a mind thinking for itself', possibly even 'the silence of one who criticizes' (40,52,53,78. Emphasis added). Masculinist lyrical expressivity does not speak to this female secrecy, hence the rejection of Denham's poetry. But the silent solitude rather defines all surrounding chatter, naturalising one woman's experience of cultural 'acting' as performed demureness, which Katharine simply dwells in more than her audience have asked her to. Her habit of quiescence speaks where she does not. The metaphor, which is narratival rather than fictive, suggests that - uncomfortable as this becalming may be in a society dependent on the constant act of small talk - hers is not in itself an antisocial silence, for it speaks and can be heard. Rightly then, since it seeks community, it is announced in the narrative metaphor as an invitation to join Katharine. Less rightly, it also invites mystification. She has reason to complain of 'the myth about me'. And it bespeaks critical spectatorship, but of something less than drama: 'love ... remained something of a pageant to her', we are told (95,123).

Katharine's stillness is unsettling. It relieves her mother's endless talkativeness, and reveals it to be oriented towards forms of social joining uncongenial to Katharine herself. For except in the usual drawing-room tea party sense, Katharine is not conventionally sociable. Her mother goes around 'exuberating in an infinity of vocables', as the mimetic narration says (275,276). But - ambivalent task as it is for any woman - Mrs Hilbery is well placed to resolve the tragic impulses of the surrounding young men within her own comedy:

> Ralph found that Rodney had now joined their company. The two men glanced at each other. If distress, shame, discomfort in its most acute form were ever visible upon a human face, Ralph could read them all expressed beyond the eloquence of words upon the face of his unfortunate companion.

It will take something extra to 'join' this company, something which in theory considers nothing beyond the eloquence of words:

> Mrs Hilbery was either completely unseeing or determined to appear so. She went on talking; she talked, it seemed to both the young men, to some one outside, up in the air. She talked about Shakespeare, she apostrophized the human race, she proclaimed the virtues of divine poetry, she began to recite verses which broke down in the middle. The great advantage of her discourse was that it was self-supporting. (444)

Of course, so is her daughter's discourse of silence; only that discourse will not incidentally support certain kinds of social fusion, like the producing of amity between those pained young men with their competing interests in Katharine. Mrs Hilbery, it seems, understands all along that Ralph and her daughter are kindred, and it is this secret unity which, underlying the more explicitly public kinds, also makes the specialised sexual untruthfulness of that society insupportable in the longer run. Woolf is nowhere closer to Wilde than in this novel, and the stripping-away of excess imagery, in reflection of the purging of manners, aspires to dramatic economy. Aptly, the relationship of Katharine and Denham is a marriage of mathematical secrecy and mute doodles, a sharing of 'undeveloped shapes', the sexual comedy and still pathos of what cannot possibly ever be said by these two people. Their courtship shows the importance of earnestness about being (447).

For Katharine's interested male spectators, her own spectatorship renders her a mystifying spectacle. For her, it sharpens the others' outlines as pure sight. Rodney ridiculously frets that she is mocking him. Denham believes in the words of 'the real Katharine' (131). These are wild misperceptions in either case. Katharine is as uncharted as Rachel Vinrace; and others' ignorance of her is touchingly funny, in a humour of the unutterable Katharine, given the potential, here, for sad disappointment and for comic surprise. That her silence has the power to be literally injurious is evident from a scene involving Mary Datchet. Mary herself loves Denham. Yet she comforts Katharine, who has panicked, thinking Denham lost to her; and she escorts her home to where Denham has been awaiting her - an act of considerable altruism on Mary's part:

> 'At last,' Katharine breathed, as the cab drew up at the door. She jumped out and scanned the pavement on either side. Mary, meanwhile, rang the bell. The door opened as Katharine assured herself that no one of the people in view had any likeness to Ralph. On seeing her, the maid said at once: 'Mr Denham called again, miss. He has been waiting for you for some time.' Katharine vanished from Mary's sight. The door shut between them, and Mary walked slowly and thoughtfully up the street alone. (409)

Active silence now transfers its energy to Mary, whom the reader is asked to join. Mary is hurt, and, to the extent that we sympathise, so are we. It is not a moral pathos, however, but one of spectacle. For Katharine and Ralph are as blinkered as lovers anywhere, and their comically typical selfishness cannot bring condemnation upon them, any more than Jacques has a right to bring it down on Audrey and Touchstone; and this remains true even if we feel troubled for Mary Datchet. Katharine's silent leave-taking of Mary figures the silencing of facile judgement. It is silence - fictive and narrative - become metaphor, joining disparate characters within one spectacle, and the readers to the characters.

Rodney's sexual candour is likewise hard-won. Newly affianced to Cassandra, he is the sort for whom a formal abrogation of his previous engagement to Katharine is necessary. The relevant passage, in its modulations of realism and symbolism, comedy and pathos, has a Chekhovian texture. On one hand, one knows well enough that the human crisis here enacted is in its own right serious; but equally, there is an ambiguity as to just how seriously to take this incident, or, more accurately, with what kind of seriousness:

> Two emotions seemed to be struggling in Katharine; one the desire to laugh at the ridiculous spectacle of William making her a formal speech across the tea-table, the other a desire to weep at the sight of something childlike and honest in him which touched her inexpressibly. To everyone's surprise she rose, stretched out her hand, and said: 'You've nothing to reproach yourself with - you've been always -' but here her voice died away [back into its accustomed silence], and the tears forced themselves into her eyes, and ran down her cheeks, while William, equally moved, seized her hand and pressed it to her lips. (450)

Because what William has 'been always' is specific, Katharine's silence on it becomes dramatic. This value is a function of repression, also of compression, since the silence is no longer as diffuse as it had been, but is now gestural. Appropriately, the movement is towards presentation of a quite pure, non-judgemental scene. Comedy recedes, and defers to humour. As silence becomes specifically metaphoric, and pointedly gestural, the token of what it distils - at the same moment the broad impulse is away from comic specificity, in favour of something more troubled.

Much the same thing is happening when Katharine tells her father of her engagement to Denham. In his shock at the anti-proprietorial fact that Katharine loves this young man, he must face it that he is not at the living centre of her life:

> 'I gathered something of the kind last night,' he said. 'I hope you'll deserve her.' But he never looked at his daughter, and strode out of the room, leaving in the minds of the women a sense, half of awe, half of amusement, at the extravagant, inconsiderate, uncivilized male, outraged somehow and gone bellowing to his lair with a roar which still somehow reverberates in the most polished of drawing-rooms. Then Katharine, looking at the shut door, looked down again, to hide her tears. (452,453)

It is a telling play, this comic-pathetic force unresolved and articulated in the double 'somehow'. Virginia Blain finds here 'the comic sight of Mr. Hilbery, the Victorian father fearfully jealous of his daughter's love and liberation from paternal control', which is 'far more artistically convincing' than Mrs Hilbery's 'sentimentality'. Blain thinks Mrs Hilbery 'has escaped authorial control and is allowed to give a false shape to the action'. But this cruel pleasure in Hilbery as purely comic, along with the charge that Woolf does not sufficiently control his wife, is what one has come to expect of a certain way of reading. It simply ignores Katharine's weeping - a complexity which must be given due weight in any assessment of the 'control' Woolf attempts. As to why a Woolfian comedy of the male psyche is considered welcome in some quarters, this will be touched upon in the final chapter.[36] Katharine is forced to put on an act, to hide, and manages, indeed, to hide from Blain. The passage also reaches through its verb tenses into the dramatic present, before resuming the narrative past behind which Katharine's weeping is concealed. There is nothing else for it: if women are socially to be little more than spectators, then individual men will become typed ('the ... male') as Rodney finally is not, becoming mere spectacle, and this will not be a grand spectacle, but silly and disturbing at once ('ridiculous ... barbarous ... displeasing', as Three Guineas would later put it (25)).

Here and throughout Woolf, women have a dramatic and humorous sense which helps express for them that which is by any other means unsayable. Blain has faulted Night and Day, in effect for being humorous in these respects:

> There is a strong comic vein in the novel, introducing a note of hilarity or even farce ... part of the comparative failure of Night and Day as against The Voyage Out ... springs from the imposition of a comic-romantic ending upon a story which has placed so much stress upon the tragic impossibilities in life ... There are some wonderfully managed passages ... but the burden of seriousness placed on Ralph sits oddly with the flashes of comedy that illuminate other aspects of the novel.

It is interesting that Blain should associate the comic, here, with an imposition by the author. But, humour being a synergy, the comic and tragic impulses which disturb Blain are really neither incongruous nor essentially in competition. Douglas Hewitt, too, cannot find anything in Mrs Dalloway other than a similar polarity, although his criticism is couched in more theatrical terms:

> there is an ambiguity in Mrs Dalloway which seems to me even more damaging ... a radical ambiguity in the judgements which we are invited to make ... we can see Mrs Dalloway as a woman who [gives] joy and love by her gallantry and her power to feel.

This would make of Clarissa a festively comic figure. 'Or', Hewitt continues,

> we can see her as a remarkably self-dramatizing woman ... the two utterly opposed views constantly jar on one another ... the ambiguity ... evades the issues ... refuses to decide between incompatible views and ... seeks therefore to dazzle us with momentary set pieces.

But it is really on Hewitt that the two views jar. With more sympathy and truth, Deborah Guth shows that no fatal ambiguity exists in this novel:

> If one looks closely ... this inner world [of Clarissa's] is ... largely composed of strangely stylized gestures ... this 'real' inner world is itself a ... form of self-dramatization created for herself and duplicating rather than contradicting the somewhat artificial external life she leads. Just as her social self, she feels, is gathered up for presentation to an external audience, so also her inner world is an ingathering of images and imagined gestures ... The third-person 'she' as well as the impersonal 'one' through which these images are rendered are thus not only a stream-of-consciousness device for entering her mind; in fact, they mainly serve to express the distance Clarissa takes as she constitutes herself both actor and audience.

Clarissa's social acting is spiritually expensive, and her own solitude is dogged by theatrical form; but the fictional spectacle cannot be found wholly tragic, nor can Clarissa be pitied for finding a way of being which uses the forms of behaviour most to hand in her milieu and potentially destructive of the private life. A limitation and a freedom simultaneously, the global fiction enacts, here as in Night and Day, the tragicomedy of this inner drama.[37]

Women are not automatically humorous by virtue of sex (witness the fictively humourless La Trobe, and also Doris Kilman), so this is not an essentialist quality, but an achievement. But that fictive characters should come short of it is no impediment to the female novelist's seeking it procedurally, even to the point of formal experimentation so as to find what signifies humour. Constantly in Woolf's work we encounter characters at the same time risible and pitiable. Outside of the generically comic works like Freshwater, Orlando, and Flush, Woolfian comedy will be found to carry a burden of tears. It is witnessed from a height of vision seeking expression as tragicomedy.

V

The Voyage Out is a humorous fiction, but this goes unsupported as yet by the narration, which is mannered, overly emphatic, and still unready to trust the audience. The novel is therefore thick with received ways of being poetic. Night and Day abandons that particular kind of narrative manipulation, in favour of a poetics of fictive humour unimpeded by marked narratorial coding. Jacob's Room seeks, as further means to this end, an experimentally humorous fiction whose narrativity is this time integral to it, its form significant.

Woolf did not produce a theory of humour (or for that matter a theory of anything). Her remarks on the subject, if used provisionally, are nonetheless helpful to a reading of her. One should not do this too solemnly. Yet humour has, in her hands, serious ends; and that early idea of the androgyny of humour seems important. Here again, though, one would not want to pin Woolf wriggling to the wall by overreading her 'androgyny'. Blain does the service of reminding us that,

> too much can be made too easily of Woolf's so-called 'androgynous ideal', and ... we should perhaps remain wary of pursuing it through her works with a kind of single-mindedness that was never exhibited by their author.

Of course, Blain really ought to concede that there are other sorts of single-mindedness never shown by Woolf, for example any necessary segregation of comedy from tragedy of the kind Blain believes to exist in Night and Day.[38]

One can endorse Barbara Hill Rigney's 1984 argument, that feminist readers, to mention only one section of Woolf's audience, might profitably take some of Woolf's key metaphors ('androgyny' is one) with less doctrinaire earnestness, in favour of renewed openness to what is styled her 'empathy'.[39] In the 'Laughter' essay, Woolf notes a cultural penchant, strong at the time, in which 'we go to funerals and sickbeds far more willingly than to marriages and festivals'. Her gentle caution may be contrasted with John Mepham's simplistic prognosis of 'Virginia Woolf's obsession with mourning'. To be fair, he does go on to say, quoting Woolf's essay 'Modern Fiction' on Chekhov's story 'Goussiev':

> What makes /it/ so appealing for Virginia Woolf is its uncommitted tone ('it is impossible to say "this is comic", or "that is tragic"').

But this is no simple pleasure in uncommittedness. It is in truth commitment in quite another direction, one which undercuts the alleged mourning-obsession. Tony Davenport has in fact analysed Woolf's 1923-25 revisions of 'Modern Novels' (1919). This became the crucial 'Modern Fiction', which is important in tracing her developing dramatic and tragicomic feeling (though that is not Davenport's own concern).He is careful to say that the famous 'gig lamps' sequence 'has become so familiar that one has forgotten what it first meant'; and he notes how 'even critics who are still using ... the essay ... to provide a framework of theory tend to avoid it as a cliché'. Davenport then quotes the original version of the 'gig lamps' passage:

> Is it not possible that ... if one were free and could set down what one chose, there would be no plot, little probability, and a vague general confusion in which the clear-cut features of the tragic, the comic, the passionate, and the lyrical were dissolved beyond the possibility of separate recognition?

In the revised form of the essay, this reads as follows:

> If a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style.

This passage, originally and in revision, shows Woolf's wish to be free of the stylistic and conventional compulsions separating tragic from comic effects, and also her awareness of dramaturgy. The revisions are not careless, and only a very special reading could find in them any movement towards the 'uncommitted'. Woolf's pleasure, also present in this essay, over the Chekhovian fictive tragicomedy, is indissolubly linked to her speculations about a possible novel-form which, as one aspect of its dramaturgy, accepts no clear distinction of the tragic from the comic.[40]

The Chekhov reference is also interesting in view of Chekhov's eventual counter-Jamesian move from fiction to drama. Indeed, Woolf's story 'Uncle Vanya' (c 1937) is constructed around the missed pistol-shot, an inconclusive action new in the history of Russian catastrophe. The comedy of this bungled murder exists in tension with comedy's usual preference for active modes and unambiguous actions. Chekhovian action is often more than, or less than, it seems; and that is perhaps the operative word here, 'seems', since Chekhov's actions are seemings. As such, they fully accept their status in the drama, and so, frequently in Chekhov, one feels as though drama had come home to itself. It would be possible to rewrite Chekhov in ways that masculinise him. Paul Taylor complains that Helen Cooper's Mrs Vershinin does this to Three Sisters. In Cooper's mirror-image play, 'the events of Chekhov's drama formed the off-stage background and ironic counterpoint to the action'. The effect of this was, Taylor thinks, undesirable:

> Such ironies had their drawbacks, however. Depending on the off-stage world being known in precise detail, they removed from Cooper's quasi-Chekhovian play one of the elements that makes Three Sisters distinctively Chekhov - the sense of concurrent, unknowable lives being lived just out of view. Unfortunate, too, were the flashbacks which equipped the oppressed Army wife with a complete psycho-history, turning her from a shadowy fringe figure to a crudely-known, centre-stage quantity.

This is to render Chekhovian action less seeming and more action; but his characters lose their solitude in the process. The drama may become more ideological, but it is not for that reason more dramatic. It is not a transformation of which Woolf is ever guilty. Cooper sounds a little like La Trobe, obliging us to know certain things. Not only would Woolf have considered art like Mrs Vershinin too clever, and for that reason beneath her, she would have suspected any cross-reference between genres or within a genre, which failed to leave essential privacy in place, and with it, a space for audience interpretation. It is ironic that feminist rewriting like Cooper's can end up requiring the audience passively to watch what has been laid on.[41]

The comic plot of Night and Day, thinks Josephine Schaefer (cited by Nancy Topping Bazin) derives from Twelfth Night. Bazin mentions Schaefer's listing of 'disguise, mistaken identity, coincidence, and the last-minute happy ending in this, the most complicated of Virginia Woolf's plots'. She then quotes Woolf's complaint about Renaissance plots; and concludes that Woolf 'seemingly used a Shakespearean-type plot in Night and Day in playful protest to the continued demand'. It is not clear what 'playful protest' means here; nor, to judge from certain diary and letter extracts quoted in the first chapter of this thesis, is one convinced that Woolf really disliked any 'continued demand' for Shakespeare. The formal idea is intriguing. But there is a need to insist on the irreconcilable Malvolio's dark note, presumably echoed in Mr Hilbery: the suppressing and exclusion of a risible but truculent puritanism could never be matter for pure comedy.[42] Night and Day, in summary, is neither wholly comic or tragic: it seems both. As J.J. Wilson, praising Orlando in terms of Chekhovian tragicomedy, notes: 'To learn how not to have to end his plays with a pistol shot was Chekhov's great ambition; may it also be the ambition of our new androgynous and fully human history'. This accords with Woolf's 1919 wish to be freer of 'catastrophe' in the received sense.[43]

By recommending marriage and festival, Woolf introduces, momentarily, a festive theory of the comic which is better instanced in Mrs Dalloway and To the Lighthouse than in the novels discussed in this chapter. Mikhail Bakhtin is useful on festive comedy or the carnivalesque: 'carnival', he says, 'does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators ... Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people. While carnival lasts, there is no other life outside it'.[44] This is what Clarissa Dalloway accomplishes when her parties are successful, or Mrs Ramsay, around the meal table and in the garden. The Voyage Out is not festive. It latterly hovers around Rachel's sickbed, though with, as Woolf understands it, humorous or tragicomic intent. The 1905 essay likewise counsels against masculinist solemnity. Nor is the advice unnecessary. In considering 'whether feminist theory should be "mainstreamed" or kept a separately identifiable entity', Rigney thinks Woolf's feminist audience should be vigilant not to 'risk ... credibility as thinking scholars'.[45] It is a somewhat humourless worry, this concern for academic respectability, and of precisely the kind mocked in Woolf's piece. Academic feminism may become the ironic victim of its own need to be taken seriously, which is why Hélène Cixous's warning carries the weight it does:

> There are two types of knowledge: there is the knowledge we learn here in universities, which is the knowledge of knowing, which has to do with mastering; and there is another type of knowledge, which does not derive from higher education, but from the highest education, and that is knowing through pleasure - it is pleasure itself.

For Woolf, the hilarious clear-sightedness of women exists, in the 1905 essay, because they have no access to the master's crude and ponderous knowledge. Women dally with truth. This idea is very ancient. In Hebrew scripture, Jehovah's feminine wisdom is poetically thought of as being creative through play (Proverbs 8.1-3,30,31; 9.1-3). It would indeed be sobering to watch academic feminism seduced into being portentous, but it is refreshing to have Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva, among others, emphasise the ludic. However, even this inhabiting of the ludic may itself suffer, because of its being systematic, the trace of what is absent but inscribed, becoming autoerotic. It might also narrow towards comedy as a specific, and in particular caricature; but these are points to consider later.[46]

Many feminists of the nineteen-seventies, anxious that university English departments should treat their approach with the respect it merited, and involved in whatever activisms were required to that end, solemnly indicted Woolf for not offering a politicised feminism of the kind they would have found immediately useful. The phenomenon had its consequences for the reading of Woolf, and will be worth exploring further in the final chapter. Similarly, if The Voyage Out's tendency, and indeed all of Woolf's fiction, is towards what this chapter has discussed as 'humour' or tragicomedy, it is important to recognise that Woolf cannot be accused of being systematic; and so this argument's premises may be withdrawn as soon as offered, or at least, kept in play. The readers of The Voyage Out are only feeling naturally if they crowd around Rachel's sickbed and funeral, since her sudden demise is what frustrates marriage and festival. But given Woolf's reflections on the nature of true humour, this is the more reason to be open to a tragicomic reading.

IMAGINING READERS

I

Imagining readers requires a certain generosity. Arguably, writerly attempts to enforce or to guarantee a given response are owing to imaginative failure. This, at any rate, does seem to be true the other way around: one is aware of having produced forced readings at times, and these interpretations arise, precisely, from failure to be, oneself, an imagining reader. A generous narration will be, in the terms explored by the preceding chapter, 'humorous'. That is to say, it will share the greatest possible overview with a reader, intimating a large and tragicomic subject through disposition of scene and dialogue. It may educate, but cannot invent, the reader. The reader may respond to, but cannot invent, the novel. Yet there is scope for the sharing of invention, which, Woolf came to think, is fiction's central prerogative, with such imagining readers. This chapter will trace Woolf's eventual isolation of 'invention' as being definitive of fiction, and will explore ways in which the form of Jacob's Room generously imagines readers who would be willing to share that function. This involves the novel's receiving a structure which encodes its audience and helps them by giving them invented facts upon which to fasten. The succeeding chapter will consider Woolf's lyricism as a set of expressive acts around a centre of solitude, writerly and readerly, which it is desirable for dramaturgic reasons to leave untransgressed. The last chapter is particularly interested in Woolf's punning, the doing of verbal turns for the reader, as one aspect of that lyricism.

Jacob's Room is a good place to begin thinking about this. For the first time in her fiction, Woolf attempts a novel-length form which will signify humour as subject. It is not coincidental that, also for the first time, the fictional persona's life is offered panoramically, almost from cradle to grave, in what is more or less a fictional biography. Jacob's Room might be usefully approached, by surveying the development of Woolf's exploration of what separates and unites fiction and biography. This done, it will be found that her theorising about biography comes to a point, on the privilege of 'invention', around the time of her writing Roger Fry: and because of this, she is finally unwilling to call biography an 'art'. This insight of Woolf's formalised late in her career, throws retrospective light upon what it is Jacob's Room shares with readers, and shows that sharing's formal generosity. Incidental to this, 'facts' (imagined or real) are important. They are what biography cannot, and what fiction must, invent. Invention of fictive fact emerges as another instance of the dramatising imagination which is most at home with the concrete, the particular, and the revealing token or gesture.

It is not surprising that Woolf, who calls herself 'a great memoir reader', should have thought persistently about biographical questions.[1] Her father, Sir Leslie Stephen, besides being editor of the Dictionary of National Biography for a while, kept for his children an autobiographical 'Mausoleum Book', the last entry of which he dictated to Virginia in 1903, when she was twenty-one.[2] But Quentin Bell reports how much of a threat she seemed to find the Dictionary: 'The labours involved in the making of the Dictionary of National Biography were arduous; Virginia believed that she and Adrian had been crushed and cramped in the womb by those important volumes'.[3]

Her friend, Lytton Strachey, is well known as an iconoclast who changed the perception of what was possible in biographical writing. From this mixed environment come a number of impulses. The impossible Alardyce biography of Night and Day; that semi-autobiographical portrayal of mental health technicians in Mrs Dalloway; and the obsession with Julia Stephen which finally spent itself in To the Lighthouse: all these tell of a need to enunciate something about life story, or, to re-use biographical facts fictionally, as indeed she used a relative, Julia Margaret Cameron, in Freshwater.[4] There is also the biographical fantasy Orlando, with its extra-literary links to Vita Sackville-West. The fictional biography Flush incidentally illuminates the Brownings.

The Waves is preoccupied with how life story arises from an undifferentiated background. A potted fictional biography of Shakespeare's sister appears in A Room of One's Own, the fictional history of a family's generations in The Years. Roger Fry, 'relieved' by autobiography in 'A Sketch of the Past', is formal biography undertaken in gesture to a dead friend.[5] And there are also many reviews of memoirs, letters, diaries and journals. Uniquely in this production, Jacob's Room gives its main character's life from almost the beginning, to a dead end. Appositely, and as preliminary, one wants to consider Woolf's attitudes to the province and subjects of biography, and then to read Jacob's Room as embodying whatever aims the inquiry reveals.

The direction of Woolf's thinking about what is or ought to be involved in writing biography, may be gathered from a small cluster of early reviews appearing between 1906 and 1908 in the Times Literary Supplement. If these are examined, it is possible to collect from them an idea of her overall approach.

For instance, in reviewing Alice Gaussen's A Woman of Wit and Wisdom, Woolf complains:

> There is clearly very little to be said about Mrs. Carter unless you possess a real gift for the interpretation of character, and Miss Gaussen is content with the more superficial part of a biographer's duties.

This is intriguing notice: biographers interpret character - when they are not being superficial, that is.[6] The following remarks in review of Winston Churchill's Coniston leave open the question of whether Woolf is addressing a novel, a biography, or a history; but this is owing to the book's nature. The ironic blurring is informative:

> Mr. Churchill's novel swells considerably beyond the normal limit. Mr. Bass has a habit of repeating the last words of his sentences, which his biographer seems to have caught from him. The book ... seems also to have copied the shapelessness of a people whose latent energies are not yet properly fashioned for use ... Mr. Churchill's limitation as an artist [is], he transcribes rather than creates ... [but] you rise with the impression that you have absorbed a great deal of the raw material of history.

Here, the novelist is rhetorically a biographer obligated to shape what is otherwise raw, historical, and unprocessed. The terms 'biographer' and 'history' are devices; but the ease with which Woolf introduces them into a discussion of fiction renders them translucent.[7] Again, the relationship between historical fact and historical fiction is aired as Woolf reviews Marjorie Bowen's Glencoe romance The Glen o' Weeping:

> Probably no true novelist makes it his business to administer strict historical justice; and we think him successful in the best sense if he can set people talking and fighting once more, and thinking even ... And yet she possesses some of the gifts that should make a novelist. People group themselves before her; she sees lonely figures watching on the shore, and solitary horsemen on deserted roads; the picture forms itself instinctively.

The 'true novelist' is here regarded as being not ultimately at ease with the strictly historic: novelistic business is dramatic, scenic, and vivifying. This statement usefully clarifies the previous quotation's rhetoricity, also the facility of Woolf's rhetoric for ignoring generic difference.[8]

The possibility of biography as 'art' appears in what Woolf has to say about Sir Fulke Greville's Life of Sir Philip Sidney, where it becomes clear which dangers, and opportunities, she thinks exist for a biographer:

> it would be easy to glide in serene air, to exalt and magnify till the figure of Sidney became of colossal proportions, and we might find ourselves in the end mouthing fine periods about a man who had ceased to exist. But Greville was ... a writer of fine English prose ... it has a higher value perhaps as a complete work in which the whole figure is embalmed, and there is no vent perceptible in the encircling envelope ... it is due to his friend's art that it is still a solid figure which we may feel warm to our touch.

'Art' in biography produces this solidity of character within the surrounding envelope of a re-created milieu.[9] The life of Sidney is felt as real, not mythic, because it is suspended within a prose medium that functions as signifying context.

Other kinds of opening, and abdication, Woolf detects in E.V. Lucas's treatment of Miss Seward in his A Swan and Her Friends. Miss Seward was (Lucas saw) risible, but Lucas was 'content with the simpler duties of the caricaturist'. In itself this is not blameworthy: 'the portentous Swan tempts the parodist if any one ever did'. But Lucas falls short of real humour, and settles for presenting buffoonery. He lacks restraint and also resource:

> a true humourist would also refrain; he would lead us ... to the very limits of comedy, suffer us perhaps to glance at the ridiculous, and then, by means of some skilful light upon another side of the character, he would draw us smoothly away, give our comic sense a respite, and urge it forth again with a fresh start. Thus the character could float buoyantly all the time within its proper limits. But Mr. Lucas is not careful of limits; he wishes us to laugh, to laugh almost incessantly; and so the chance he had of drawing ... an exquisitely comic figure typical ... of something vast and enduring in human nature is lost; we have instead the conventional buffoon.

The seriousness of this handicap is shown in Lucas's failure to see the characteristic behind the pose, the humorous underlying the merely ludicrous; it is a dramatic failure. He misses the point of Miss Seward, which her letters should have revealed to a sympathetic mind:

> how much of it is characteristic of her? ... Why should Miss Seward need a biography? ... the whole society echoes her accents ... and [they] deluge us with bad criticism, bad poetry, and bad emotion. We laugh till we are bored, and we are bored because we are still conscious that this is all too far removed from life to give us much reason to dislike or love or know them more than any other tedious and prolix people much at the mercy of their pens ... there are touches that remind us that they had brains and that they lived ... It is this that tantalizes the reader; for, here we feel and dimly see that it is a toweringly humorous figure who did contrive to embody with overwhelming success an ideal of the moment, because, among other things, she embodied it with more vigour than other people. Ten pages are enough to prove to us that she was ludicrous; but the essential point of her - that her letters half cover and half express a genuine attitude towards life - is what Mr. Lucas with all his vivacity fails to show.

Lucas passively submits, for all his appearance of comic activity, to Miss Seward's self-caricature. What is essential in her, the dramatic point, he cannot embody as the humorous embodies, for that must mean rendering through her a whole society, and Lucas is too busy manipulating readers into that laughter which ends in boredom, to exercise the needed sympathy. He does not see her within the processes she incarnates, or grasp her as a type. Greville, however, had done this for Sidney.[10]

Difficulties of another sort beset Mrs Warrenne Blake, who had edited Memoirs of a Vanished Generation 1813-1855. Woolf finds her editing inept, but only as an instance of a wider, cultural obtuseness in approaches to biography:

> Mrs. Blake might have given us more of what we value and saved us much labour had she been artist as well as editor. The book might have been half the size; she might have brought out a distinct shape, according to her conception, by skilful quotation and comment. But her book is another example of the strange methods of modern English biography; you are presented with a great bundle of papers, and bidden, substantially, to make a book for yourself. To arrange or to criticize, to make people live as they lived, is considered unnecessary, or perhaps disrespectful. We feel that there is a spirit in letters which we must not allow to perish, but we are too timid to set it free.

Even an editor must be artful and interventive. Depriving readers of what they valued, giving them overmuch labour, was a failure to imagine those readers. True, they themselves can be expected to be imagining readers; but not to the extent of having to imagine the substantive book.[11] This is reminiscent of the complaint in 'Taylors and Edgeworths', where an obtuse, unspeculating narration only accidentally unblocks the reader's ability to recreate scene.[12]

These reviews from 1906 through 1908 offer a way in to Woolf's thinking about biography. Biographers, we gather, must be gifted, and not documenters. If one ignores character interpretation, preferring just to document; or if, conversely, one either imposes an interpretation or submits too easily to one, then fabrication of the life has been transferred to the reader (bidden to make a book for himself). One will have been content with the worst kind of superficiality, feeling that interpretation is unnecessary, disrespectful, or obvious; and all this because of timidity. With regard to the personality latent in 'letters', it is a question of how to 'set it free'. The exemplary Greville resorts to 'art', producing what may be considered entire, Sidney embalmed solid within an encircling envelope of manifest prose style. Lucas, by contrast, does not deal with what is half covered, half revealed, in letters as biographical raw material, preferring to dwell upon what is only too evident. The solidity he achieves is that of caricature.

A complex of ideas takes form in these reviews - for example, this idea of biography as freeing a personality latent in the raw matter of correspondence. The ironic overlap of biography, fiction, and history is also important: what is proper to each genre? Why, if to leave readers substantially to make their own biography is such a bad thing, does Woolf leave the reader to produce Jacob Flanders? It is clear that fiction must have freedoms which biography has not. Even historical fiction need not 'administer strict historical justice', but might congratulate itself on creating characters who talk, fight, and think; on reproducing groups of people as well as solitaries; on making pictures form in the reader's mind. If one examines two other reviews (from 1909 and 1927) together with a late essay (from 1939), it becomes plain that Woolf, though originally thinking of biography as an art, finally abandons this notion. She continues to grant biography some artistic functions, while clarifying what is peculiar to fiction and therefore untransferable. Her fictive practices in the meantime show that, on one hand, she prefers to imagine biography rather than theorize about it; and on the other, that fiction may lay claim to pretty much all of biography's liberties.

In 'Sterne' (1909) Woolf calls biography an 'art' which 'has fallen very low'.[13] But the genre itself she defends, especially Boswell's life of Johnson, which gives 'an aesthetic pleasure ... of first-rate value'. Modern biographers weaken themselves by insisting that the line between life and works (in literary biography) be firmly drawn, since 'it is easier for them to draw distinctions than to see things whole'. One thinks here of the biographies of Woolf herself by Quentin Bell (the life alone) and Lyndall Gordon (the life along with the works) respectively. Woolf goes on to make a qualified use of the notion of 'fiction', introducing it rather matter-of-factly:

> A certain stigma is attached to the biography which deals mainly with a man's personal history, and the writer who sees him most clearly in that light is driven to represent him under the cover of fiction. The fascination of novel writing lies in its freedom.

Driven to this freedom, the biographer of personality will, to evade stigma, fictionalize the subject, if not turn literally to outright fiction, for 'fiction' here represents a way of proceeding, in that,

> the dull parts can be skipped, and the excitements intensified; but above all the character can be placed artistically, set, that is, in fitting surroundings and composed so as to give whatever impression you choose.

Essentially, this is a dramaturgic procedure. For the moment, Woolf speaks of literal novel writing, from the standpoint of those freedoms which the biographer of personality is obliged to claim. That biographer does not aspire to the novel form itself. Indeed, he need not do so: 'the bare statement of facts has an indisputable power, if we have reason to think them true'.

Trying to recall the facts about her own first memories, Woolf, too, resorts to the freedom she recommends in 'Sterne':

> Perhaps we were going to St Ives; more probably, for from the light it must have been evening, we were coming back to London. But it is more convenient artistically to suppose that we were going to St Ives, for that will lead to my other memory, which also seems to be my first memory.

Artistic rightness governs what are supposed to be literal recollections.[14] Yet the literary biographer, as of 1909, has given himself a problem in Woolf's view. He may present some account of the subject's writings, or of the subject personally; but he has not that freedom to do what is artistically convenient and attempt both at once. Woolf calls this 'a distinction ... which we do not find in the original'. She regrets that biographers wishing to portray persons, not writings, or, persons along with their writings, feel 'driven' to novelistic kinds of freedom. That is because the novel has limitations of its own. To write what is more than 'second-rate' calls for the 'imagination of genius', and this is possessed by few. If only biographers would give 'distinct' and concrete facts, it would be found that these, with of course some minimal artistic arrangement, were a sufficiently fecund provisioning of the imagining reader:

> a real life is wonderfully prolific; it passes through such strange places and draws along with it a train of adventure that no novelist can better them, if only he can deal with them as with his own inventions.

That last phrase has its bearing on the future direction of Woolf's thinking: the idea that 'invention' distinguishes the novelist. In 1909 she notices it in passing, and thinks of biography as ideally presenting the whole literary man, a rounded-out reading experience of himself and his work, with no unnatural distinctions.

Rather than covet too much novelistic freedom, which could anyway flourish only in the right hands, the biographer might skip, intensify, place artistically, and frankly compose. He could treat the strange facts respectfully, but as being more in the realm of invention than life. He could make free with their environing. W.L. Cross, whose The Life and Times of Lawrence Sterne Woolf was reviewing in this piece, set out 'merely to give the facts of the life'. Cross's purposes seemed somewhat self-contradictory. He admits (she says) that Sterne's story 'was "like a romance"'. Yet in this biographer's opinion, that life's facts 'would be dull enough, if it did not "turn out", as he remarks, that the writings are in part autobiographical, so that one may consider his life without irrelevance'. Her choice of the terms '"turn out"' and 'irrelevance' is ironic, for the book was 'excellent reading from start to finish' despite Cross's timidity. He simply 'underrated the value of his material, or the use he has made of it'. The Sterne biography worked well, she concludes, because of this referring back and forth between the prolifically suggestive facts of the life, and the personality in the writings - things not separated in Sterne's way of being, therefore best not to be separated in any biography of him.[15]

Eighteen years later, in an enthusiastic review of Harold Nicolson's Some People, Woolf is, in 1927, still prepared to speak of such a thing as 'the biographer's art'.[16] Again she praises Boswell: 'in order that the light of personality may shine through', Boswell knew, 'facts must be manipulated; some must be brightened; others shaded; yet, in the process, they must never lose their integrity'. Boswell was therefore able to transfer from the life into his account of Johnson that 'incalculable presence', something having been 'liberated ... freed from a servitude' - namely 'the personality' of the subject. Victorian biographers later squandered this freedom, this means to the transmission of the personal, loading themselves with unimagined documentary truth despite that method's 'artistic wrongheadedness'. In sharp contrast, the contemporary biographer 'chooses; he synthesizes; in short, he has ceased to be the chronicler; he has become an artist'. Nicolson recuperated the Boswellian 'liberty which enables'. Hence, 'Some People is not fiction because it has the substance, the reality of truth. It is not biography because it has the freedom, the artistry of fiction'. This newer biography, she says, gives 'pith and essence', resorting to 'subtle phrases' and 'brilliant description', the personal being 'synthesized and summed up. Some People is full of such examples of this new phase of the biographer's art'. Nicolson 'does not cumber himself with a single fact' standing by itself. He has 'won for the art of biography' novel freedoms:

> Mr. Nicolson has proved that one can use many of the devices of fiction in dealing with real life. He has shown that a little fiction mixed with fact can be made to transmit personality very effectively.

After such praise, Woolf's 'objections or qualifications' to what looks like formal generosity are of great interest.

These objections grow out of her belief that literary-aesthetic truth is 'antagonistic' to literal unprocessed truth. There are thus two 'truths' to reckon with, both 'genuine' - 'the truth of real life and the truth of fiction', one of them rawly instantaneous, the other ordered formally by mind (though obvious phenomenological caveats could be urged against this). Nicolson takes 'a pinch' of both, producing a mix whose characters prove statically less than life size, stunted, ungrowing and unrevealing. It has something to do with his freedom from fact. Faced with the two kinds of truth, 'the imagination will not serve under two masters simultaneously ... the mixture of the two is abhorrent' to imagining readers. Fiction's truth is quite as real as 'the world of brick and pavement': only this hybridizing repels. Too free a freedom with the raw biographical subject beggars the reader's 'implicit belief', forfeiting that Boswellian 'power over us'. The biographer is 'always being stimulated to use the novelist's art of arrangement, suggestion, dramatic effect to expound the private life'; yet, 'if he carries the use of fiction too far, so that he disregards the truth, or can only introduce it with incongruity', he loses both classes of truth to the reader's imagining, and the reader is saddled with 'neither the freedom of fiction nor the substance of fact'. So Woolf believes that Nicolson is not the shape of things to come: the future biographer's 'method still remains to be discovered'. But she pays homage, in characteristic phrase, to what is 'a possible direction'.[17]

The 1909 review confines its vision mainly to the subject of biography himself, concerned as it is for the transmission of an indistinguishable wholeness of life and letters; it approaches method from that perspective, and obliquely. The 1927 review, delighted with what Nicolson does, feels misgivings about his method, and so shows increased preoccupation with method as such. These reviews, though separated by some eighteen years, take the view that biography is an art, and say so repeatedly. But by the time of her 1939 essay 'The Art of Biography', Woolf is prepared to modify what she earlier assumes about biography, insisting, now, that the biographer is 'a craftsman, not an artist; and his work is not a work of art, but something betwixt and between'.[18] This is a significant qualification. By this later date, she has to her own satisfaction isolated (though, as she says, slowly and with difficulty), not shaping, or selection, not 'arrangement, suggestion, dramatic effect', but rather, 'invention', as the essential thing for fiction.

By 1939, to fictionalize is, explicitly, to invent. Provocatively titled, 'The Art of Biography' sets forth her reconsiderations twelve years after 'The New Biography' which praised Nicolson for his art.

Lytton Strachey's gains and losses are much to the fore in this essay. Ann had been made to say of him, in Woolf's scripted dialogue 'A Talk About Memoirs'(1920):

> if I knew Mr. Lytton Strachey, I'd tell him what I think of him for behaving disrespectfully of the great English art of biography. My dear Judith, I had a vision last night of a widow with a taper setting fire to a basketful of memoirs - half a million words - two volumes - stout - blue - with a crest - genealogical trees - family portraits - all complete. 'Art be damned!' I cried, and woke in a frenzy.

This is dramatised acknowledgement of Strachey's artistic iconoclasm.[19] But 'The Art of Biography' opens with a gesture to the subject of its title. This time, it is 'the biographer' who is portrayed as wishing to use such an expression. He pleads that his 'art' is 'young', having had insufficient time to settle down as a genre: it is 'the most restricted of all the arts' in its dependence on sources. The novelist is 'free', he pleads, the biographer 'tied'. Woolf concedes an essential difference between fiction and biography 'in the very stuff of which they are made. One is made with the help of friends, of facts; the other is created without any restrictions save those that the artist, for reasons that seem good to him, chooses to obey'. Acknowledging the biographer's bid for 'a measure of freedom' in the unfettered treatment of subject, she then introduces Strachey as a figure arriving in time for the 'new liberties' of biography, consideration of whose writing helps determine 'whether biography is an art, and if not why it fails'.

Strachey has turned to biography because it lets him 'recreate' characters much as poets and novelists might do, 'yet [does] not ask that inventive power in which he found himself lacking'. She alludes to Eminent Victorians, but prefers to dwell upon Queen Victoria and Elizabeth and Essex, the first of which she considers a success, its author 'making use of all the liberties that biography had won'. For he has respected, there, the limits of those freedoms: 'In the Victoria he treated biography as a craft; he submitted to its limitations'. The same cannot be said of Elizabeth and Essex: 'in the Elizabeth he treated biography as an art; he flouted its limitations'. This signals Woolf's emerging scepticism about biography as being any sort of art at all. Victoria's life is so voluminously documented, that 'the biographer could not invent her, because at every moment some document was at hand to check his invention'. Therefore the author 'used to the full the biographer's power of selection and relation, but he kept strictly within the world of fact'. By the time of this essay, then, to treat biography as art would be to invent rather than just to select or to relate. This is Strachey's undoing in Elizabeth and Essex, namely that the subjects' remoteness seduces him to aspire to a form which 'gave the artist freedom to invent, but helped his invention with the support of facts - a book that was not only a biography but also a work of art'. She adds: 'the combination proved unworkable; fact and fiction refused to mix ... he was urged to invent ... his invention was checked. The Queen thus moves in an ambiguous world, between fact and fiction'.

Late in Woolf's career, the formula is now complete: there comes to be an essential equivalence of 'art', 'fiction', and 'invention', with invention singled out as the characteristic freedom of the art of fiction.

Explaining what is involved in invention, Woolf distinguishes the extra-literary from the literary fact, at the same time offering this caution: 'if [the biographer] invents facts as an artist invents them - facts that no one else can verify - and tries to combine them with facts of the other sort, they destroy each other'. The literary fact is inventable, the biographical fact cannot be. Strachey does not give, in his Elizabeth, a fictional biography (such as might have been freely woven around real figures in an historical romance), but effectively an invented one. His inability to invent fictionally went into reverse to produce the Elizabeth, at its expense as biography. Contrastingly, the literary fact may be wholly invented, but its 'authenticity lies in the truth of [the artist's] own vision'. Woolf calls 'the failure of Elizabeth and Essex ... the result of a daring experiment carried out with magnificent skill'. And although she will not have biographers inventing facts verifiable even by their own artistic vision, she sees interesting scope for them within the realm of biographical fact.

This is because newer freedoms have brought about the death of old prejudices: one may now insist upon the relevance of all kinds of fact, whether savoury or no. Neither are biographical facts scientific in pretension, but indices of opinion. Biographers may be the ones to cut away 'dead matter', pluralists (even when themselves committed to one presentation) tolerant of mystery. Granting this freedom of access to all fact, and to non-scientific perceptions of it, thence to ambiguity, Woolf concedes a final major freedom to biography, the freedom to illuminate the lives of the obscure. Imagination with its inventiveness is far more durable than even great biography, she is convinced; but the imagining reader needs relief when he tires, and something upon which to feed. Should biography give 'the true facts', it might rank - through the replenishing of imagination - with 'the very greatest' art, because far from giving a mere collation of data, it will judiciously offer what Woolf calls, in a key phrase, 'the creative fact; the fertile fact; the fact that suggests and engenders'. This language reminds one of Woolf's reservations about Dickens, who, not being suggestive, would give readers nothing to engender in solitude, and who would therefore not appeal to imagining, but to passive, readers. Strictly speaking, and without being pedantic, there are no facts which are creative or fertile. But there are fertile, creative readers who will respond to concrete token by supplementing it from within that privacy or solitude for which the dropping of such facts displays an understanding and respect. What effect such productive facts have, how they make themselves felt, Woolf reveals in her conclusion:

> For how often, when a biography is read and tossed aside, some scene remains bright, some figure lives on in the depths of the mind, and causes us, when we read a poem or a novel, to feel a start of recognition, as if we remembered something we had known before.

This impression of scene and figure, lingering in the memory, releases the feeling of déjà vu one often has in reading literature, rendering it real to us, assimilable as recognised experience. Woolf has moved some way, then, from her earlier position when she granted biography an intermediate fictional and artistic status. This latter denial of biography as 'art' is not so much a demotion. It is what we would expect: a clearer working definition of biography from Roger Fry's biographer, and a reflection on its general relation to the art of fiction. The Fry biography is the immediate agent of this change.

What, though, is meant by saying that Woolf prefers to imagine biography rather than elaborate any theory of it? The question is pertinent in view of a claim like Gordon's, that Woolf 'thought up the theories that were to shape her novels', by which Gordon means Woolf's 'biographic theory'.[20] It all sounds rather programmatic. As is obvious from the examples of reviews and essays between 1906 and 1939, Woolf did not shrink from analytic speculation, nor does one find absence of relish, or reluctance. Perhaps the question may be resolved by analogy. If one thinks of such novels as Marquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude; Rushdie's Midnight's Children; most or all of John Barth; Mailer's Ancient Evenings; or Eco's The Name of the Rose, one might say that these writers reappropriate narrative from narratology, by making narrative itself the fictional subject. Eco's is the best example, since he is a theorist turned novelist. It is not that the work of these writers implies a hostility to theory: Eco is after all a professional semiologist, and Barth is fascinated (probably fatally) by narrativity itself. But there does seem to be some impulse imaginatively to reclaim the usual concerns of theory by comprehending them in literature. Similarly, Woolf shows herself well able to discuss biography as a theoretical subject. But already in short stories, as in the freedom of treatment she asserts in her reviewing of real lives and memoirs, one sees another kind of approach alongside this theorising, replenishing it, and, one gathers, preferred to it. The authority for that last remark flows from her unusual procedure through the three parts of 'The Lives of the Obscure', an overview of several real, and in their own ways, remarkable lives, to be discussed shortly.

What one finds, in reading Woolf's reviews of memoirs, and essays on biography, along with fictions which formally mimic memoir and memoir-review, is a cross-fertilizing that explores the definition of biography and possible improvements in its method, all from within an entirely fictive standpoint. Early fictional attempts (such as 'The Journal of Mistress Joan Martyn' and 'Memoirs of a Novelist') show her preoccupation with the matter. And whereas she said polemically in 1939 that fiction is essentially inventive, she is alert already in 1906 and 1909 to its own privileges, which are peculiar and not mirrored in those of biography. The biographical question, for example, of whether a character's death need be thought definitive, finds its way into how _The Voyage Out_ treats Rachel, and how _To the Lighthouse_ sees Mrs Ramsay. Comic difficulties attendant on the producing of biography in the period of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, are incorporated in _Night and Day_. Biography finds its way into _Jacob's Room_ too: Mr Floyd proposes unsuccessfully to the widow Flanders, but 'finally, becoming editor of a well-known series of Ecclesiastical Biographies, he retired', having married another (_JR_ 19). Jacob is assigned an essay, '"Does History consist of the Biographies of Great Men?"' But he thinks himself very free in his reading: 'any one who's worth anything reads just what he likes, as the mood takes him, with extravagant enthusiasm'. Not that this makes of Jacob much of an imagining reader: heading his list of things to be read just as one pleases are the usual 'Lives of the Duke of Wellington, for example' (36).

Such reading may work in the fiction to symptomise a liberty the character has, or is coming to have; but these biographies do not, in Jacob's Room, function as liberating texts. Facts in the fiction they undoubtedly are, though not the kind of creative facts which draw us inward to generate scene from them. Hence they are undramatic. Nor would such fertile facts happen anywhere in this novel were it simply content with 'the volubility of fiction' (136). Sandra Williams feels freer through reading 'stories by Tchekov'; yet even so, 'Sandra would open the book and her eyes would brighten (but not at the print)' (137, 157). Her supposed freeing is untransferable to Jacob, who complains, '"I shall have to read her cursed book" - her Tchekov, he meant, for she had lent it him' (140). Conventional biographies, or unconventional stories, none of these work suggestively as dramatic fact within the novel, from which the imagining reader may, in privacy, generate a character. Jacob's freedom to read biography is not like being freed by biography to read. That rejection of Chekhov prior even to reading him, expresses the limitation of his being, for the moment focussed on Sandra herself. Memoirs, and the Chekhovian freedom to forgo any appearance of plot - none of this is active in the novel as any kind of liberating invented fact or as the site of character-generation. It is Jacob's act (or refusal) of reading which are suggestive, rather than the texts themselves. But as for the raw material of letters which are always coming and going, saying and proving unable to say, eliciting response, and so expressing and limiting, these do represent concrete invented facts, from which the reader may dramatise. How, in mimesis of this correspondence, does Jacob's Room, imagining the readers as any letter-writer must, use its privilege of invention?

An invented biography preferentially aware of itself as invention, would want to be able to invent obscurity, to embed in it a wealth of fertile facts freeing the reader to create scene as well as to be receptive to scenes shown. Such facts, which would be important sympathetic nodes in the narration, cannot exhaust the personal and may even cram it out, so the ground conditions for implication, and then instances of implication itself, would also need inventing. The naming of characters, for instance, needful for fixing identity and pinpointing truth, might seem to denote, and be simultaneously undone.

Narrative pleasures therefore relieve a sense of the withheld. If there were to be some ingenuous appearance of unfinishedness, the narration might innocently protest its abdication of any real effort to finish - but strategically. This marked narratorial presence with its declaiming intrusion of disclaimers, might seek confluence with fictional voices at some point, again for reasons of strategy splicing itself with them, so as not to overdetermine reader response. Some kind of narrative graphics might be employed, to further the aims of the invented biography. Invented fictional texts liberating character and also the reader would occur as naively raw material uncredited in the fiction with any such power. There would, in short, be plenty for imagining readers to do. Jacob's Room does exert its right of invention, but affords the reader a point of entry by forgoing its rights, to the extent of reticence about defining Jacob or abolishing any of his guises. If Jacob's Room is indeed a work of the imagination, Jacob himself is not a creature entirely of Woolf's own imagining. Any reader inevitably re-creates character; but Jacob's Room enshrines this inevitability in the very midst of the writing, making it the first principle of its procedure. What is inevitable, or habitual, is transfigured into a freedom which the novel hopes the reader will claim, inducing him to be Jacob's biographer too. The author triggers one's spontaneous composition, then takes flight after having shown what is nearest to have been ironically furthest from knowledge. These techniques express a formal generosity which opens Jacob to view by encouraging readers to imagine him as vista or as broad spectacle, watching the life performed.

The narrator in Jacob's Room, allowing that 'concealment by itself distracts the mind from the print and the sound', that 'the fact is concealed' (76), suggestive but unintrusive, is aware of what will happen within the reader if the narrated subject should turn out to be significantly absent, that attention will shift from the printed words and their sound, to what is not there.

> As for following him back to his rooms, no - that we won't do. Yet that, of course, is precisely what one does. (91,92)

Here is a wish to be finished with all omniscience, to imply the life of solitude without explicitly looking into it. This wish draws the narration into a physical shape on the printed page, as it had also done in 'Miss Ormerod':

> ... doors in back streets burst sullenly open; workmen stumped forth.
>
> Florinda was sick.
>
> Mrs Durrant, sleepless as usual, scored a mark by the side of certain lines in the Inferno.
>
> Clara slept buried in her pillows; on her dressing-table dishevelled roses and a pair of long white gloves.
>
> Still wearing the conical white hat of a pierrot, Florinda was sick. (74)

Hiatus mimics inventive evasion, distracting the mind from the print and the sound, and inscribing solitude. The facts are there, and we may generate scene. One might like to be told (but will have to imagine and create) what is in these gaps, which require hesitancies in reading, fertile pauses replete with concealment. If there is any omniscience here, it will be as much ours as the narrator's.

Details of various conversations also go unsupplied, lurking within ellipses:

> 'There is Mr Clutterbuck. You always see Mr Clutterbuck here. He is not very happy at home, I'm afraid. They say that Mrs Clutterbuck...' She dropped her voice. 'That's why he stays with the Durrants...' (85)

Even (maybe especially) exciting incidents, such as that of the runaway horse, are undescribed, and happen in a hiatus:

> 'Oh stop! Stop it, Mr Bowley!' she cried, white, trembling, gripping his arm, utterly unconscious, the tears coming.
>
> 'Tut-tut!' said Mr Bowley in his dressing-room an hour later. 'Tut-tut!' - a comment that was profound enough, though inarticulately expressed, since his valet was handing his shirt studs.
>
> *(163)

The asterisk puts a stop to even this depiction: an impassable point, it lets incident collect before it but will not permit it to spill indefinitely outwards, in a mockery of exciting action and narratival sensation. 'Blame it or praise it, there is no denying the wild horse in us. To gallop intemperately; fall on the sand tired out; to feel the earth spin ... there is no getting over the fact' of this (137). But the narration is no runaway, galloping intemperately. It names the incident and shows the melodrama on the brink of happening; offers a moment's aftermath; and then, the symbol of reticence.

This is not the same reticence Ann enacted (in 'A Talk About Memoirs'), using as her pretext the works of J.A. Bridges, such as his Victorian Recollections: 'Life is what we want. (She turns over the pages of several volumes without saying anything)'.[21] She had to: the memoirs talked her down. She fell silent, a serious matter within any dramatic dialogue, which the parenthesized narration tries to explain and save. We are not talked down in Jacob's Room, but drawn as it were into colloquy because of the novel's enstructured silences, its respect for solitude. The subject's significant formlessness, now narratival as well as fictive (which it was in The Voyage Out), entails, as in the poem's telling absence from Orlando, a strong strand of narratorial presence, but this is not always obtuse. Appreciation of narrative strategy in this novel is helped by an examination of its approach to the naming of characters, and of its deployment of half-covering, half-expressing letters as invented facts in the story acting as a raw basis for imagining readers.

As in 'Lives of the Obscure', names are book titles: 'Each had his past shut in him like the leaves of a book known to him by heart; and his friends could only read the title, James Spalding, or Charles Budgeon' (62). They are an occasion for fixing identity, which the narration may both notice and retire from: 'Jacob was telling a story about some walking tour he'd taken, and the inn was called "The Foaming Pot," which, considering the landlady's name ... They shouted with laughter. The joke was indecent' (68; Woolf's ellipsis). The reader may have to invent the name. The Calthorp exchange shows name capable in itself of generating scene, since self-revelation is what these two personae are working up to:

> 'Are you going away for Christmas?' said Mr Calthorp.
> 'If my brother gets his leave,' said Miss Edwards.
> 'What regiment is he in?' said Mr Calthorp.
> 'The Twentieth Hussars,' said Miss Edwards.
> 'Perhaps he knows my brother?' said Mr Calthorp.
> 'I am afraid I did not catch your name,' said Miss Edwards.
> 'Calthorp,' said Mr Calthorp. (83,84)

The reader is amused and saddened, here, by the comically foregrounded tags which strain towards intercourse, and by the narration's mimickry of the tragicomic moment of revealing, its abruptly breaking off, its not going down that path with the fiction. Name may also imply an impulse towards life story: 'As for Florinda's story, her name had been bestowed upon her by a painter who had wished to signify that the flower of her maidenhood was still unplucked. Be that as it may, she was without a surname' (74). The wish to signify character as somehow fulfilling name could seem in theory straightforward. 'One word is sufficient. But if one cannot find it? ... Even the exact words get the wrong accent on them' (68,70). And then, names may be violently at odds with manifest character: 'No, she had her confidante: Mother Stuart. Stuart, as the lady would point out, is the name of a Royal house; but what that signified, and what her business was, no one knew', though the reader harbours suspicions (75).

Florinda was all that the ancient Greek woman was, until Jacob saw her turn down Greek Street with another man; yet, meeting Sandra on Hermes Street in Athens, it was still possible to see life shaped by a naive nominalism, to sustain the faith that reality is nameable. Yet a character's being named, even in full, as 'Jacob Alan Flanders, Esq.' (87) can also signal remoteness from him, as in the addressing of his mother's mute, ignorable correspondence. She is after all writing to an unknown son, and this is not much different from 'crying strange names ... through the night' (132). Name seems to do so much, then. A book title, it invites to a reading, and suggests that pasts did happen. Fixing personality and encapsulating mythic life story, it flows from the wish to signify. But it may well be incongruous, grounds for losing faith as much as for retaining it, giving notice of the distance of namer from named. Name does not solve, but begs, the question of identity. '"Who is Sylvia? what is she?"' (85), is a fragment of fictional text in the novel, liberating the reader to widen the quest.

It is not the self-consciously literary text which in Jacob's Room functions liberatingly as invented fact, but the unconsciously powerful, or consciously impotent, one. As an ironic base matter, correspondence works in this way throughout the book, which begins with 'Betty Flanders's letters to Captain Barfoot - many-paged, tear stained' (5). Jacob's going up to Cambridge is decided by letter (26, 27), and once there he receives letters from his mother (35). The universal volume of correspondence is so great that 'the drivers of post-office vans' are 'the rashest drivers in the world' owing to pressure of work (61). Jacob's 'essay' on the 'Ethics of Indecency', rejected by three prestigious journals, is thrown 'into the black wooden box where he kept his mother's letters, his old flannel trousers, and a note or two with the Cornish postmark. The lid shut upon the truth' (67,75). Fictionally, that truth is the trail-blazing veracity of the rejected essay. Narratorially, it includes Betty's letters to her son. The narration is not innocent of this in the way that the fiction is. Again, Florinda could 'read love letters' in restaurants, but 'would never learn to read even her love letters correctly', a naive fact about her, carelessly dropped as it seems, suggestive. All through Jacob's Room, 'letters must be written' (75, 76,81).

When Jacob is in Paris, his mother awaits 'the post, with its variety of messages'. The narrator wonders,

> whether we gain or not by this habit of profuse communication ... But that letter-writing is practised mendaciously nowadays, particularly by young men travelling in foreign parts, seems likely enough. For example, take this scene. (120)

From playing on men and mendacity, the scene itself enshrines misunderstandings prior to any lying report of a son to his mother. Betty is mistaken by Jacob's associates for his 'lady', it being unclear whether he told them this to cover embarrassment (121). By the characters themselves, fragments of Shakespeare and nursery rhymes are thought enormously productive poetry (122). But what counts here, what works as creative fact, is isolated in hiatus for the reader's special notice: 'Well, not a word of this was ever told to Mrs Flanders; nor what happened when they paid the bill and left the restaurant, and walked along the Boulevard Raspaille' (123). Jacob's letters as both naive fact and significant withholding are what the reader remembers, despite their fictional impotence:

> Jacob had nothing to hide from his mother. It was only that he could make no sense himself of his extraordinary excitement, and as for writing it down -
>
> 'Jacob's letters are so like him,' said Mrs Jarvis, folding the sheet. (127)

There is a difference between the man who wrote these letters, and the man they are like. The hiatus indicates narrative adoption of this gap, this truth which respects privacies in all directions in and out of the text.

Passing to and fro with great frequency, letters promise not any intimate knowledge, but rather, the fact of differentiation between persons only provisionally at one:

> That he had grown to be a man was a fact that Florinda knew, as she knew everything, by instinct.
> And Betty Flanders even now suspected it, as she read his letter, posted at Milan, 'Telling me,' she complained to Mrs Jarvis, 'really nothing that I want to know'; but she brooded over it. (135)

Only the romantic Sandra believes that, akin to life and conveying it, letters communicate something essential: '"For I am sensitive to every side of it," Sandra thought, "and Mrs Duggan will write to me for ever, and I shall answer her letters"' (149). No judgement is passed on this heroism, but her expectation, set alongside the disappointments and the impossibilities, is dramatised thereby. Only Sandra would actually say, thinking it possible, '"Write and tell me about it," ... "And tell me what you feel and what you think. Tell me everything"' (155). So she writes 'a long flowing letter ... with his book before her and in her mind the memory of something said or attempted, some moment in the dark on the road to the Acropolis which (such was her creed) mattered for ever' (165). By contrast, Fanny Elmer 'wrote now - poems, letters that were never posted' (166). These romantic extremes - the voluble letter which thinks itself intimately revealing, profuse like Victorian biography, and the gushily intimate letter which can never be sent - clarify the status of all those other letters in Jacob's Room, the majority, which have some intermediate life, neither significantly revealing fictionally, nor willingly secretive. In the majority's case, the mere fact of them matters, though they hover (like name, like the pun word) between saying something and saying nothing. At the last, there are 'all /Jacob's/ letters strewn about for anyone to read' (172). But if anyone should read them? Attention shifts to 'a pair of Jacob's old shoes', another fertile fact, letters being one kind among several, and as revealing (173).

Woolf notes of Richard Edgeworth (in 'Lives of the Obscure') that his had been a blunderingly intrusive narration, an obtuse stumbling upon creative facts more potent than he could know. The reader, using these dramatically concrete nodes, imagines scene despite, not because of him, using raw material he is unaware of having given. For him, the other lives he stumbles into are not significantly there: himself it is who matters. From start to finish of Jacob's Room, one kind of narrative voice in particular assumes a heavy presence in the text, and there must be some question of whether this is an imposition on readers. The following passage is typical:

> It seems then that men and women are equally at fault. It seems that a profound, impartial, and absolutely just opinion of our fellow-creatures is utterly unknown. Either we are men, or we are women. Either we are cold, or we are sentimental. Either we are young, or growing old. In any case life is but a procession of shadows, and God knows why it is that we embrace them so eagerly, and see them depart with such anguish, being shadows. And why, if this and much more than this is true, why are we yet surprised in the window corner by a sudden vision that the young man in the chair is of all things in the world the most real, the most solid, the best known to us - why indeed? For the moment after we know nothing about him.
> Such is the manner of our seeing. Such the conditions of our love. (69)

There is nothing here to imagine. Edgeworth's narration reveals its obtuseness in his innocence of speculation, so this intrusion is not obtuse in that sense - quite the reverse, it reflects about what it is to imagine knowledge of Jacob. The voice comes from no one in the fiction, reaching us from outside. Sometimes it identifies itself as being 'I/the observer': 'in short, the observer is choked with observation ... For though I have no wish to be Queen of England - or only for a moment - I would willingly sit beside her; I would hear the Prime Minister's gossip' (66). We encounter literary convention in that pronoun. But there is a shade of something becoming personal here too, the straining of voice towards embodiment, towards that concretisation in the reading mind of a persona. A number of these lengthy digressions on the grounds of our knowing appear in Jacob's Room; and since they lodge in the mind, there is no evading the problem of their rather high direction.

In this connection, something interesting happens in Chapter VIII, which serves to modify the kind of omniscience apparently in play:

> Rose Shaw, talking in rather an emotional manner to Mr Bowley at Mrs Durrant's evening party a few nights back, said that life was wicked because a man called Jimmy refused to marry a woman called (if memory serves) Helen Aitken ... Male beauty in association with female beauty breeds in the onlooker a sense of fear. Often have I seen them - Helen and Jimmy - and likened them to ships adrift, and feared for my own little craft ... Helen must have confided in Rose. For my own part, I find it exceedingly difficult to interpret songs without words. And now Jimmy feeds crows in Flanders and Helen visits hospitals. Oh, life is damnable, life is wicked, as Rose Shaw said. (93)

Phrases such as 'a few nights back' and the unattributed 'if memory serves', render this passage as gossip. The narrator was at Mrs Durrant's recent party; the unidentified 'I' is a possible point of view. In Chapter X, Fanny Elmer's thoughts are described from outside, and omnisciently:

> he was still awkward, only Fanny thought: 'What a beautiful voice!' She thought how little he said yet how firm it was. She thought how young men are dignified and aloof ... And how childlike he would be, come in tired of an evening, she thought ... 'But I wouldn't give way,' she thought. (113,114)

The quotation marks emphasise the narrator's externality to Fanny. But then they are dropped:

> And for ever the beauty of young men seems to be set in smoke, however lustily they chase footballs, or drive cricket balls, dance, run, or stride along roads. Possibly they are soon to lose it. Possibly they look into the eyes of faraway heroes, and take their station among us half contemptuously, she thought. (114)

That attribution, 'she thought', is still outside of Fanny; but the narration has now adopted her view, moving for the most part inside her thinking, in a wish to bring itself into greater congruence with what is being narrated, namely the fiction.

Similar fusion happens a little later:

> I like books whose virtue is all drawn together in a page or two. I like sentences that don't budge though armies cross them. I like words to be hard - such were Bonamy's views. (136)

Further on still, a different kind of convergence is visible. Julia Eliot, Mrs Durrant, and Mr Bowley are gossiping about Jacob, 'character-mongering' (a coinage reminiscent of that subheading 'The Character-Mongers and Comedians' in Woolf's 1929 essay 'Phases of

Fiction', and so connected in her mind with the comic mode):'"His mother, they say, is somehow connected with the Rocksbiers," replied Mr Bowley'. Jacob's Room, likewise, is what they say. What 'they say' in this scene, and in those words, spills outwards through the narration in a sympathetic mimetic field:

> A cat will always go to a good man, they say ... (so the character-mongers said) ... And that is the very reason, so they said, why she attracts Dick Bonamy ... 'That young man, Jacob Flanders,' they would say ... 'His mother, they say, is somehow connected with the Rocksbiers' ... they say that character-drawing is a frivolous fireside art ... Those actions ... oar the world forward, they say ... The buses punctually stop.
> It is thus that we live, they say, driven by an unseizable force. They say that the novelists never catch it; that it goes hurtling through their nets and leaves them torn to ribbons. This, they say, is what we live by - this unseizable force. (150-152)

This gossip (presupposing a smallish society with its punctilios) Woolf punctuates with those stopping buses. But the pun on 'punctually' makes a point of putting a stop to our readerly exclusion from the fictional clique. We note it, and the narration immediately resumes its eavesdropping gossip, the comic scepticism of reported hearsay, ourselves now absorbed in the character-mongering coterie which speaks of Jacob. This design on us is of a different order from life's 'force', and so gives one pause.

The splicing of voices, narrative and fictional, would not be felt by the imagining reader unless it were clear that there is indeed a plurality of voices to be fused. Similarly, we would not feel The Waves to be so much Bernard's narration, if there were not several other fictional sources of voice possible in that work. But why should it become obvious at all that multiple voices are audible in Jacob's Room? It matters to this novel that its procedures be transparent. The narrating over-voice, intruding, commenting, fusing wholly, separating, has to be felt as an angle merely, Woolf seeking no overall omniscience here but wishing to open Jacob to the view of readers' imaginings. One agrees, 'it is no use trying to sum people up. One must follow hints, not exactly what is said, nor yet entirely what is done' (28). The remark reappears verbatim in Chapter XII, as gossip in a passage which, fictionally, denies what is by now platitudinous (150). The narrative intrusions do clarify what is being done, liberating readers to do for themselves. But they often merge with, and accompany, a less prescriptive, more speculative voice. Invention, fiction's very prerogative, is shared with the reader, and Jacob's obscurity is deepened, the engendering facts about him having been provided for the solitary imagining of scene. At the same time, much is generously implied between these facts. Character is a collage of overheard things and supplied surmises, the readers being part of that society which collates him. The formal generosity goes so far as to consider us of its society. The graphically self-conscious text artificially construes Jacob; chapter-shapes come and go, stand free of the fiction, follow it, fuse with it, in a revelation of the biographic need for found order. We are invited to free ourselves of that need if we so wish, and frankly to invent, to sidestep the narrator, submitting to some private need. The espousal of an ingenuous unfinishedness is not innocent, but itself strategic, for there can be no absolute controlling of imagining readers. The novel shares its faculty of invention with them, the author purveying this liberating text so as to trigger in us our spontaneous composition; then taking flight.

As a fact, the novel has power beyond what its author can foredetermine, like the continually written and sent letters; and it has, correspondingly, acknowledged limitations. It does not posture as denotation but inhabits a mid-realm between saying Jacob and leaving him, or proving him, unsaid. Jacob is a guise; what is nearest of him is furthest from knowing, a distance the novel emphasises. What is there in the midst of the writing may be seen by those who look. Not death, but the author and ourselves, will shape Jacob; and this it is which frees him from the dead letter of an invented life.

Although invention as peculiar to fiction is worth insisting on, then, it is obvious from Jacob's Room that fiction may well forgo its privilege, that that power may be turned towards an invention of fictive space for imagining readers themselves to fill. This is the common reader's, and Jacob's, room simultaneously, and opens the way to a spontaneous, unrehearsed, and unfinished composing. Evanescent readerly imagining of this kind approaches closely the kind of immediate attention which the drama requires.

Jacob's Room is a natural outgrowth of the concerns which produced 'The Journal of Mistress Joan Martyn' and the 'Memoirs of a Novelist', which will therefore receive due comment. They in their turn, were the products of deep preoccupation with the nature of life stories revealed in Woolf's numerous reviews of memoirs and in her essays on biography. We have an 'astonishing gift for illusion', and yet illusion uses up 'superfluous imagination'. We admire how 'the Greeks could paint fruit so that birds pecked at it' (JR 133). But the strength of such illusion exists, paradoxically, because 'we do not believe enough', or, because our susceptibility to illusion is passive and replicating, whereas belief is creative though not omniscient (134). We agree: 'here is Jacob's room', conceding the novel's governing metaphor; but there have got to be times when he is not in (94,36).

Woolf was well aware of the static dynamism in the classical Greek aesthetic: 'For Virginia Stephen, as for the classically educated young men of her generation, the Greeks provided a touchstone of beauty and truth'.[22] The novel impresses a similar experience in its matings of rhythm and spectacle, though more a dramatic than a plastic spectacle. But that fiction called '"the Greek spirit" ... is ... an illusion' too (133). The movements of Jacob's static-dynamic life might seem a mythos, reaching through various episodes and lyric hymns, various frenzies and still tableaux, towards Athens and moira, or rather Sandra, but there is about that whole process a randomness that belies external telic provision:

> 'And the Greeks, like sensible men, never bothered to finish the backs of their statues,' said Jacob, shading his eyes and observing that the side of the figure which is turned away from view is left in the rough.
> He noted the slight irregularity in the line of the steps which 'the artistic sense of the Greeks preferred to mathematical accuracy,' he read in his guide-book. (144,145)

This ability to let go any precise depiction, which they had at their fingertips, is also present in their stylised drama's very minor concessions to what we might recognise as realism. It is worthy of acknowledgement; and though 'their solution is no help to us', their unprescriptive praxis might be emulated (145). Jacob's Room is likewise not a biographical prescription, but it is narratively generous, and looks for ways in which to expand the imagining reader's spectatorial scope. As fiction, it has the peculiar right to invent; but that is precisely the central function which it assigns to, or shares with, its readers. Its adoption of apparent plurivocity, of an active graphics like the shifting of procedural backdrops, and the suggestion of subject through scenic and dialogic values, is a production of such a spectacle as to involve. Fertile facts comport with our historic sense, but are also seed crystals suspended in the prose solution, solving and resolving our dramatic needs. It is on the basis of these concretised points that we may produce a vision of Jacob which has point, pointing to what the fiction does not say, nor us either.

So far, the discussion has wanted to clarify what, in the developing view of Woolf, is peculiar to fiction, namely invention; but at the same time, it has been clear that fiction and biography do share the need for fertile, suggesting facts, which give readers something they may engender in solitude. Jacob's Room offers the circumambience, the surrounding obscurity, which can contain Jacob, who becomes a presence, if those invented facts with which the fiction is endowed appeal to the immediate generative power of imagining readers. Behaving like an ideal biography, it invents where biography cannot. It goes further, recognising that, for a novel in the public domain, a truly panoramic view must be as plural as its readers, whose individual visions attach to and grow out of productive facts. Their spectatorship and the author's form, together, a compound notional writing 'I' which does the collaborative composing. The subject, as often in James, emerges not in any one scene or dialogue, nor even in all of these cumulatively, but from the alignments and correlations of these which are mutually evaluative. This is a dramatic and deictic project, which, as epiphenomenon, is frequently found to pursue a present-tense narration. The invented facts award to the dramatising imagination just what it needs: the historic quiddities which are at once broadly typical as well as quotidian. This discussion has therefore hoped to show Woolf's narrational generosity - which a panoramic impulse must surely be, at least in aspiration. But the previous chapter also found that such a movement would be likely to have a tragicomic end. It remains to think about Jacob's Room as being a 'humorous' work comprehending narrating voices potentially out of kilter, formally anticipated by shorter pieces which remake biography in fiction's image, and enacting its tragicomedy within the very action of its signifiers.

II

Attention must now turn to the broader subject of Jacob's Room, to that which Jacob's spectacle instantiates, and to the aptness of this form for that subject. Jane Marcus wrote in 1981 that Woolf's feminist readers need 'simply shine /their/ lights into the musty corners that neither nephews nor professors have ever seen the need to dust off' in order to reassess Woolf.[23] Judy Little in the same anthology tried this with Jacob's Room, reading it as comedy, specifically as a parodic Bildungsroman.[24] Whether or not this may really be done quite so 'simply' as Marcus thought, it will be well to outline Little's position, so as to distinguish a different approach.

Little refers to Woolf's diary entry for January 1920, about the proposed novel's method and its desired result.[25] She quotes:

> scarcely a brick to be seen; all crepuscular, but *the heart, the passion, humour*, everything as bright as [thematic] fire in the [formal] mist. Then [as a result/in addition] I'll find room for so much - a gaiety - an inconsequence - a light spirited stepping at my sweet will. (Emphasis and parentheses added)

She glosses this entry by saying: 'If the form is right, [Woolf] will find room for everything she wants to put in, including humour, gaiety, inconsequence'. Compressing these last-named attributes where Woolf does not, running together what for Woolf are separate states, Little is inattentive to the *immediate* associations of 'humour' ('the heart, the passion'), preferring her own previous understanding of that term. The error matters, given that, in Woolf's more special usage, 'humour' is hardly gay or inconsequential. Far from it: humour is rare, because it is the panoramic achievement of a complexly tragicomic vision. Since this vision is anything but simple, any simple representations of it will be reductive.

Another reader who, dealing with the same diary passage, conflates what Woolf itemises separately, is Francesca Kazan.[26] Kazan quotes more of the 1920 entry than Little does:

> I suppose the danger is the damned egotistical self ... is one pliant & rich enough to provide a wall for the book from oneself without its becoming ... narrowing & restricting.

Her subsequent reasoning, insofar as it comments on the diary passage as a whole, reveals a certain confusion:

> Self and text interact here in a series of fluctuations. The text is described through the language of architectonics - scaffolding, bricks and walls - while the self is encountered through the language of emotion - the heart, passion, humour and egotism.

This conflation is bolder than Little's, juxtaposing items further apart textually. Its intuition accepts the 'heart, passion, humour' triad, but brackets with these, 'egotism', or, in Woolf's own usage, 'the damned egotistical self'. Kazan feels free to do this because, obviously, these conditions all express emotional subjectivity. But the invidiousness of associating 'humour' with 'egotism' is evident from Woolf's already-quoted impressions of Violet Dickinson and the

Barnetts. Closer analysis of the 1920 diary entry will therefore be useful.

The first thing to strike a reader of the relevant passage is Woolf's arrival at her notion of form well ahead of any specific content, although she knows, very broadly, what she wants for her subject ('the heart, passion, humour'). She conceives 'a new form [with 'immense possibilities'] for a new novel', even though 'the theme is a blank'. She is not short on ambition, either, her wish being to 'enclose everything, everything'. Potently, there is egotism in this desire: success turns upon who is mistress. Woolf wonders, 'how far it will ... enclose the human heart - Am I sufficiently mistress of my dialogue to net it there [in the projected form]?' Closure depends on Woolf's having come to be 'sufficiently mistress of things', of her having 'learnt my business sufficiently now to provide all sorts of entertainments'. In either nuance, the metaphor (authorial command; mistress of ceremonies) relates to control over presentation. This begs the obvious question: if 'the damned egotistical self' needed to bring off this experiment had ruined form for 'Joyce & [Dorothy] Richardson', how is any commandeered structure to enclose a condition like 'humour', given humour's latitudinarian quality, its anti-authoritarianism? The book's wall must enclose fire, but be itself mist: what went to the making of it must remain unseen. Kazan shrewdly notes that Woolf's aporia ('a wall for the book *from* oneself' (emphasis added)) can denote her originary function here, and also the book's preservation of its realm against the originating ego. Granting Kazan's acuity, it remains important to insist that - natural as it may seem to class together 'the heart, passion, humour' with 'egotism', all these being expressions of selfhood - 'humour' is in fact achievable for Woolf *only* to the extent that 'self' is transcended and 'egotism' overcome. Humour is for the mistress of pinnacles, rising far above the kind of personal engrossedness associated with *mere* emotionality.

Hence Woolf's intensive rhetoric assigns it to the last of three terms.

These readings of the 1920 diary passage offered by Little and Kazan are parodic in effect, and suggest that reassessment of Woolf is not that simple. They may be thought to show (placed side by side) some affinity between simplistic attributions of comedy (as distinct from humour) and overemphasis upon a controlling presence. So, Kazan can align 'humour' with 'egotism', because she assumes, without comment, the purely comic status of humour. Had its special character been duly noted, it could not have been thought congenial company for egotism. For Woolf, comedy is indeed of the self, while humour is greater than this.

The purpose of the 'pictorial passage', or 'pictorial space', or 'description' (Kazan's usages and main emphasis) in Jacob's Room is, she thinks, to afford the 'fluidity of modernism' 'a more welcome aspect in the context of the sometimes disconcertingly random narration'. But the narrative purpose she envisages is somewhat coercive, which is unsurprising, seeing that humour is thought fit to partner egotism. The ground under this modernist fluidity is only an 'apparent stability'. Woolf's novel does not mean to let us stand firm upon it: 'we are forced to question our desire for that which is stable and constant' (emphasis added). The rhetoric is integral to the argument, and seems fully intended. Jacob's Room, on this showing, is not humorous, because the mistress's damned egotistical self has imposed its sweet will on us. That would not prevent the novel from being comic; but it would mean it has failed, despite its author's express wish, to enclose humour.

Are, then, these descriptive, putatively stable passages in Jacob's Room intended to force our awareness of instability? Yet another diary entry (from August, 1928) is helpful here:

> Shall I now continue this soliloquy, or shall I imagine an audience, which will make me describe? (Emphasis added)

Imagining readers as audience produces description.[27] The reverse also seems true: where the novel is nondescript, there is work for imagining readers. Woolf has a developing sense of this audience and is not inclined to force it, but to offer its scenic sense inducements. Fortuitously, but aptly, Little uses theatre-metaphor in her argument:

> Virginia Woolf /she says/ drags in all the Bildungsroman scenery; then she lets Jacob walk aimlessly about, as though the stage were bare.

Little's intuition is led to this metaphor, one guesses, because so much about Jacob's Room is indeed redolent of dramatic tendencies, expressed markedly in dialogic and scenic structuring, and in foregrounding of a narrative present tense. Given the nature of humour, drama could not be far away. To compose a life (biographically; historiographically) just is to dramatise that life. This perception may be thought to reconcile those polar responses of Little (for whom the novel is 'comedy') and Kazan (who calls it 'an elegiac study of death'); for if the novel, in imagining the readers as audience, invites them to enact their spectatorial gifts, the 'theme', inasmuch as it is comic spectacle, will have its burden of tears, aspiring without untoward strain to the significant form for humour. This must mean that, globally, Jacob's Room is not parodic, satiric, elegiac, or uncomplicatedly comic, even if it comprises elements of all these modes. Its newfound narrativity wishes to enclose heart, passion, and humour, not so as to master an audience by force, but because there exists a narrativity proper to humour. The walls enclosing this can receive and return echoes, which will assist writerly identity.[28]

It is therefore appropriate that the acting narrator should sound at times like a Jacob-voice (hortatory; opinionated, and sententious), and at others like a Betty-voice (speculating; experimental, and free-associating). This moving in and out of any pretense to omniscience is comprehensive as humour is comprehensive, catching at both mother and son. It is true that we are at one point asked to grant 'ten years' seniority and a difference of sex' (74; but to whom?). Taking this over-literally may be to set up a straw woman. Jacob's Room calls its protagonist nineteen in October of 1906, when he goes up to Cambridge (28); and at the narrative point of our being asked to grant somebody ten years' seniority over him, he cannot be far from his twenty-second year. Woolf was herself composing the novel between the ages of thirty-eight and forty (1920-22), and would be about thirty-nine, roughly seventeen years older than her creature, at the moment of that request to grant ten years' seniority. The arithmetic is thus notional. It is even fictional, invented, perhaps rhetorical at last. So one may hesitate somewhat to identify the narratival sexual difference from Jacob with Woolf's literal sexual difference from her invention, though there need be no hesitation in finding here a narrative voice feminised by approximation to Betty. In other words, the voice is a constructed one, and dramatic. Its rhetoric is (for the duration, at least, of its ostensible femininity) interestingly located within a female spectatorship which looks bemusedly at Jacob. At other times, the voice ventriloquises from inside the young man himself, or from within a like persona, being what we guess he sounds like, from the facts we are given concerning him. Narrative voice can be seen, then, to adopt mimetic modes for mother and for son, and to be spiritually androgynous. Since that is so, we may expect from it a tearful comedy, and a ludicrously tragic scenario.

III

It is no use trying to sum up Woolf's writing: the attempts would seem to be forced. For Gordon, we are expected to share in the making of Jacob only 'at moments of acute frustration' for the narrator. Gordon considers 'this honesty about failure' to be 'impressive'. The failure, she says, is a 'comic drama of a writer in pursuit of a subject. The narrator is pathetic'. It would have been useful, here, for her to be able to say that the novel was 'humorous': this would have explained the synthesis of impressive honesty, drama, comedy and also pathos. But there is perhaps an impediment to her thinking so, revealed in an idiom she shares with Kazan:

> The deliberately fragmented narrative ... forces the reader to share in the biographer's effort and failure.

Both Kazan and Gordon feel, they say, this forcing of the reader. Gordon can say, on the same page, that 'the reader is invited to share' creation, but that the narration 'forces the reader to share' failure (emphases added). This process is simply asserted. Her language in the biography of Woolf (1984) is not accidental, and repeats a similar, earlier (1983) illocution, as well as appearing elsewhere. These sources, outside the biography, are not simple reproductions of each other, but are condensed and refashioned pieces. What remains unchanged from version to version may be taken to represent Gordon's active choice.[29] If then Gordon and Kazan are committed to this rhetoric, it can seem that *Jacob's Room*'s form, provided by the damned egotistical self, is after all somewhat overbearing, the mistress manipulating us. By this index, *Jacob's Room* fails by dominating the reader, precluding that 'humour' which Woolf had hopes of enclosing. The novel could not *force* us to share tragicomic failure, without forfeiting the very desired effect. Its stance towards readers would be insecure, the writer not imagining us as imagining in turn. Telling us what to think, controlling our response, it would caricature the proposed new form. That is not in principle impossible, of course; but *Jacob's Room*'s procedures cannot, it happens, justly be thought to force readers, and some readings themselves turn out to be 'forced'. For Woolf, if impressively honest comic-pathetic spectacle is humorous, it sees no need to constrain, and relinquished possibilities of narratorial control are not at all the same thing as failure staged for comic effect. A rhetoric of force comes too easily to some critics concerned to force a passage for their approach. Sometimes the unexaminedness of this rhetoric seems to issue in nonsense. Jane Marcus says, for instance, that 'the male reader is forced to deny the superiority of his gender if he is to read *A Room of One's Own* sympathetically'. But it is not clear, here, what is the claimed relation of force to sympathy: is Marcus saying males will need to be forced to be sympathetic? If not, if one is sympathetic as things stand, why the need for force? Other critics know what they mean, which is at times worse still. D. Dowling writes that Jacob's Room has 'a profound moral', that it 'assert/s/ ... moral values', and that naming the protagonist 'Flanders' is meant 'to hammer home /Woolf's/ meaning to the point of torture'.[30]

The argument against this implied bid for control may be taken further by discussion of the (1920) excised tenth chapter of Jacob's Room, 'A Woman's College from Outside' (therefore, as spectacle).[31] Attention will be given to what this story says to Marcus. 'Angela' is called several times (in holograph and typescript) 'Miranda', a young Welshwoman feeling the stir of personal vision, 'this new world'.[32] As in Shakespeare, the pristine young visionary has her witnesses - 'the room', for instance, 'the witness of such a scene'; the mirror in that room; and, of course, the imagining readers. Sadly, this is no daughter of Prospero: 'Angela Williams was at Newnham for the purpose of earning her living' by 'the science of economics'. This fact comically deflates her 'impassioned adoration' of life - the choice of Newnham or new world. Her 'reflection' in the glass - flawless and precarious - is beautiful all the same. 'Which meditation' she ruins by turning slightly, annulling the image. The reflection/meditation pun is only half willing to emerge, for Angela is double. So are the narrated words playing around her, which reveal as reductive the name pinned to her door by those 'elderly women ... who would on waking immediately clasp the ivory rod of office'. It was 'as if the only purpose of all these names was to rise martially in order should there be a call on them to extinguish a fire, suppress an insurrection, or pass an examination'. These are masculine and repressive modes of action. They must (and do) induce hysteria, partly sexual. As those old authoritarians sleep, the young women's insurrectionary spirits will out:

> soft laughter came from behind the door. A prim-voiced clock struck the hour - one, two. Now if the clock were issuing his commands, they were disregarded. Fire, insurrection, examination, were all snowed under by laughter, or softly uprooted, the sound seeming to bubble up from the depths and gently waft away the hour, rules, discipline ... into the garden /poured/ this bubbling laughter, this irresponsible laughter: this laughter of mind and body floating away rules, hours, discipline: immensely fertilising, yet formless, chaotic. (Emphases added)

According to Woolf's 1905 'Laughter' essay, laughter is humanising. Even so (she then said),

> Pure laughter, such as we hear on the lips of children and silly women, is in disrepute. It is held to be the voice of folly and frivolity inspired neither by knowledge nor emotion.

The essay concedes that comedy's 'office is comparatively slight compared with that of true humour' (emphasis added), but warns of how 'we are in danger of losing this precious privilege, or of crushing it out of our breasts, by a mass of crude and ponderous knowledge'. That, of course, is what Angela is likely to gain at Newnham. Laughter sees through 'wealth and rank and learning', the essay says; and 'the chief ministers of the comic spirit' (women and children) are what they are, 'because their eyes are not clouded with learning nor are their brains choked with the theories of books'. Laughter finds all those 'pomps and conventions and dreary solemnities' transparent. One knows, then, what the Newnham girls find to satirise in secret all night, and why theirs is a fertile ridicule. Some suspect women of this kind of thing, hence 'women are looked upon with ... disfavour in the learned professions'.[33]

Angela, like Rachel Vinrace, is neither woman nor child - another doubleness, besides her conflict of free poetic vision with necessary economics readings. She harbours a life alternative to what academic authority dictates, and is an angel on the side of hilarity. But we find, as she speaks her aesthetic mind, that 'pain was in her voice'. Looking at the coming dawn, '"Oh", she cried, as if in pain'. We see her awake in bed, thinking of her new world,

> sucking her thumb like a child (her age nineteen last November).

This sight complicates any delight we feel at the girls' irrepressible laughter: we are inclined to smile at and with their subversions, but the cost of that secret satire and its dividedness is seen to be a sad stunting. The piece raises and depresses pleasure, offering neither a comic nor a tragic experience. By showing us, deictically, Angela from outside, as spectacle, appealing to our scenic sense, it presents humour in criticism of solemn authority. We think of Angela therefore, without being told what to think.[34]

The story found its way out of Jacob's Room, but accords with Woolf's desire, there, to enclose 'the heart, the passion, humour'. The narrator is not a mistress of Newnham: comic anarchy, a gaiety and an inconsequence, and then an angelic pathos, are offered unresolved. This piece speaks to Marcus of Woolf's 'passionate longing for purity, for female community'; and this is well taken. But it also tells her of Woolf's 'deep desire for the discipline of female authority', even of her wish 'for a haven under female authority'. Henrietta Barnett was, it seems, not so deplorable after all. But this misreading cannot survive the anti-authoritarianism in Woolf's understanding of that 'humour' which Jacob's Room was to enclose. The distortion enforces Woolf's story, and emerges, arguably, from an over-appreciation of just the sort of academic authority for which Marcus and her colleagues have struggled. The patriarchalism of this need to be under such dominion, or to wield that kind of power, is reified in the misreading. For neither this story, nor its originally framing narrative, wishes for some external mastery of the will; or, to subject the theme to some damned egotistical self; or, to be imposed upon or to impose. In the bid to lay claim to a Woolf reading of one's own, Marcus, like Gordon and Kazan, succumbs, with paradoxical passivity, to undistinguished models of reading and writing as force. Once visible, this ceases to be seductive; and it held no great appeal for Woolf. It would in truth be strangely self-defeating, were Woolf to make readers experience this or that. Forced readers may admire, laugh, or weep, but are unlikely finally to feel much more than passive spectators of the forcible narrative.[35]

IV

In the diary entry which Little and Kazan discuss, Woolf thinks of her proposed new form as 'mark on the wall, K.G. & unwritten novel taking hands & dancing in unity'. She has already experimented towards this form, albeit not programmatically, and is in hindsight conscious of a natural chronology. There is marked difference between what the egotistical self imposes formally, and new form under metaphor of a choreography of preexistent minor forms, or like the Graces. It will be useful to comment on the trio of stories Woolf mentions, but also enlarging the choric rhythmos with 'The Journal of Mistress Joan Martyn' (1906), 'Memoirs of a Novelist' (1909), and 'Lives of the Obscure' (1924,1923,1919), treating these as anticipatory.[36]

Before doing so, one might deal with Gordon's belief (common among Woolf's readers) that 'with the mention of Jacob's surname, Flanders, in the opening sentence', 'the whole book forecasts' 'his death'.[37] His fate and feet (this in effect claims) are in Jocasta's son's old shoes, inscribed as in the Sophoclean mythos, anticipating, it is often felt, how 'Jimmy feeds crows in Flanders' (93). But it is a too-solemn overview. The connection of surname and Great War is there to be made, and a certain kind of biographer would not resist. Yet Jacob's Room does not feel as though that were its end. The novel's emotional centre is somewhere around its eighth chapter.

To return to that business of naming, 'Florinda', a name for pastoral chastity, is a misnomer, while 'Papworth' (Mrs), ever-pregnant mother of nine, lives her name to the hilt (74,98). Caricature and burlesque, summed up in nomenclatures, came effortlessly to Woolf. Yet it is no good trying to sum people up. So if Jacob is more than a death in Flanders, his name has not determined him. If it does seem to us that his name is summary, we will have over-read the sometimes omniscient narration. That, though, would be to under-read the fiction, which is more concerned with what is central in his life than with what is fateful. Loudly, he heads for death in battle. Secretly, he is a man in weak relation to his mother. We might choose to insist that the War surely put the ultimate tragic distance between mother and son. Yet this merely enacts, to one stage further, an entrenched process which need not have taken that shape, regardless of Jacob's end. Jacob's Doom really is an unwritten novel: the death is aftereffect and machinery. Mason observes of tragedy: 'the end of a tragedy is not the most tragic place in a tragedy just because it is the end but in virtue of another power which may not always be present at the end'.[38] To assert otherwise credits Woolf with a certain bid for control, more reminiscent of the over-adequate biographies which drew her complaints, and with the encoding of irresistable signals. Jacob has room to evade these, and so do we, because Woolf has not written a biographic melodrama.

It has been argued in this chapter that Jacob's Room continues Woolf's appeal to the imagining readers, to the readers as audience, and that, like The Voyage Out and Night and Day, it aspires to 'humour' as pure spectacle and significant form, in the realising of which reader and writer become aware of community. This process entails the mimesis of solitude, which is to receive attention in the next chapter. In the meantime, brief and selective reference may be made to those early shorter pieces already detailed, to show anticipations of Jacob's Room; and then part of the emotive eighth chapter explored.

'The Mark on the Wall' (1917) uses voice within voice to mock 'the masculine point of view which governs our lives, which sets the standard', and admits to a 'slight contempt for men of action', even as the narrator moves to investigate (an action) the curious mark. Delay in identification is owing to a scepticism about the status of knowledge. Future novelists will take for their models the ancient Greek dramatists and Shakespeare, 'leaving the description of reality more and more out of their stories, taking a knowledge of it for granted'. Baldry agrees with that assessment:

> In all this /forfeiture of scenic realism/ the Greek theatre may be at variance with our own; but it is in agreement with the practice of other times and cultures, including those in which drama has reached its greatest heights - Shakespeare's theatre, for example, with its unchanging background of doors, alcove and balcony; the Japanese Noh theatre, with its unvarying picture of a pine tree on the rear wall of the acting area; or Sanskrit drama, picturesque and exotic in the setting which its words convey, yet performed on a completely bare stage. In the history of world theatre as a whole freedom of imagination has been the rule: it is our own age, in so far as it is tied to visual realism, that is out of step.

Already, it is significant that Woolf should point to those dramatic sources as literary examples.[39] So the future writers of fiction will disown masculinist definitions like those paraded in 'Whitaker's Table of Precedency', which, ridiculous, will be 'laughed into the dustbin'. Practically, this undoing is seen in two verbal cruces:

> generalisations are very worthless. The military sound of the word is enough. It recalls leading articles, cabinet ministers - a whole class of things indeed which as a child one thought the thing itself, the standard thing, the real thing ... There was a rule for everything

- except for what play may be made with words. The paronomasia poses as denotative of what editors and governments do. It can be toyed with, its relation to militarism shown as spurious discursive action, in an anti-authoritarian lexical play to dally away that denotation. Indeed, the narrator conceives the mark as a nail until it is found by action (another's, and discursive) to be a snail. Only one phoneme is added, but the s/nail cannot be both things. Woolf's punning features in her experimental fiction, but is not visible, if it is there at all, in either The Voyage Out or Night and Day. Present in this story, it implies or announces itself in two sorts of licence - secret paronym, and exhibited paronomasia. The narrative strategy of monologue within monologue, and constantly shifting speculation, is helped by this tactic. What is presented, to counterpoint this vocal inwardness, is lexical surface as outwardness, as discursive action ungoverned by the masculinist rules. Knowledge is always in token of the unknown; and as for knowing, it is, itself, a role. As A Room of One's Own would later say, 'There is no mark on the wall to measure the precise height of women'.[40]

Taking 'Kew Gardens' (1919) and 'An Unwritten Novel' (1920) together, the first story offers a strong appeal to visual sense. This depiction, which imagines the readers as audience, gives them enough to stimulate their scene-making faculty. With the scene for backdrop, dialogue may afford to forgo explicitness. The dialogues are accordingly restrained, with comic-pathetic result; for it is not clear how much Eleanor and Simon reveal to, or conceal from, each other; William's companion is sadly eccentric; and Trissie and her beau are in the grip of feelings beyond all talk. Beneath this, the snail-realm reminds us that the scene may be perceived in strangely other ways. That is the unwritten fiction between the two women's words, which read like something from 'The Waste Land' (whose plurivocity itself anticipates Eliot's later, dramatic essays):

> 'Nell, Bert, Lot, Cess, Phil, Pa, he says, I says, she says,
> I says, I says, I says -'
> 'My Bert, sis, Bill, Grandad, the old man, sugar.
> Sugar, flour, kippers, greens
> Sugar, sugar, sugar.'

In that comic exchange, words trigger and share invention. 'An Unwritten Novel' also speculates about character-invention. But, 'we'll skip ... skip - oh, but wait! ... Skip, skip', since explicitness is redundant, these statements occurring within the kind of intrusive parentheses one finds in Jacob's Room. With the mention of 'the itch and the patch and the twitch', 'I starve and strive ... crusts and cruets, frills and ferns ... the glacis of cut glass, a desire to peer and peep', language acts become a surface which we see happen by writerly fiat ('the time's not come for bringing them in ... I say the time's not come') and an omniscient scepticism ('whatever it may do to the reader, [it] don't take me in'). All is not control, however, since the proposed story is to achieve, jinglingly or otherwise, 'richness and rotundity, destiny and tragedy', and that, precisely, is why 'many die in every novel that's written - the best, the dearest ... It's life's fault'. True as this was also to be of Jacob, it helps engender 'the vista and the vision ... the distance'.[41]

'The Journal of Mistress Joan Martyn' (1906), introduced by a historian disapproved by her male colleagues for a habit of being, in lieu of facts, 'content to imagine merely', gives us Joan's journal-extracts, to make of them what we will. Joan's father recreated forebears from incomplete memoir-material, as was his way, which also has to be ours. But in confiding to Joan his dream of autobiography, he has difficulty imagining readers as auditors: 'And would they care to hear it? And who will they be?' What we do with Joan's diary, is what she did with Richard Sir's Cornish songbook, namely envisage what is 'in the midst of the writing', and there 'to be seen by those who look'. Richard's text illumines what is nearest home but, ironically unlike fabulous Troy, furthest from Joan's knowledge. Panoramic vision is given its opportunity: 'I saw them as solid globes of crystal; enclosing a round ball of coloured earth and air, in which tiny men and women laboured'. Richard's liberating book implies an opening to readers to feel similarly about Joan's fragmentary journal.[42]

'Memoirs of a Novelist' (1909) invents obscurity where 'Lives of the Obscure' works outwards from it. Primly, Miss Linsett, as biographer to Francis Willatt, suppresses all the interesting things in her novelist-subject's life, yet unwittingly gives data towards some Francis not the creature of her control. She imagines, and so obscures, a Francis independent of the facts. She also declines to imagine the facts which admittedly stud this fiction. Her reviewer feels that 'one must abandon Miss Linsett altogether, or take the greatest liberties with her text'. Short of which, one would at least 'like to ask her upon what system she cut her friend's /as a later narrator would assign Jacob's/ life into chapters', and in particular why she provides so much 'inappropriate detail' around Francis's death, as though that were the life's end. But the reviewer does not altogether fault Miss Linsett: Miss Willatt must share the blame. A melodramatic novelist, she sought quick and purple effects, her narration only 'the portentous voice that linked the dialogues'. Her fiction hardly benefitted from earlier historical readings, since she had no feel for the dramatically concrete, preferring 'qualities without bodies'. At this point, it is well to exonerate Woolf of a similar and frequent charge: what is at issue here, is whether Woolf gives readers dramatic body sufficient for them to envisage the resultant qualities.

We do not find, either in Miss Linsett's overly inventive fiction, which is what her biography really is, or in her friend's literally too-inventive fiction, creative facts furthering our capacity to realise character or scene. But accidental detail does prove quite fertile. For Francis was ghostly mother to a society of inadequates, suggesting an interesting egotism not at all agreeable to Miss Linsett's platitudinous confection. Within the obfuscating biography is another, real-life obscurity. For Francis, 'power, which should have been hers as a mother, was dear ... even when it came by illegitimate means. Another gift was hers, without which the rest had been useless; she could take flights into obscurity'. The pun enacts this flight. Francis craved maternal power outwith the spiritual laws that allow it, and connotation is not going to submit, either, to denotation's, or even biography's, law. To her acolytes, hers were 'confused outlines', much as Betty Flanders was 'like Jacob in the blur of her outline', a blurring of mother and son never dispelled by the frequently portentous voice linking the snatches of dialogue (JR 88). The reviewer debunks Miss Linsett's caricature of Miss Willatt. Miss Linsett, we are informed, had been telling us what to think; and the reviewer tells us what to think of Miss Linsett. But our literal-minded scepticism has had some exercise. Given the (admittedly factitious) facts, who is to say that our Miss Willatt will be that reviewer's, any more than Miss Linsett's? This is to query the status of biography within the broader genre of historiography, the inquiry itself disguised as an attack upon mere hagiography. People, events, processes - these are knowable only by means of token and gesture, in a symptomatic knowledge ready to admit that, in all life-composition, one inevitably dramatises. It is better to have this out in the open and to be explicit about it. The minor fictions here briefly reviewed live a mid-life between Woolf's treatment of literal memoirs and her outright invented fictions. 'Lives of the Obscure', to be discussed in a moment, moves in the opposite direction, fictionalising real lives through dramatically construing the fertile facts. All of these pieces demonstrate Woolf's desire for a generic fluidity.

Her procedure was often misunderstood. Knowledge by token is in full play throughout Three Guineas, but that is insufficient to moderate Q.D. Leavis's intemperate review in Scrutiny. Reform by token is advanced in A Room of One's Own; but Auden, for all his own dramatic forays, read this literalistically, and censoriously, by the light of his own manner of political earnestness.[43]

The three pieces of 'Lives of the Obscure', dating respectively from 1924, 1923, and 1919, realise, with one exception, lives from a fact-nuggeted obscurity. Edgeworth has no sense of 'secret story', or any awareness of that solitary wife whom his volubility eclipsed. But because 'it is so difficult to refrain from making scenes', and since 'certain scenes have the fascination which belongs rather to the abundance of fiction than to the sobriety of fact', for that very reason 'we conjure up', despite our knowing full well that, 'if the past could be recalled', our scenes 'might perhaps be found lacking in accuracy'. Edgeworth's unspeculating, and unremitting, intrusions into other lives are accidentally revealing, so his obtuse narration cannot hinder the imagining reader's invention: 'we see him through their eyes;

we see him as he does not dream of being seen'. He is not imagining the readers (a different order of lack from that of Joan Martyn's father), though the reverse is true. Such narrators as Edgeworth - omniscient, obtuse - let us do more than just attend to them. We become newly aware of what they are not saying, of what lives at the periphery. That is why the obscure may have as many lives as readers. Essentially their solitude remains untouched, and this impregnates the few facts about them which are available. Eleanor Ormerod is another whose life is not shaped by her death (as those lives were, even, in the iconoclastic Eminent Victorians) despite Woolf's essay's choosing to end on that note. Instead of omniscience, we have a rich collage of implication gathered from anecdotes, key facts, ambiguous dialogue; and mediated by a graphically aware text using dashes and hiatus to suggest how occasional are the narrated events. The essay's voice is sometimes Eleanor's, and at other times a replying voice. For she was above all else a social fact, this collector of the fugitive locust, and a locus of speculation.

But when Woolf asks of us, 'can you imagine' Laetitia Pilkington, she means us to understand by this something else again. For Laetitia there is, under pressure of financial need, an embarrassment of printable biographical detail, a willed provision of suggestive facts which leave her no solitude. Her dashes are not so discreet as they think. The identities of 'Widow W-rr-n' and 'the D- of M-lb-gh' are obvious; we cannot but know what a 'h-h' spite is. The posture of discretion is an act, and sad, the resort of one needing privacy she cannot afford. Thanks to her, we know (and are grateful to know) that Swift 'used to suck in his cheeks instead of laughing'. But imagining Laetitia does not, in this case, mean generating scene from all those eccentric and curious facts. She was forced to give us them, and so their abundance is not inevitably fictive. One wants, instead, to live for the moment in all her uneasy dashes, even, or especially, when they hide nothing of substance. The sympathetic reader may, in this way, find that the narrative facts are more fertile, even, than the fictional ones.[44]

To abstract now what these stories and essays are doing: there is a half-conscious strategy of appealing to, of engaging and increasing, an imagining reader's spectatorial powers. Secreted or displayed punning, as well as jingling, let one encounter a verbal surface where discourse is itself action. Voice within voice; the Jamesian distancing of a narrator who reviews what a biographer said of a novelist; and comic omniscience whose revelations are by-products of self-absorption - these techniques induce us to feel that, the fiction being decentred, we are free to participate, insofar as we feel engrossed rather than enforced. What the text's graphic self-presentation means is that we are seeing only one mode of arrangement, and that others are quite possible. If there is visualisation, the picture's lyricism is not imposed but proceeds from an awareness of the secrecy of things, and we are given scenery against which to hear incomplete dialogue. If what is in the writing's midst is furthest from knowledge, just to posit it will not do: rather, it suggests itself to our overview. This is so of character as possibility or proposition, as a speculative construct: to help us produce it, there are creatively incongruous facts, important and delimited, and we have the Miss Willatt we want. Death is easy to write of, but not definitive.

So, is one to agree with Gordon when she finds in Jacob's Room a 'haste for modernity'?[45] No. Woolf is not after modernity simply for itself, nor in that much of a hurry (the experiments discussed span sixteen years up to, and two beyond, 1922). Haste and force (proofs of impatience) would hinder a writer pursuing panoramically tragicomic 'humour', and undo that purpose. Understanding Woolf's intention will mean imagining the readers she was imagining; and these minor pieces are our inducements.

V

The church clock, however, strikes twelve.

XII
(JR 130)

Here, with true Shandyism, narration (arbitrary chapter-division) rushes to merge with fiction (in the dramatic present), but looks rather gauche, an imposition of form because one has to and might as well. We are being told what to think. Nowhere is this more so than in the following hortation from Chapter VIII, typical of the summing-up Jacob-voice's certainty:

> Let us consider letters ... how soon deeds sever and become alien ... the power of the mind to quit the body ... this phantom of ourselves ... speech attempted ... infinitely brave, forlorn, and lost. Life would split asunder without them ... These ... make of life a perfect globe ... the voices that try to penetrate before the last card is dealt and the days are over ... 'Try to penetrate' ... the task of reaching, touching, penetrating the individual heart. Were it possible? (79,91)

The not-so-subtextual concern of all this sententiousness is: Can the letters Betty sends ever penetrate to Jacob? Jacob does Florinda. All Betty's motherly screeds go in the box, read casually if at all. 'In the literature of love', says Ellen Moers, 'from the beginning of time, whatever the sex or nationality of the writer, the letter is the natural form - real letters, hoax letters, letters in novels, verse letters, secret letters, sung letters, spoken letters, letters that stand or fall not by the test of truth to fact, but by the test of truth to love'.[46] Meanwhile, 'the little creak, the sudden stir ... the little creak, the sudden stir' of Jacob 'stretched with Florinda' repeats, by phrasal gesture, a distressing sexual mechanics. Betty, if she knew of this, would cry 'my son, my son'. Her letters, with their 'mother-wit, vulgarity, and sentiment', would say, if they could, 'don't go with bad women ... and come back, come back to me', but they 'can never, never say' any such thing (167,87).

The portentous voice linking the dialogues is in love with the omniscience of its overview, writing letters to itself, not seeing its own tactlessness. It prefers to penetrate, rather than imagine, the reader, and so does not foresee an amused disbelief that this crudity would advertise its supposed understanding. Even if the Jacob-voice is sympathetically picking up the Betty-voice, its preoccupation breaks through in that antanaclasis. Concern is on its own terms, officious. The pun has no intention of allowing the reader to miss it or to fail to admire its deftness: it is three times repeated. What it wishes to say is something like this:

> Here is a scene in which the lonely Betty's secretly distraught letters try to get through to Jacob, to tell him - but this is unsaid - not to have sex with whorish women. And here, even here, lies her letter unopened, while Florinda lies opened and entered by Betty's son. What pathos. Note how well I grasp its irony, and how tellingly my very diction reflects the fact. I give you a panoramic view of the whole forlorn scene.

It really does nothing like this, of course, but instead draws notice to its own lexical posturing, thereby caricaturing the whole process. Obtusely, and melodramatically, emphasising sadness, it is unwittingly comic. Thanks to this impenetrableness, other, fugitive things come to light.

For prior to that tedious blunder, the speculative Betty-voice entered Mrs Flanders's mind to note, among many other domestic thoughts, her remembering 'Parrot's great white sale' (87,88). This subdued paronomasia attracts more to itself than the declarative pun. Walter Redfern remarks of 'hidden puns' that 'they ma/k/e the listener aware of a complex of ideas which enrich the total statement, even though they do not come into full consciousness'.[47] 'Out blow the sails', then, and Jacob 'furled the sail' to the Scillies (43,47). His boat arriving, 'a sailing ship' passes the shore, and passing ages resemble 'waves fit for sailing' (55,73). Florinda's landlady 'kept a parrot'; and if Florinda dislikes living there (which she does), still, the night outside is no romantic sea 'in which you sink or sail as a star', but more prosaic. She can always sleep in Jacob's room with him, heading for which one may well encounter 'a girl ... for sale' (75,78,79). There is a 'fine

Mexican parrot' at Miss Perry's, and nearby in narrative space, the whore Laurette (99-101). Jacob at his most statuesque resembles 'a British admiral', the world his ship (141,161,87). *White*hall, to Betty's anxious mind, is the fleet tethered at Gibraltar, the Admiralty whose wires hum with news, though not of her brother lost at sea (168-171,88). She writes under a red light, the red light of the (misnomered) Parthenon's columns (171).

Hence that great white sale evokes, in triple entendre, Betty's typical intentness on household linen; her compensating maritime romance of a not-quite-favourite son coupled with worry for a sea-going brother probably lost; and her anxiety over whether this son of hers accompanies the sort of women most unlike his mother, the sort who sell themselves. This last, she would take as an ultimate rejection. But she guesses more of him, than he knows of her: she senses what a young man away from home will encounter in the city, whilst he knows nothing whatsoever of domestic economy or science. So the subdued punning has wide sympathies and some objective (if general) knowledge of a son by his mother. All the declarative double entendre succeeds in doing, by comparison, is to reduce this complexity to a phallocentric (indeed, phallogocentric) caricature. The Betty-voice's punning abides, relatively unmarked, in secret empathy. It is amusing, this anxiety's penetration of her imputed diction; but one's smile is pained, since there is something unfunny in it too. Nor is one delighted by the wry poetic justice of Jacob's misjudging, and losing, that little prostitute Florinda (91). What happens in the separated lives of mother and son cannot be balanced in quite so melodramatic an economy.

The reader, spectator of a fiction but also of a way of narrating, comes to feel that the truth is tragicomic. This sentiment is a function of one's much-increased awareness of surfaces, and induces laughter burdened with tears. Nor can one really (though that, of course, is precisely what one does) split the Jacob- from the Betty-voice. The speculative voice possesses an accidental omniscience, and the more hortatory voice an incidental ignorance; but they penetrate and sail through each other. There is an unintended pathos in the unintendedly comic hortatory pretense to a sad knowledge. And there is comedy in the unconsciously accurate diction of Betty's distracted mind. The Betty-voice, if unforcible, can be at times directive, while the Jacob-voice's h-h direction begs to be deflated. These procedures give an audience space in which to imagine what might be true, imagining that kind of readerly need. The after-image is 'humorous'. As Empson wrote in 1931 about the novel's conclusion, it shows 'a concentration on ... domestic details as dramatic; Mrs Flanders, for instance, not knowing what to do with her dead son's boots; but ... it is no use saying it could only be done by a woman novelist. Shakespeare is full of details of this sort, which would be humorous if they were not terrible'.[48] The reference here to an antecedent dramatic imagination is very just. If that part of the novel's eighth chapter which has been noticed here is a sentimental node in the midst of the writing, holding what is there for those who look, it is because the solitude of this fiction's readers is not enforced. The writer too is at an enjoying distance, her privacy intacta.

SOLITUDE

I

In 'The Narrow Bridge of Art' (1927), already referred to, Woolf projects of the future novel-form: 'It will be written in prose, but in prose which has many of the characteristics of poetry'. One of those characteristics she then outlines: 'It will have something of the exaltation of poetry, but much of the ordinariness of prose'. Not accidentally, her mind immediately turns to genre: 'It will be dramatic, and yet not a play. It will be read, not acted'.[1]

Woolf's quick invocation of the drama almost certainly flows from that separation of poetic 'exaltation' from prose 'ordinariness' (or, in more popular usage, of the poetic from the prosaic). One genre is irresistably to hand, which in its historically greatest period, decorously separated the ordinary from the exalted by means of prose/verse division. As for the newer prose drama, such as that of Shaw and Ibsen, it is insufficiently expressive, Woolf thinks; and she also takes it as given that verse drama is now a spent force. The age of the novel, though, also includes 'the poetic dramatist of the future'. The yet-to-be-devised form will not leave intact that separation of prose (the ordinary) from verse (the exalted) which had long characterised an older drama. It will not submit, either, to the broader generic division of narrative from drama. For Woolf the best drama has always been poetic, and the future novel will therefore be a poetic drama - all generic, and (within genre) decorous pigeonholing done away with.

Woolf's preference for the poetic over the prosaic drama, is a preferring of lyricism. Lyricism could be noisy: in the minor Renaissance drama, it, as much as any other stage business, denied the audience solitude. Indeed, Woolf (prior to the nineteen-thirties) craves the 'explosive', so as to 'draw blood' by the proposed dramaturgies.[2] Since this entailed the 'poetic', a strenuous lyricism is envisaged, rather anxiously expressive, the lyricising dramatically active. But this enacts an irony. Lyric is, in itself, conventionally a solitary and private mode. In Shakespeare's hands, lyricism did not impair either his, or the audience's, anonymity, although it was inseparable from the action. The white noise of Woolf's metaphorising in The Voyage Out becomes its own end, acting autonomously, and it is not amiss that Night and Day should have cut out this interference. Jacob's Room, Mrs Dalloway, and To the Lighthouse are all looking for ways in which to have lyricism act. But the problem for these works is that of combining a dramatically indispensable lyricism, with the privacy (authorial; readerly) that had long been associated with lyric as a genre, and not to be too deeply tinged with the Conradian purples of lyrical overactivity. If Minow-Pinkney is not mistaken, Woolf's style is, like that of Eliot the dramatist and poet, given to use of the present participle. This is formally to figure a lyricism acting, as does drama, in the present rather than conventionally in a narrative past. Should this become too noticeable, Woolfian lyricism would have become histrionic, leaving nothing done in the dark. But with Jacob's Room, Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The Waves, and Between the Acts, the beauty of the after-images rather vindicates her lyricism's truth. Hence the present chapter is curious to know (given that Woolf seeks this active lyricism) in what ways she contrives solitude's structuration in her metaphorising. It will broach these matters by reading Orlando's symbolically absent poem in the light of Woolf's thinking on a variety of poets. Then it will turn its attention to the disablement of lyric truth by two masculinist occupants of their famed solitude, namely Emerson and Thoreau. Finally, it will explore through several novels Woolf's major lyrical re-use of Marvell's notional solitude, which informs what Eliot calls his 'slight lyric grace'.[3] At all points, interest is not attached to 'solitude' as to some absolute value, but rather, to ways in which an audience's privacy and a writer's anonymity can be respected even within the lyric expressiveness for which Woolf is noted. The solitude of this chapter's title, it should be borne in mind, is a dramatic value, lack of which hurts the minor Renaissance drama and its overly emphatic descendant, Dickens.

II

In 1928 Woolf published her fantasy Orlando which, in its last chapter, has this passage of implied poetry:

> Let us go, then, exploring, this summer morning, when all are adoring the plum blossom and the bee. And humming and hawing, let us ask of the starling (who is a more sociable bird than the lark) what he may think on the brink of the dustbin, whence he picks among the sticks combings of scullion's hair. What's life, we ask, leaning on the farm-yard gate; Life, Life, Life! cries the bird, as if he had heard, and knew precisely, what we meant by this bothering prying habit of ours of asking questions indoors and out and peeping and picking at daisies as the way is of writers when they don't know what to say next. Then they come here, says the bird, and ask me what life is; Life, Life, Life! (169)

The preciosity is inviting, the formal procedures comically transparent, and the play of sound primary. The paragraph enjoys the parody of its textures; and while the rhythms teeter on the brink of metre, it remains prose. Metrical exactions, though flirted with, are there to be ignored: prose, with its greater freedoms, is adopted.

Even so, seventeen years later, Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson anthologised various pieces (many whimsical) which had beguiled a lifetime's reading, and which they wished to share. Their collection includes Latin and Greek verses given in metre and then rendered into English prose, as well as selections from prose works. The anthologists acknowledge a debt to 'Mr. Leonard Woolf for permission to include a passage from the works of Virginia Woolf' which appears in the following form:

> Let us go, then, exploring
> This summer morning,
> When all are adoring
> The plum-blossom and the bee.
> And humming and hawing
> Let us ask of the starling
> What he may think
> On the brink
> Of the dust-bin whence he picks
> Among the sticks
> Combings of scullion's hair.
> What's life, we ask;
> Life, Life, Life! cries the bird
> As if he had heard....

This poem, construed from Orlando, makes the implicit explicit.[4] For while cadencing can be heard in and around the novel's comic rhymes, the poem foregrounds that rhythmic fact while seeming not to see by what licence Woolf lets the 'lines' function aurally as prose. It is just possible that the passage is overly solemnised as a result. The exposure means both gain and loss. Notice is given of Woolf's rhythmic praxis, though not of that rhythm as prose comedy. If one were unalive to this parodic lyrical activity in Orlando, one could not come fresh from this anthology and plead ignorance. The pleasure of that finding might, however, unwittingly obscure the way in which Woolf's own kind of control has been passed over, her fictive options denied. It is done by those who loved her, and she would certainly not have complained. Yet it does not acknowledge the narrative freedom she specifically took. Simultaneously, it pushes her freedom, and her control, further than she in practice wishes them to go. What could have been wrong in anthologising this passage as prose? Interest therefore now centres on the kinds of freedom Orlando wants, as substantive fiction and as narrative posture; on its attitudes to active fluency, its own included; and on its poise between lyric liberty and reserve. In turn, these matters invite attention to Woolf's feelings about poetry as a case of liberated utterance with curbed freedoms, as expressing both powers and limits; and also to her desire for an active prose poetry which takes over some poetic liberties whilst remaining sequestered from poetry's forms.

In reading Orlando, freedom of response is helped by the substantive fiction which, like Marvell's 'The Garden', makes free with time. Time, it is true, is subjective and recreative in much of what Woolf wrote. Here though, its relativity is openly theorised about and built into the fictive structure. Orlando's country house has 'three hundred and sixty-five bedrooms' and 'fifty-two staircases' (70). Like this 'biography', it has chronology symbolically stacked in the brickwork.

Not that this ossifies the novel's time (it reads seductively), nor that time is arranged into too forced a pattern. Rather, 'time' is purely functional in Orlando. While the fiction's temporality is there as one would expect, an explicit theory of psychological time is also unfolded which connives at the primary narrative, converging with it but, merely by being there, distancing it too. Fictional time is at its beck and call. There are 'sixty or seventy different times which beat simultaneously in every normal human system'. Of contemporaries, it may be said that 'some we know to be dead though they walk among us; some are not yet born though they go through the forms of life; others /like Orlando/ are hundreds of years old though they call themselves thirty-six' (191). When the narrative voice makes these announcements, it advertises how free Orlando is to enact a variable treatment of subject. For there will always be something contingent, not exigent, about the novel's accidents: Orlando, as a possible fiction, leaves the truth about time untouched. Similarly, the question of identity occurs in the fiction, but is commented on by the narrating voice. Orlando,

> had a great variety of selves to call upon, far more than we have been able to find room for, since a biography is considered complete if it merely accounts for six or seven selves, whereas a person may well have as many thousand.

These multiple selves, as is perhaps not unnatural, crave resolution into,

> nothing but one self. This is what some people call the true self, and it is, they say, compact of all the selves we have it in us to be; commanded and locked up by the Captain self, the Key self. (193,194)

Biographers, in emulation of this military self who commands and locks up, may wish to record their subjects' utterances, the key self's own talk. Unfortunately, however, 'it is probable that when people talk aloud, the selves ... are conscious of disseverment, and are trying to communicate, but when communication is established they fall silent' (196). The truly integrated biographical subject, then, says nothing at all; and nothing of that solitude will be recorded. This is only a parodic stance, of course; but it explains the absence of Orlando's poem 'The Oak Tree', which is never presented in the novel, although lesser poems are. The intrusive narrator is always insisting on this freedom of treatment, this coveted scope which liberates the fiction to subject narrative-time and character-identity to whatever demands may be made on them by a psychological truth which remains hidden.

Yet the reader's response to this assertion of freedom is not left formless. Orlando assumes the right to discipline its fantastic treatment. It does so by adopting, alongside the substantive or primitive fiction, that actively self-mocking narratorial posture which obliges the reader to find Orlando comic. The narrative well knows it exists (12,24,41,49,etc). It uses mock-sympathetic archaisms like ''Twas' and ''Tis' (23,74,107,127). It complains of its lack of the usual vital documentary sources; gives us learned footnotes, even an Index whose references are not always to what is most important; and introduces itself with an impossibly pedantic Preface, in distant satire on James (79,104,126,206-208). It comments openly on its own sentence structure and syntax, referring to itself as 'the text' (49, 160). It exploits its own theory of illusion. For even if the mind does need illusion, responsibility for any plenitude of depiction may casually be ignored: what looks like a narrative blank will easily be filled by the too-ideal participating reader; and what Pope says remains as unreported as it is ineffable (124,126,127,158,46,61). The novel refers, with a hush of reverence, to 'Sh-p-re', ostentatiously in awe, and not desecrating the sacred name which we may be permitted to infer (195). Separating Orlando as fiction from Orlando as narration, then, the narrative procedures are clearly transparent, every bit as see-through as the Thames ice during the Great Frost. Although Woolf wrote this novel with a view to learning how to write a straight story in clear sentences, her submission is never total; freedom to control is asserted in the narration, which has things to say about the fiction - all of which relaxes the reader into an amused engagement from within an intact, if managed, privacy.[5] Of course, this separation of *Orlando* into fiction and narration is done for analysis' sake: the novel as a whole blends these seamlessly, as aspects of ironic posture and tonal economy.

Besides very free treatment of subject and a narrative control of comic effects, *Orlando* parodies attitudes to lyric fluency or facility. It experiments with rhythm and rhyme in order 'to fill this page with sound' - all part of the mockery of lyricism's usual activity, a pompous trundling out of every possible device that might assist mimesis and truth (183-185). This flaunting of style does not preclude real dabbling in assonance or literal reflection upon the nature of representation (185,187). But the glamorous machinery seen in *Orlando*'s glinting glass innards, being satiric, informs us that the fiction, whatever it does with its own easy flow, is not past control or innocent of organisation. It has a design - on us. Young Orlando is quite prolifically fluent (11,12,15,16,18,36). He finds that mimetic difficulties cramp his style:

> He was describing, as all young poets are for ever describing, nature, and in order to match the shade of green precisely he looked (and here he showed more audacity than most) at the thing itself, which happened to be a laurel bush growing beneath the window. After that, of course, he could write no more. Green in nature is one thing, green in literature another. Nature and letters seem to have a natural antipathy; bring them together and they tear each other to pieces. The shade of green Orlando now saw spoilt his rhyme and split his metre

- much as the Tennysonian word-matching is bound to fail, and as 'green shade' alters, for the moment, Marvell's metre in 'The Garden' (11). So much for literary laurels. Divertingly, reality and letters diverge. Green inhabits its solitude, always other than anything Orlando can say about it; but this intractable otherness, maddening to any peremptorily mimetic purpose, saves the prospect of human identity by strong counterpoint (192). Nature is inviolably alone. As to what really sanctions mimetic liberty, or rather, imposes arbitrary mimetic conventions, this is the literary establishment embodied from start to finish in Greene, who well-nigh destroys Orlando as a young writer and later heralds her distilled poem abroad. Orlando really prefers Browne to Greene; but it is Greene who is, in his own estimation, a vivifying medium of the real (55). The ironic pun is crucial: Orlando takes the freedom it does against biographical and fictive convention, and against professional literary criticism of just the kind Greene enforces, meeting force with comic force (29,41,61,168,191,8).

Greene's censure can do nothing whatever to check the torrential flow of Orlando's lyric activity, in token of which,

> The river had gained its freedom in the night ... The mere look of the water was enough to turn one giddy. All was riot and confusion ... eddying and swirling like a tortured serpent, the river would seem to be hurtling itself between the fragments and tossing them from bank to bank, so that they could be heard smashing against the piers and pillars ... Dazed and astounded, Orlando could do nothing for some time but watch the appalling race of waters as it hurled past him. (39,40)

That way lies a metaphor which aspires to government. This hectic onrush, though, owns no form or responsibility. There is a volume of comic force behind the narrator's flowing with this current of merely transcribed truth: these images of freedom swirl into, surround, and bear onwards the forms which are consciously less than opaque. The young Orlando, we are told, 'took out a writing book labelled "Aethelbert: A Tragedy in Five Acts", and dipped an old stained goose quill in the ink. Soon he had covered ten pages and more with poetry' (11). So active is this tragic lyricism, that in those days, 'image followed image' with ease (12). After 'two years of this quiet country life', Orlando has, idle that he is, 'written no more perhaps than twenty tragedies and a dozen histories and a score of sonnets' (15,16). This is disgraceful indolence; but its passivity is real enough. Such is his youth: 'at this season of his life ... his head brimmed with rhymes and he never went to bed without striking off some conceit' (18). The narrator's explosive labials mimic young Orlando's lyric manner, 'the words coming on the pants of his breath with the passion of a poet whose poetry is half pressed out of him by pain', and sound not unlike the fourth stanza of 'The Garden' (30). As for his Elizabethan and

Victorian ephemeras, we are led to understand that there are plenty more where these came from (36,149). The Victorian litterateur Eusebius Chubb, though, finds unbridled fecundity to be a gardening unto death, and Orlando too comes to think fluency a curse:

> when she took up the pen to write, either she could think of nothing, and the pen make one large lachrymose blot after another, or it ambled off, more alarmingly still, into mellifluous fluencies about early death and corruption, which were worse than no thinking at all. (143,144,152)

This repulsion comes about because Orlando was utterly passive in the face of what merely looked like lyric activity, and he could exert no control: he 'shrank, as his wont was, from the cardinal labour of composition, which is excision' (45).

What dramatises Orlando's learning of voluntary poetic discipline, is the way in which his favourite oak tree assumes a central spiritual importance, insinuating itself as the governing metaphor in that poem, 'The Oak Tree', which the biographer makes the key to Orlando. The fact of this poem is introduced on page 48. Well before this, however, the primary image has gathered a symbolic strength, drawing to itself connotations of rootedness, of persistence, continuity and stability; and of the possibility of a panoramic view of life, seen from the green shade of a delicious and canopied solitude:

> He had walked very quickly uphill ... to a place crowned by a single oak tree. It was very high, so high indeed that nineteen English counties could be seen beneath; and on clear days thirty or perhaps forty ... He sighed profoundly, and flung himself ... on the earth at the foot of the oak tree. He loved, beneath all this summer transiency, to feel the earth's spine beneath him; for such he took the hard root of the oak tree to be ... it was anything, indeed, so long as it was hard, for he felt the need of something which he could attach his floating heart to ... To the oak tree he tied it and as he lay there, gradually the flutter in and about him stilled itself. (12,13)

Much to the point, old Queen Elizabeth hopes Orlando will be 'the oak tree' on which to lean her infirmity (17). Orlando's losing his beloved Sasha ruins his peace like 'the tearing and rending of oak trees'; and, during Greene's nightly visits, 'a whole oak tree ... was burnt to ashes' (38,53). In the midst of spiritual, hence literary, crisis, Orlando resorts to his tree: 'When he reached that high mound whence on fine days half of England with a slice of Wales and Scotland thrown in can be seen, he flung himself under his favourite oak tree' (60,61). The vista keeps expanding; and he is liberated, there, from literary ambition, freed to write as his nature demands (64,65). Although what the oak tree means to Orlando is by itself not enough to curb headlong fluency, 'The Oak Tree' proves to be a chastely secretive work involving enormous labours of excision and revision, all other poetry marginal to it (109,78,83,91). It represents longstanding and committed lyric activity, none of which we see or hear.

Exacting in its composition, an important likelihood exists that the poem will unmake itself in the writing:

> as he scratched out as many lines as he wrote in, the sum of them was often, at the end of the year, rather less than at the beginning, and it looked as if in the process of writing the poem would be completely unwritten. (70)

What proves so difficult, is that the tree becomes to Orlando all that is real, so that 'The Oak Tree' wants to represent this truth, the truth of metaphor, within poetry's formal constraints. The more truthful Orlando's statement is to be, the more his poetic theory negotiates crisis, and the less he can simply spill images and rhythms as before. The poem demands a perpetual fresh start (110). It finally craves its proper audience, metaphor being a communal act, and forcibly reminds its author of this (170,171,173). On getting it, Greene publishes the poem to acclaim and great success (175,176,195). It joins the Victorian literary industry, very public, mass produced, and uniformly bound (177-181). But as Orlando returns to her tree in 1928, meaning to bury a copy of 'The Oak Tree' under its roots, in symbolic preservation of solitude, she queries, 'Was not writing poetry a secret transaction, a voice answering a voice?' (202,203) Reality and letters stay ripely separated by personal secrecy. Mimesis remains artifice: the tree will not absorb the poem, nor the poem be annihilated under the tree. If lyric is to be active in the world, it had best respect the solitude which makes lyric possible. It does well never to become its own end, but to cleave to that spectatorial vista which time increases, and which affords perspective on lyricism itself. It must be a lyricism surrounding something panoramic and inexpressible.

Comforting to the fictional Orlando, this discomfits the narrator, who intended to control a beginning, a middle, and an end. The narrator wanted to construct Orlando, and Orlando, selectively, brick by brick, until that publication of 'The Oak Tree' as the fictional climax. Readers would find pleasure in the admirable compositional methodology, its symmetry, its literary-aesthetic truth. When the plodding transcriber finds that passivity before the truth requires one to record the fact that Orlando does not care about her poem's becoming public, meaning to live significantly and well beyond the event, undercutting its melodrama, there comically arises a minor crisis of narrative control, in a cruce resorting to another narrative pun: 'how discomposing it is for her biographer that this culmination to which the whole book moved, this peroration with which the book was to end, should be dashed from us on a laugh casually like this' (195). But 'The Oak Tree' had itself been an exercise in discomposing ('in the process of writing the poem would be completely unwritten' (70)), a fact which, in its time, had ruffled Orlando. Her moving beyond the literary event of her life has an unnerving effect on the narrator since it undoes the full control of the careful composition, the considered form. This creates further comic distance, so that we see Orlando retaining its fictive freedom through self-caricature, the puns and other lexical resorts being aspects of that textual and narrative liberty. Orlando leaves, among other residues, heightened awareness of how poets are supposed to arrive at their imagery and forms, what disciplining of powers this means, and what their metaphors have to do with life. Also, since 'The Oak Tree' is not even partially quoted in Orlando, remaining forever secret and outwith the fiction's control, something of lyricism is undiscussable and occurs in solitude. This concentrates the mind as much upon what Orlando hides, as upon those aspects of poetising which it thinks to be discussable.

Orlando has nothing to lose, and comic truth to gain, by facing and mimicking those secret processes whereby poets furnish their lyricism. The novel's lyricising puts on an act; but all lyricism 'acts', and the satire cleaves to its object. Orlando's delirious lyric behaviour is quite giddily active, but not essentially dissimilar to the dramatic tendency of Woolf's general lyricism. Vita Sackville-West's, by contrast, is a sadly unlyrical poetry, as almost anything by her will reveal. Doing overmuch, it remains curiously inert and inactive. If Woolf's lyricism strikes us as alive, that is because we are not, so to speak, given 'The Oak Tree'. The lyricism of existence is prior to that of poetry, and its saying is unattempted. Solitude remains implied and unimpaired, and the poetry sees itself for what it is.

III

Before considering what Woolf says about poets as diverse as Byron and Eliot, Milton and Sassoon, looking at how she sees their problems and triumphs in terms of asserted freedom and control, it is instructive to recall briefly the premise of an important 1929 essay, 'Phases of Fiction', namely that the time is ripe for the poetic novel.[6] Woolf's desultory survey samples a variety of prose authors, seeing what they did, or could do, entirely as liberation from and/or submission to received notions of scope and licence. The essay usefully comments upon her concern for poetry itself, letting us know what of poetry she wished the novel to appropriate, and what not.

To illustrate how Woolf typically speaks of various prose writers, one might cite her feeling about Trollope, who 'could not hold himself aloof' from his characters because, in his conception, 'the novel has issued her orders', and 'who am I', he asks, 'that I should go disobeying the novel?' Stevenson too, restricts us 'when we should be swinging free'. But Mrs Radcliffe 'enjoys her freedom lavishly', and Dickens's character-making force is 'prodigious', though it creates, Woolf says, 'more than it can use'. By contrast, when reading Pride and Prejudice, 'instead of reading at random, without control ... we have been aware of check and stimulus'. James frees both characters and readers from accustomed constraints but seems nonetheless 'to be coercing [feeling] into a plan which we call with vague resentment "artificial" though it is probable that we are not so foolish as to resent artifice in art'. Proust gives his readers no 'direction or emphasis'. And Sterne is on the horizon; like him, 'can we not escape even further, so that we are not conscious of any author at all? Can we not find poetry in some novel or other?' Novels, it seems, are not to be suffered to issue orders that simply must be obeyed. There is a difference between the unconscious, Aristotelian possession of a writer by characters' personae (which leads to writerly invisibility and metaphoric intensities), and the allowing of characters to dictate conventional form, which renders too obvious the form's tiredness and the writer's submission. Some surplus is desirable; but not the inventive gratuitousness of Dickens, or that Jamesian excess of artificiality. These are not satisfactory ways of breaking with old controls, namely this lavishness on one hand, willed art on the other. At their best, novels are not free to be both lavish and major. Austen gives her readers a certain experience of control, yet it is not James's coercion. Proust and Sterne are not there at all; and it is their authorial absence, their preservation of writerly solitude, which makes the lyrical novel possible for the reader. If lyricism is to act, the author must stop acting independently, and be content to act in and through his metaphorising.

This brings Woolf to her final subheading in which she discusses 'The Poets' or poetic novelists. She says at last what she means by a poetry of the novel, namely, 'the poetry of situation rather than of language', a lyricism memorable 'not as we recall it in verse, by the words, but by the scene' (emphases added). She says Meredith had sought this. But with him, as with Hardy, 'we feel a lack of control, an incoherence'. Hardy himself is his creatures' Fate, while Meredith's 'listen passively' to his imposed poetry. Therefore 'the perfect /poetic/ novelist expresses a different sort of poetry' from theirs, and is better represented in Emily Brontë and Tolstoy, since in Brontë one does find this '*profound poetry of the scene*' (emphasis added). Brontë's scenic poetry 'deepens and controls ... the whole book', a leashing and an unleashing of vision 'rarer in prose than in poetry'. Yet Brontë, and Melville too, are limited in being poets dealing with very large scale conceptual truth. It is Proust who successfully incorporates concepts into his actual material surfacing and texture, with its 'frequent passages of elaborate metaphor', a process Woolf calls 'translation from one language into another' - that is, from the language of idea into the language of verbal surface and metaphoric logic. Authors like Peacock and Sterne write this prose 'as poets write, for the sake of the beauty of the sentence and not for the sake of its use'.

These are important insights. Metaphor enters into Woolf's rhetoric here, so there is no point in being too literal about this 'poetry' of scene and situation, just as 'translation' is also a figure. But the rhetoric is not expendable, either: it *means*. There is an authorial control which does well to look as though the author were not too present at its imposition. It ought not to be imposed at all, in fact; nor is lyrical language enough to bring readers into touch with an acting lyricism. The true source of poetic control is the scene, which should distil and enact what is felt to be life's inner lyric character; and it is not something to which one should listen passively. Scenic poetry is profound and unconscious, having its own formal logic determined from within, from an existential solitude that volunteers poetic truth, but which will not be coerced into yielding it on writerly demand. If this scenic lyricism is unfolding as it ought, beautiful sentences and elaborate metaphors, which will not be autonomous, can afford perhaps to *appear* so, since their superficial lyricism acts to a deeper end. At the core of the poetic novel's lyric activity, then, is that indispensable scenic poetry. Woolf states this as truth, but attempts no further definition. There is a silence at the heart of her formula. The profound poetry of the scene emerges from it and appeals to its readerly analogue; but it does not lend itself to being fully theorised. Woolf's observations read like a gloss upon the Poetics, where the concern is to establish mimetically a scenic truth assisted by metaphor.

Of course, if poetry is so liberating, why not write it? Why be reduced to prose? But Woolf does not find prose inferior. If anything, it brings increased freedom along with its characteristic demands. It can be entered more readily than other forms because of its verisimilitude, in keeping with which it exhibits comparative 'lack of artifice'. The poetic novel must pursue 'denial of artifice' in the Jamesian sense. At the same time, the poetic novelist can hardly avoid letting his 'attempts to control' our response be felt, so that we are 'compelled to accept' this lyricism he proposes. He cannot renounce 'command' or 'the power ... to shape', even while he does not submit to poetry's forms. He must find ways to reconcile the slow accretion of fictional revelation with 'design and order'. That is the problem's whole crux. The poetic novelist has to give a scenic poetry compelling, and pervasively controlling, so as to justify what he does on the plane of verbal epiphenomenon, representing an inchoate psychological truth by resort to 'style, arrangement, construction'. It is a question of how to 'balance the two powers' of truth and form. There is also, it is obvious, some tension inherent in compelling readers whose solitude is still to be respected: what price form? The young and plastic novel holds great promise: nobody knows what life is, and there is no definitive novel. The way is open for any willing to try. The new novelist's poetics will be both local and global, since what constitutes a novel is,

> the whole fabric of the book, its sentences, the length and shape of them, its inflections, its mannerisms, all that it wears proudly and naturally under the impulse of a true emotion.

Submitting to the broader control native to scenic poetry, such a novelist will be able to justify his metaphoric structures, which will seem proud, natural, and so gain willing readerly assent to what seems compelling not compulsory. Everything in his book will be referable to the clear demands of significant form. It is an unknown form, and unsaid. But, under its canopy, you can see England, Scotland, and Wales, since its view is panoramic. Poetic saturation does not entail the metrical forms or disciplines of poetry. Novelists are to stay free of these, while claiming freedom as to treatment, given that contemporary poetry can no longer do what it has done for even quite recent generations.[7]

If then, poetry is finally undiscussable (as implied by the figurative absence of 'The Oak Tree' from Orlando), it is not beyond discussion as to how poets poetise. Within verse's own constraints - which Woolf considers unimperative for the poetic novel - how did individual poets find their freedom to imagise, to voice and to mime the real, to assert a happy control? What Woolf says about particular poets reveals that her concern is never so much with what they say, as with how they go about saying it. The poem itself is not in Orlando, but we are told about its composition.

In 1917, a review of Edward Thomas occasions Woolf's noticing this poet's liberty of imagistic choice, which she already goes on to link with the prospective fictive freedoms novelists may yet explore. 'The most exact of poets', she says,

> is quite capable of giving us the slip if the occasion seems to him to demand it; and as his theme is most often a moment of life or a vision, so his frozen stream, or west wind, or ruined castle is chosen for the sake of that mood and not for themselves.

Thus far, Woolf is clearly aware of an emblematic function for imagery, in which poets retain the freedom of movement to obey their own exactitude. This obedience to mood resembles the later insistence that surface lyricism must express an indefinable scenic poetry. She immediately covets 'mood' for the novelist, foreseeing,

> a time when character will take on a different aspect under the novelist's hand, when he will be less fearful of the charge of unreality, less careful of the twitterings and chatterings which now make our puppets so animated and for the most part so ephemeral.

This unflattering assessment of English fiction in 1917 identifies realism, especially in dialogue, as the symptom of fear and care, resulting in forced animation and, ultimately, throwaway writing. Woolf wants the poet's broadly careless freedom unconsciously to match image to mood. Her remarks on Thomas's ability to create expectation and then to give us the slip, are prefaced by a brief comment on Tennyson in which she notes his 'method of sifting words until the exact shade and shape of the flower and the cloud had its equivalent phrase'. But she is uninclined to think this praxis proof of the deepest, hence unconscious, control, just as Bernard in The Waves gave the habit up eventually, as being empty of real life. If a poet purifies his phrasing towards Tennysonian mimesis, he may simply be an unsophisticated realist ignorant of realism's conventional structure.[8] Elsewhere, Woolf characterises Tennyson as a supreme note-taker or transcriber, who 'brought the art of taking notes to the highest perfection, and displayed the utmost skill in letting them, almost imperceptibly, into the texture of his poetry'. The 'almost' is damning: Tennyson's habit does not betoken freedom. Quite the reverse: she mocks the 'bottled origin' of the Tennysonian image with its source in 'the old business of word-matching', Tennyson proving more slave than free man in this respect. For this poet cannot leave either words or phenomena bathed in their own atmosphere. He is, she feels, ungenerously precise; and it will be entertaining to notice, in the final chapter, Freshwater's burlesque of him, where Woolf gives in to her desire to dramatise and caricature his bent.[9]

Woolf's admiration for freedom in choice of imagery, and for the organising principle which can justify the image in poetry, does not translate into uncritical awe for poets: she sees that some sorts of control are no liberty, and the death of art. So it is with Christina

Rossetti, she judges. Rossetti wished to discipline her facility, to channel and structure it. But regrettably, 'poetry was castrated' by her drive 'to make all her poetry subservient to the Christian doctrines. Consequently, as I think, she starved into austere emaciation, a very fine original gift, which only wanted licence to take to itself a far finer form than, shall we say, Mrs Browning's [poetry]'. Form is what Rossetti was after. To that end she imposes greater, indeed programmatic, control where more liberty is wanted, and produces only an undernourished art robbed of its fecundity. It may be said that Rossetti did not believe there could or should be, for herself as a poet, any genuinely Christian privacy or solitude from which a lyricism might appear that bore no explicitly religious reference. She threw away that solitude for a poetry obedient to outside prompting. The verse is religiously, not lyrically, active. Poets have enviable freedoms, but not all of them can or do exploit what answers to their more secret facility.[10]

Poets also have broader freedoms than the elementary one of license to imagise according to mood, and they may grasp these despite the odds. Donne, for instance, at one stage becomes beholden to patronage. This circumstance subjects him to new constraints, to a poetry more public than he might like. Before this, he has notable 'power of suddenly surprising and subjugating the reader' in his need to express 'not the likenesses which go to compose a rounded and seemly whole, but the inconsistencies which break up semblances'. Under a patron, Donne was forced to face that 'what is not poetry but something tortured and difficult will prove to the patron that the poet is exerting his skill on her behalf'. It is quite a burden to have to carry. But he only appears to concede this, and contrarily seizes new liberty in subject and treatment: 'his imagination, as if freed from impediment, [went] rocketing up in flights of extravagant exaggeration'. Later religiousness does not resolve the 'inconsistencies' he lived, and goes on, therefore, to enliven even the devotional poetry, in contrast to the effusions of Rossetti. For Donne found ways of reinhabiting, even under outside imposition, his essential solitude, which is why his lyricism does not become inactive or redundant.[11]

Like Donne's, Sorley's poetry may be seen as 'a promise and an experiment'. He is 'always making an effort to shed the conventional style and press more closely to his conception'. Especially 'from the evidence of his remarkable prose', Woolf gathers that Sorley is 'ready to upset all his convictions and be off on a fresh track'. He 'thought for himself', using 'any opportunities for changing his mind and moving on ... to the full'. His poetry indicates 'a force yet undirected seeking a new channel' of form; and, meritorious that it is, it has 'the still rarer merit of suggesting that the writer is so well aware of his own purpose that he is content to leave a roughness here, a jingle there, for the sake of getting on quickly to the next stage' of his writing. Sorley's freedom to become is linked to a certain forceful unfinishedness in the poetry, his large liberty careless but critically right, in interesting contrast to Tennyson and Rossetti. This inwardness of conception and of purpose allows for a lyric heedlessness which is only apparently irresponsible.[12]

Speaking of Sassoon, Woolf singles out for first comment, that he is to be regarded as a poet precisely for the formal freedom he does not have. Sassoon is 'a poet, we believe, meaning by that that we cannot fancy him putting down these thoughts in any form save the one he has chosen'. Poetry's formal working must be necessary to it, unimaginable as anything else. In 1917 and 1918, when Woolf is writing about Sassoon, he is noted for a 'realism and ... surface cynicism' which pursues 'the most sordid and horrible experiences in the world', creating a 'jaunty matter-of-fact' verse dependent upon 'shock' value. His 'straight, courageous method ... selects', she says, what he wants readers to feel about the Great War. Woolf appreciates this, conceding its power. Sassoon's consuming hatred of the War does not limit his vocal freedom, leaving him unable to make other kinds of poem than those written in his dominant satiric key, however. To illustrate this, Woolf quotes a poem in full. Introducing it, she praises 'the beauty /in such poems, which/ though fitful, is of the individual, indefinable kind which comes, we know not how, to make lines such as we read over each time with a renewed delight that after one comes the other' (emphases added). The poem is given, and no attempt made to analyse its appeal. Importantly, she says that Sassoon's occasional pieces were 'evidence not of accomplishment, indeed, but of a gift much more valuable than that, the gift of being a poet, we must call it'. Poetry, then, is not just facility; and its definition, though never attempted, is linked to freedom of voice. Sassoon's poetic status is undeniable owing to this assertion of freedom, which is a broader liberty than that of imagising. The 'gift' is beyond analysis, producing indefinable beauty of line. There is thus a Sassoonian solitude capable of more kinds of voice than the satiric, and of other ways of being lyrical.[13]

Yet another kind of flexibility, she believes, is the admirable Miltonic power, which has to do with the free play of meaning-production just below his textual surface:

> The inexpressible fineness of the style, in which shade after shade is perceptible, would alone keep one gazing in to, long after the surface business in progress has been despatched. Deep down one catches still further combinations, rejections, felicities & masteries.

The strange syntax of this diary entry is itself mimetic. She detects beneath the expressivity of Milton's surface lyricism an underlying , and hidden, mind never fully illustrated in its poetry. Milton's busy power is compounded from a freedom to imply.[14]

It is evident that, in the course of elaborating broad and specific modes of poetic liberty, Woolf leaves her theory of poetry (if she has one) unsaid. Tennyson's mimetic transcriptions feed his poetry's textures 'almost' imperceptibly. Donne is at one point obliged to write 'what is not poetry'. Sassoon's is an indefinable 'gift of being a poet'. Milton has a freedom of the implicit. Something takes shape in these evasions, as surely as 'The Oak Tree' has its felt absence in Orlando.

In all these individual critiques, Woolf dwells upon what kind of energy any given poetry represents. As with Eliot's poetic criticism, very little of it is practical in I.A. Richards's sense. But Eliot's is a dramatic grasp of poetry: it is seen to embody types of spiritual charge. This also appears to be Woolf's preoccupation: how and what does anyone's poetry *do*? Poetry is oscillation between freedom and constraint. If it enacts this transaction, Woolf's formal interest is always assessing what energy it is that any poetry dramatises, to see whether prose might assimilate this. The finest lyricism is produced from a fund of the private and unsaid, and readers become privy to that significant solitude which the verse announces contingently. That, for instance, is why so much of the minor Renaissance drama's lyricism is inert in its loud activity - because it knows no privacy. Woolf's silence as to poetic theorising does not mean, then, that she is uncritical. She *is* convinced of mystery and inclined to salute it; and this may be further demonstrated by looking at her appreciations of Brooke, Eliot, and Byron.

Woolf has much to say of Brooke as a man, still alive in the memory of his friends. His style of life, she comments, his attitudes to his own living space and to the time at his disposal, were remarkably and lovably free. So is his criticism, which has 'a freedom and a reality which mark the criticism of those who are themselves working in the same art'. Inability to emote himself into discovery of the right word in any poetic sequence was unlikely to engross Brooke in life-or-death struggles for formal mastery. When composing, he would simply leave (like Ralph Denham) 'spaces for unforthcoming words', the absent word deferred. She is interested in how he does arrive at those unavailable words:

> On one occasion he wished to know what was the brightest thing in nature? and then, deciding with a glance round him that the brightest thing was a leaf in the sun, a blank space towards the end of 'Town and Country' was filled in immediately.

One might have expected this from 'a mixture of scholar and man of action'. Brooke chose the leaf as index of an intensity not so much felt as decided on. It is settled at a glance, immediately resolved. These blank poetic spaces are in the last analysis easily filled - a capacity with the look of wonderful freedom and of marvellously casual power. But Woolf is not blind to what this means. Brooke's poetry is really 'the brilliant by-product of energies not yet turned upon their object', energies which promise 'a subtle analytic poetry, or prose perhaps, full of intellect, and full of his keen unsentimental curiosity'. The relaxed facility produces a spin-off poetry which just happens to exist. He 'was certainly fond of adjectives'.[15] But they lack 'magic', and therefore 'the words remain separate, however well assorted'. Brooke is not free, as are Keats and Shelley, to be unconscious: 'the brain was always there, working steadily, strenuously, and without stopping'. This intellectuality, incapacity for the sentimental, dependence upon adjective, lack of charm, and foregrounding of analysis, does not in Woolf's view express freedom, but limitation, Brooke's liberated manner and facility notwithstanding.[16] Substantively, she finds him unlyrical. His poetic blanks do not signify inner existential space: he fills them easily and quickly. It is not enough to furnish good, or even the right, words: one must do so without knowing it. Lyricism must be hidden from itself, betokening what is past knowing.

Woolf's remarks about intellect and analysis should not be mistaken for antipathy to theory and awareness of structure: it depends on what these do to poetry. Speaking to T.S. Eliot,

> I became more or less conscious of a very intricate & highly organised framework of poetic belief; owing to his caution, & his excessive care in the use of language we did not discover much about it. I think he believes in 'living phrases' & their difference from dead ones; in writing with extreme care, in observing all syntax & grammar; & so making this new poetry flower on the stem of the oldest.

If so, that was an organic poetry. Eliot's subscription to 'a poetic creed' entails his wish to 'write precise English'. Woolf never sounds completely unambiguous when she talks like this, it is true. But she praises 'The Waste Land', and Eliot's way of arriving at its statement:

> Eliot ... read his poem. He sang it & chanted it rhythmed it. It has great beauty & force of phrase: symmetry; & tensity. What connects it together, I'm not so sure.

Significantly, Eliot could make it possible for readers to 'fetch [his meaning] from the depths of silence', from the abyss of what he did not try to say (emphasis added). 'The Waste Land' draws Woolf's praise for its rhythmic tension, beauty, and force; for its mysterious formal balance which can be felt, but which does not announce to even an interested auditor the source of its structure. Eliot's lyricism here does what, later, his drama will prove it has not the public solitude to do. Woolf would go on to dismiss those dramatic, in favour of these lyric, productions.[17]

With refreshing perversity, by contrast, Woolf also came to adore Byron's verse for exactly opposite reasons, namely because of its 'extreme badness'. Byron could, like the younger Orlando, write '16 canto's without once flogging his flanks', which made Woolf 'fall in love with him'. She enjoys the consummate formal transparency of Don Juan:

> It is the most readable poem of its length ever written, I suppose; a quality which it owes in part to the springy random haphazard galloping nature of its method. This method is a discovery by itself. Its what one has looked for in vain - a[n] elastic shape which will hold whatever you choose to put into it. Thus he could write out his mood as it came to him; he could say whatever came into his head.

The Diary's editor, with a freedom not unlike that of Sackville-West and Nicolson over Orlando, adds the 'n' to this passage. But it better admits Woolf's mood here to let her speak of Don Juan's having 'a elastic shape' - she praises adaptibility and gawkiness, not just fluency. Byron always landed on his feet, with that biddable form which turned with him any way he chose. This example might lead somewhere, but 'it doesn't seem an easy example to follow; & indeed like all free & easy things, only the skilled & mature really bring it off successfully'. Admiring Byron's nerve, Woolf is 'ready, after a century', to be one of his women.[18] In 1927, poetry could have done with emulating him. 'Byron in

Don Juan pointed the way; he showed how flexible an instrument poetry might become, but none has followed his example or put his tool to further use. We remain without a poetic play' - a just quantum leap, given Byron's actorliness. It remains to the novel, 'that cannibal', to become duly poetic, 'written in prose, but in prose which has many of the characteristics of poetry ... dramatic, and yet not a play ... read, not acted'.[19]

If Woolf can discuss Byron in terms of the dramatic, it is because something of him is genuinely transferable. But nothing moved between Brooke's well-sorted words. With Eliot, she does not profess to know what connects 'The Waste Land' with itself, yet senses its powerful presence. Eliot's care contrasts with Brooke's easy freedom, his depth of silence and reserve with the lightly explicit. These are considerable criticisms of the poetry of those men: insight for its own sake is at work. If Woolf's final interest in poetry is attuned to the use of its liberties in the experimentally poetic novel, she also has acute views about poetry as such. In Byron she finds what is worth finding, 'a elastic shape' suited to immediate thought as is the drama, transmitting mood and idea unnoticeably; but she is aware, too, of what depth of control has to accompany this fluency and formal ease. The coveted freedoms cover those of matching image to mood; of letting images emerge from a reserve of unsaying, which is a freedom of the unconscious and of the implicit; of finding the most transparently compelling (rather than compulsory) form for a poetry of scene; and of asserting flexibility in subject-treatment and voice. Poetic forms themselves are not to be attempted in the poetic novel. Neither are certain apparent freedoms, indulged in by various poets, since Woolf divines that these are really limitations. There is no call for any Tennysonian word-matching of bottled images, then; no Brookean incapacity for the unconscious or inexplicit; no Rossettiesque sacrifice to a programme.

Appreciation of what Woolf does and does not want, may be further sharpened by reference to her discussion of Elizabeth Barrett Browning;

and finally, to the prose writers Bennett and de Quincey. Recalling Flush, one remembers how Woolf could imagine Mrs Browning's circumstances, and how that woman's elopement also figures a dash for artistic freedom. One of Mrs Browning's projects is that of the novel-poem. Naturally this attracts Woolf's attention, since she is herself pursuing generic hybrids. She thinks Mrs Browning's statement of intent important enough to quote:

> 'My chief intention just now is the writing of a sort of novel-poem ... running into the midst of our conventions, and rushing into drawing rooms and the like, "where angels fear to tread"; and so, meeting face to face and without mask the Humanity of the age, and speaking the truth of it out plainly. That is my intention'.

Mrs Browning's ironic Pope allusion is not entirely happy; but she is 'one of those rare writers who risk themselves adventurously' by dropping the dramatic social mask, venturing to pose the problem of 'what form ... can a poem on modern life take', and assuming that poets may deal with modern life as fully as do novelists. A sceptical Woolf rejoins, 'but can they?' And she cautiously asks: 'let us see what happens to a poet when he poaches /an ominous metaphor/ upon a novelist's preserves and gives us not an epic or a lyric but the story of many lives that move and change'. For Mrs Browning, the experiment that was meant to produce this novel-poem (novelistic treatment in metrical form) results in violences of 'strut and posture ... /and/ emphasis', the blank verse killing the dialogues with monotony. What might have been dramatic, instead succumbs to overacting. So Aurora Leigh 'failed completely' in that shape, although, as poetry, Woolf still admires the 'compressions and elisions ... /which/ mock the prose writer and his slow accumulations of careful detail'. Mrs Browning has no successor, Woolf says, because poets have grown timidly conservative, a fact which 'leaves the chief spoils of modern life to the novelist' in the last analysis. Opposite kinds of possible poetic genre, like the public epic and the private lyric, are cited as suggesting the desperate casting-about of Mrs Browning's attempt. Necessarily, the poetic novel must risk itself adventurously, but to Woolf it seems conclusive that metrical form will neither enable nor suffice, though in Byron's hands it creates longing for a prose analogue.[20] Indeed, she is persuaded that only melodrama, histrionics, and overacting can result from the metrical rendering of what ought to be a novel ('strut ... posture ... emphasis'). It is a loud lyricism which, fleeing the private room for the public domain, now wishes to invade other private rooms and enforce truth.

The poetic novel will be forged by courageous 'writers who are trying to work themselves free from ... bondage'.[21] Bennett is not one of them. Her much-quoted impression of life as a succession of falling atoms, and as far other than a series of gig lamps, is prefaced by, and itself sandwiches, Woolf's censures of Bennett as a writer lacking in freedom. Readers, awaiting 'impatiently the creation of what may yet be devised to liberate us of the enormous burden of the unexpressed', find that Bennet cannot assist them, because he 'seems constrained, not by his own free will but by some powerful and unscrupulous tyrant who has him in thrall ... The tyrant is obeyed; the novel is done to a turn'. The same had been true of Trollope and Stevenson. If only 'a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention', little indeed would be written 'in the accepted style'. Today's novelist, Woolf adds, must 'contrive means of being free' so to write. Bennett is markedly unfree; it will not be the likes of him who will liberate us from the burdensome unexpressed.[22] But by that phrase, 'the enormous burden of the unexpressed', Woolf does not advocate that the new novel should seek to express everything. By no means: the relief is a token relief, the expressed a token expression. There will always be the unexpressed and inexpressible. Woolf knows this; but Bennett's fiction depresses her because it does not betoken this truth, and his forced, unlyrical novels do not dramatise solitude or figure it in any way.

The reverse is true of de Quincey, however. In this connection, Woolf ridicules the critical consensus: 'poetry is poetry and prose is prose - how often have we heard that!' Novelists worry too much about 'veracity', so 'the whole tendency ... of fiction is against prose poetry'. They should do as de Quincey, who 'invented [and] formed a style'. Realising that 'prose has neither the intensity nor the self-sufficiency of poetry', and under pressure from his subject, de Quincey looked to synthesis, and to 'a subject that would allow him all possible freedom and yet possess enough emotional warmth to curb his inborn verbosity'. The balance of freedom and curbing paid off lyrically:

> he altered slightly the ordinary relationships. He shifted the values of familiar things. And this he did in prose, which makes us wonder whether, then, it is quite so limited as the critics say, and ask further whether the prose writer, the novelist, might not capture finer and fuller truths than are now his aim if he ventured into those shadowy regions where De Quincey has been before him.

This prose lyricism is not too verbose or active on its own behalf; so it does not shout or emphasise, but imparts the feeling of a slight alteration, the shift to unfamiliarity. It has come from personal inwardness, and ventures into shadows. The fuller, finer truths are expressible through the poetic novel, whose constitution will combine the maximum possible freedom with a curb on mere wordiness.[23]

Orlando, when younger, is taken by 'a writer called Thomas Browne, ... whose writing ... took his fancy amazingly' (O 45). Greene the censor upbraids all Orlando's literary heroes but incidentally reveals what it is that Browne so seductively attempts:

> Greene laughed sardonically. Shakespeare, he admitted, had written some scenes that were well enough; but he had taken them chiefly from Marlowe. Marlowe was a likely boy, but what could you say of a lad who died before he was thirty? As for Browne, he was for writing poetry in prose, and people soon got tired of such conceits as that. Donne was a mountebank who wrapped up his lack of meaning in hard words. (55)

Orlando is not tired of conceits. But the hero/ine ultimately produces no quoted novel-poem, poetic play, or poetic novel, working instead with an entirely poetic form involving centuries of adopting and discarding right and wrong sorts of control, apt and inapt kinds of freedom. The unpresented poem, for all that the narrator gives not even a fragment of it, tells eloquently of Miltonic 'combinations, rejections, felicities & masteries'. Its metaphor, the oak tree, surfaces from silence, from panoramic vista, and from solitude. The poem's absent words cannot be immediately supplied by some poetic man of action's easy facility. The spiritual and artistic process, presented as fiction, is narrated with its formal transparency constituting a serious feint.

For in the meritorious writer, 'as the pages are turned, something is built up which is not the story itself'.[24] This 'something' in Orlando is not in fact that absent poem, but the poem as figural of all that absents itself from any genuinely poetic fiction. The 'something' comes of juxtaposing Orlando's crossed-genre narrative posture with a metaphoric surface caprice, in itself contrapuntal to the fictive metaphor as a form of consciousness. It partakes, too, of a light-footed attention to the discipline of poetry; and of the selection, patterning, and thematic arrangement common to fiction and biography. Yet it lives, as it were, in none of these aspects considered either singly or together. An exercise in style which was enabling to The Waves, Orlando has us endorsing its tenet: 'only the most profound masters of style can tell the truth' (161). This exploration of pure style attempts the critical mastery of a lyricism centred upon solitude. Woolf's submission to a plain narrative style 'relieved' To the Lighthouse and invited The Waves, its structuring foregrounded, into existence.[25] The Waves is that projected poetic novel, par excellence. It consists of phrases and phrasal gestures which can 'bring, by the curious rhythm of their phrasing ... an alteration in the movement of the mind ... /resulting in our/ looking out /from our privacy/ at life in general', the life of a whole society.[26]

IV

Orlando's recreative fictional and narrative time, then, is so structured as to allow very free play to a variety of lyric postures. The narrative lyricising does its comic turns biddably; but the fictional lyric is never heard, though we know it exists. Solitude, necessary to that panoramic vision under the oak tree, is respected as the ultimate source of this publishing of private experience: the acting lyricism is affordable, therefore. To borrow Eliot's phrases about Marvell, Woolf's insistence on this informing solitude is proof of her wit, of a tough reasonableness beneath the (far from slight) lyric grace and gracelessness.[27] Novels, as public acts privately created, instantiate both realms, as do all literary genres.

Yet if Orlando insinuates anything about the gender-colouring of solitude, it is that female solitude differs in tenor from male. The rest of this chapter will consider Woolf's critical response to two male Transcendentalist solitaries, whose social reserve disabled their lyricism's capacity to act as phrasal gesture within community; and this will entail discussion of The Waves. The argument will then trace (through Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, and The Waves), Woolf's re-uses of Marvell's famous - and masculinist - 'solitude'. By grace as freedom, Woolf induces the lyricism she inverts to act expressively on behalf of a solitude whose privileges are reinstated against Marvell's sexual exclusiveness. In each of the fictions to be discussed, the figured solitude of lyric is vehicle for a tragicomic tenor, something which it would not be possible to impose. It is worth prefacing Woolf's counter-Marvellianism with her Transcendentalist critique, because one must not be content to think that, to achieve a dramatic lyricism, all that is needed is solitude. Privacy is necessary but not sufficient. The dramatic is communal in bearing; and the desired solitude must be within, rather than against, society. That this is so will appear in what Woolf says about Emerson and Thoreau.

Woolf's criticism is never perfunctory, and always engaged. Her empathy is expressed in two ways - towards the writer as once being (or still being) a living person, and towards the writing as stylistic betokening. She adopts others' concerns, but is also forever searching for what she can use; and from this her critical authority speaks direct. Yet it is only natural if some writers engrossed her more than others. In their case, she does not merely account for what they do, but is drawn into argument, as with Emerson and Thoreau. Reading her 1910 and 1917 essays on these men, one detects how personal are the reviews: to a degree remarkable even for her, the encounter can be felt, and she clearly has some stake in clarifying them to herself. The resultant critique, pointed and relevant, comes from the passionate centre of her mind rather than its periphery. The concerns she brings to bear on the Transcendentalists are of fundamental and long-term importance to her, and they inform fiction written much later.[28]

What explains Woolf's depth of encounter with Emerson? Of Emerson's writing, a fellow Transcendentalist, Amos Bronson Alcott, is quoted by Lawrence Buell as speaking high praise, citing 'its suggestiveness, unexpectedness, saliency'. Alcott adds that, 'it vaults the passes, flashes the whole of things upon the imagination at a glance, sets life and things anew for the moment'. Emerson's literary structure, Buell himself says, aspires to be 'atomistic, discontinuous, yet comprehensive and essentially unified by the artist's vision of the cosmic order': this, because 'it was in the transcendental interest to give the impression of thoughts naturally taking shape, rather than being ordered by the impresario'.[29] The Transcendentalists want nothing to seem staged, then. The aims of suggestiveness, of a vista comprising the atoms just as they fall, comprehended singly and holistically, and of an unwilled organic form, are, it is acknowledged, also Woolf's own. Indeed, in her 1910 essay, 'Emerson's Journals', she praises the ideal of 'sentences /which/ are steeped in meaning and suggestion', and of 'rich romantic pages, so deep that the more you gaze into them the more you see'. But in saying this, it is the ideal, and not Emerson, which comes in for praise, since she judges him to have come short. Yet he clearly comes close enough - even if only in aspiration, or in a general bearing which is not for Woolf the real thing - to command her attention. In distancing herself from Emerson, Woolf must account, not least to herself, for the attraction of his outlook and work. Her dialectic with his writing is shaping, rather than academic.

The 1910 essay's interest is, as often in Woolf, not in doctrine but in style both of life and writing: 'in the pages of his diary one can see how his style slowly emerged from its wrappings'. She quotes the man himself:

> 'No man can write well who thinks there is any choice of words for him ... In good writing, every word means something. In good writing, words become one with things'.

This 'theory' she castigates as 'priggish'; and her grounds for saying so are that 'Emerson did not see that one can write with phrases as well as with words'. Indeed, against Roger Fry's 1917 suggestion that, '"every word has an aura. Poetry combines the different aura's in a sequence -" ... I said one could, & certainly did, write with phrases, not only words'.[30] Precisely at Emerson's confident, expressive, and prescriptive best is where he compromises himself for Woolf. She sees his anxiety as being for the right word, the word which could be no other than it is, the word which, in absolute legal vindication of verbal mimesis, is the thing itself, the real thing, the standard thing. This recommendation merely reveals to Woolf that Emerson is not after all his own master: for her, that which declares itself a manifesto of Emerson's commitment to wording, is really a secret and unintended confession of an inability to write with phrases. She grasps this judicial candour, in its very wording, as an oblique route to his flaw, reading it as stunted gesture. Elaborating what she means by this incapacity for a phrasal composition, Woolf explains:

> His sentences are made up of hard fragments each of which has been matched separately with the vision in his head. It is far rarer to find sentences which, lacking emphasis because the joins are perfect and the words common, yet grow together so that you cannot dismember them, and are steeped in meaning and suggestion.
> But what is true of his style is true of his mind. An austere life, spent in generalizing from one's own emotions and in keeping their edges sharp, will not yield rich romantic pages, so deep that the more you gaze into them the more you see.

It is ironic that this should be judged true of Emerson. Buell describes how important to the Transcendentalists was the art of conversation; how theirs was really an oral literature fully intent, through this espousal of phonocentrism, on an ultimately didactic communication; how they laboured, even by a studied spontaneity, to incorporate the kinetic features of vocal exchange into their writing, regardless of what the formal expense might be. Buell endorses those aims: 'art does not simply mean, or even be; it is also a communication between artist and reader ... /and/ a process of communication rather than a product'. Consequently, he says, 'Transcendentalist literary works are less aesthetic products than aesthetic processes - forms of communication, transitional links between author and reader. Emerson and Thoreau are quite explicit about this'. Those, then, are Emerson's intentions. But what did he accomplish? Buell continues: 'a typical Emerson paragraph ... is a careful condensation of thought - half a dozen bricks baked and stacked'. It is strange praise; but then, 'his essays ... have most often been taken, as a conglomeration of wise sentences'. Emerson knew full well the cost of all this aphoristic desiccation: 'Emerson himself ... conceded weakness in the area of form. To Carlyle he admitted regretfully that his sentences were "infinitely repellent particles"'.[31] Thus Emerson undertakes to make literary art communicate just as talk does; and for the most part he ends up with a pile of bricks which do not necessarily like the way he has stacked them. Woolf notes this result too. Not much distance exists between Buell's 'half a dozen bricks baked and stacked', and Woolf's 'hard fragments ... matched separately'. Yet there is a difference, not altogether incidental. Buell sides with Emerson in faulting the Emersonian sentence. That is to say, a sentence, bafflingly, does not seem to cohere fluidly with the sentences before and after. But Woolf is not content with this, and delves to within the sentence itself, where, so her intuition tells her, something more fundamental has gone wrong. As she says, 'Emerson did not see that one can write with phrases as well as with words. His sentences are made up of hard fragments'. It is this internal fault in the sentence's composition which makes it rare to find 'sentences which ... grow together so that you cannot dismember them'. The problem lies not with the sentence, but with what makes it up. In Woolf's diagnosis, this is the sorry result of too satisfied a commitment to words, accompanied by too little awareness of the phrase.

Yet one wants to press Woolf on these symptoms. If Emerson 'did not see' that one may write cumulatively, using phrases, how is one to explain his blindness? Woolf's answer seems fruitful and just. Her essay shows a pervasive consciousness of what it was to be Emerson, and her insights as to his literary style come from that empathy. She is aware of how he functioned within his society. 'He could not share his thoughts with friends. Their arguments and views are never quoted beside his own in the diary'. This is, it is worth saying, in sharp contrast to Woolf's own diaries, which brim with dialogue and scene. In consequence, she discovers an 'absence of human interest'. She admits that he read various papers to the Pythologian Club; but these, regrettably, 'give no impression of intimacy'. In total, 'Emerson's diary merely confirms the impression he made on his friends; he appeared "kindly, affable, but self-contained ... apart, as if in a tower"'.That, in turn, was because 'he could live alone, registering /his own/ development, relying more and more on his sufficiency'. This is a trait Woolf closes in on, her discussion of it providing the review with its emotional centre:

> his composure is best proved by an elaborate essay headed 'Myself'. There one quality is weighed with another, so that the character seems to balance scrupulously. Yet he was conscious of a 'signal defect', which troubled him because it could destroy this balance more completely than its importance seemed to justify. Either he was without 'address', or there was a 'levity of the understanding' or there was an 'absence of common sympathies'. At any rate, he felt a 'sore uneasiness in the company of most men and women ... even before women and children I am compelled to remember the poor boy who cried, "I told you, Father, they would find me out"'.

As Woolf's 1905 'Laughter' essay had shrewdly observed, it is no mean ordeal for some men to fall under the gaze of women and children. Even the emphasis Emerson puts ('even before women and children'), reveals the masculinism of his solitude. One does wonder what kind of comprehensiveness of view, what generosity, could possibly hope to emerge from this exclusion of so many of the human race, of both sexes and of all ages. Woolf concedes that Emerson is not apologetic about this inability to be social: it is the prospect of being understood face to face that most unnerves him, and the fear of levity. She quotes him: 'I hold fast to my old faith: that to each soul is a solitary law, a several universe'. This position, she is sure, 'is different from selfishness'. It remains nonetheless true that, 'often in company and in solitude he was absorbed in regulating his sensations', a habit she considers 'unpleasantly professional'. And she concludes:

> what is true of his style is true of his mind. An austere life ... will not yield rich romantic pages, so deep that the more you gaze into them the more you see. Isolated, one loses the power of understanding why men and women do not live by rule, and the confusion of their feelings merely distresses one.

It is a just reservation: wealth of communicative suggestion was an important Transcendentalist literary end. Woolf locates Emerson's stylistic disability within his social isolation. A solitary unit or singularity, he recommends, and commits himself to, pursuit of the word which is so right as to seem the thing itself; but he is stranded, left wondering why his sentences do not communicate - with each other, let alone with readers. His retreat from any fully social existence - 'for he was not to be "found out"' - led to the unlifelike search for 'simplicity ... in his diaries as well as in his finished works'. This very simplicity chose to centre itself upon wording, upon a metaphorising practically indistinguishable from denotation; but this is at the cost of that desired plenitude of suggestion. The exaltation of his aphorisms does not yield poetry or lyricism: the vision they convey is 'not practicable; they will not stand interruption' by other social beings. Emerson, talking to himself, seeking a reduced, communicable simplicity but not wishing to have society influence him in this, eschewed society's multiplicity, its multi-facetedness, its sheer defiance of simplicity. Unable to fuse with others, he was therefore not able to fuse words into phrases or gesture a compelling life story through them. 'But the beauty of his view is great', Woolf is gracious enough to grant, 'because it can rebuke us, even while we feel that he does not understand'. Here though, the plural pronouns, for once, resonate beyond their usual status in editorial practice.[32]

Hence when Buell tells us Emerson 'enjoyed /Alcott's/ company as much as any man's', the anecdote is somewhat devalued by our being unable to forget that 'the Transcendentalists rarely let themselves go in each other's company'. Speaking of the Transcendentalist Margaret Fuller, Buell remarks, 'one gets much the same impression /from her as/ from what Alcott, Emerson, and Thoreau have to say about friendship. The sense of personal longing and unfulfilment is continually being stiffened into high-minded rationalizations for ever more noble, more distant relationships'.[33] This yearning after social fusion, the incapacity to let go creatively in relationships, Woolf identifies as being of a piece with Emerson's inability to phrase. In her analysis, Emerson would enact the enforcing of metaphor, leaping straight from thing to word to sentence to communication, but without regard to fabric, steeping, joining, growth, or richness - without, in short, an organic style emergent from within a social solitude. She thereby roots the attaining of significant form in an accomplishment of extra-literary social organism. Because Emerson emphatically retreats from this process, seeking to make literary form 'do', he fails at the level of phrase. Phrasing therefore has a social bearing, and is essential in the communication of one self to another.

Emerson writes, in his essay 'Self-Reliance',

> Society is a wave. The wave moves onward, but the water of which it is composed does not. The same particle does not rise from the valley to the ridge. Its unity is only phenomenal. The persons who make up a nation to-day, next year die, and their experience with them.

The sentences are autonomous, each to itself; and the need for metaphor is emblematic and rhetorical.[34] And since this is so, since persons are disparate particles ('infinitely repellent'?), and since they all die, ending all hope of transmissible experience, there is nothing for any phrasing to do either in this typical passage, or socially. Emerson's temper is far removed from that of Woolf. Anne Olivier Bell has spoken of Woolf's 'thirst for social life'.[35] Woolf also admits this in her diary for the sixth of January 1915:

> I know that with the first chink of light in the hall & chatter of voices I should become intoxicated, & determine that life held nothing comparable to a party. I should see beautiful people, & get a sensation of being on the highest crest of the biggest wave - right in the centre & swim of things.

Comically, on the fifteenth of February in the same year,

> I had tea, & rambled down to Charing Cross in the dark, making up phrases & incidents to write about. Which is, I expect, the way one gets killed.

Getting oneself killed, whilst absorbedly making phrase into tellable incident in the dark, is a far cry from the Emersonian submission of utterance to death. If death is the enemy, then Woolf means, figuratively and literally, to die phrasing.[36] For Emerson, there hardly seems any point. What impresses Emerson in his own wave-emblemism, is the sea's inertia, that thwarting, retentive power against all efforts to escape. No particle makes more than an apparent progression from trough to crest, and the seeming unity of forward motion is accidental. These persons, under figure of particles, are defeated by death in the bid to transmit their 'experience', since death is like the sea in having a supreme entropy. Society as superficial movement is irrelevant atop that deathly underswell. For her part, Woolf concedes that death is a threat to society; but the threatened society is what she needs and loves, rather than a manifestation with which she had found it painfully impossible to integrate. The Waves is flirtatious. Her lack of deference to Emerson's solemn knowledge is seen in her attitude to sensation, the 'sensation of being on the highest crest of the biggest wave'. Light, chatter of voices, intoxication, partying, people's beauty, sensation, all the frisson of socializing - these, she in effect asserts, are important human gestures against death, as is the effort to bring phrases into recountable incident. Socializing as gesture, and phrasing as social in orientation, blend to produce the phrasal gesture which, descriptive of phenomena, becomes deictic in literary practice. The *sensation* of society matters, but it is just this froth which Emerson cannot allow to break over him. Tumbling to it, as he thinks, he feels no social impulse towards phrasing for a future which will contain no Emerson. Or, insofar as he does bequeath his writing, his flaw consists in trying to wrest it into a living, posthumously social shape more magnanimously commuhicative than its writer had been. But, no Mrs Ramsay, Emerson cannot dispense this largesse after death. His panoramic vision is achieved against society where Woolf's is brought to maturity through it; and this also helps account for a certain humourlessness in him. The sensational Woolf is more aware than Emerson of what utterance cannot be expected to do. Aesthetically, she endorses an artificiality which might have struck the strenuous Transcendentalist as feeble, even effeminate; but it is no happy coincidence that Woolf can transmit social sensation by means of congruous phrase-making. This acceptance of fabrications leads to Woolf's major lyricism, instanced briefly, even, in some of the diary entries noticed earlier. It is not just any kind of solitude which can find such expressivity.

V

In *The Waves*, Bernard finds that, so long as he remained undifferentiated and indefinite, there was no genuinely social use for all his phrasing:

> I changed and changed; was Hamlet, was Shelley, was the hero, whose name I now forget, of a novel by Dostoevsky; was for a whole term, incredibly, Napoleon; but was Byron chiefly ... Therefore, I let fly my tremendous battery of phrases upon somebody quite inappropriate - a girl now married, now buried ... For it is difficult to finish a letter in somebody else's style. (169)

In the undefined self, phrasing as facility lacks bearing; and in the absence of social sharing, it is even cruel to the memory of the dead.

Bernard bitterly regrets not having gone to Hampton Court with the now dead Percival: 'Then comes the terrible pounce of memory, not to be foretold, not to be warded off - that I did not go with him to Hampton Court. That claw scratched; that fang tore; I did not go'. Recalling him to Jinny, Bernard pleads, 'Let us commit any blasphemy of laughter and criticism rather than ... cover him with phrases' (179). The recalled social failure embitters Bernard's phrasing. But Percival now dead, and death being 'the enemy' owing to its 'formlessness', it is to be expected that the phrase, which is form, is humanly asserted against 'doom' in a 'daily battle ... the absorbing pursuit'. The phenomenal is notionally 'netted under with a sudden phrase. I retrieved /it/ from formlessness with words' (182).

For the maturing Bernard, literature cannot itself be that social activity which overcomes meaninglessness. Rather, critical discussion among the living can constitute literary activity as social. If Neville breaks off this discussion to receive an expected guest, he is not really exchanging one social activity for another. On the contrary, because he is as he has always been - a singularity in search of some perfectly suitable, other singularity - his exclusive attention to that other is antipathetic to Bernard's presence. After that realisation, the literary falls impotent, social discourse no more (184,185).

So the mere existence of literary form is hugely insufficient in the daily battle with formlessness: company is what is needed. Singularities like Susan, Neville, and Jinny are unable to form community with Bernard; he is responsible for their life stories, not vice versa. These sub-characters are determined from the outset, monoselves incapable of holding in play any wealth of possible existences. They act their one part, but could not be re-cast. Susan, true to her early differentiation, craves logical retreat into marriage and the family; there, she seeds a society in her own image and holds it to her terms. In her ideal experience of the world, 'we are silent' (67). Jinny, frivolously animal, is a surface attracting surfaces - all she ever was or shall be. Throughout, she needs only the one word, 'come'; and should she attract a man, then 'to his one word I shall answer my one word' (66). Neville, an exacting and lonely homosexual, seeks one-to-one perfection outside of which no society will be needful. Although, he concedes, 'it is not enough to wait for the thing to be said as if it were written', nevertheless, in his own room, 'things are said as if they had been written' (133,134). These personae (along with Louis, who feels the multiplicities within himself both as cause of, and a refuge from, social embarrassment; and the unnerved Rhoda, who has not even one self which can be fully experienced, thinking instead to achieve selfhood by compulsive presence in society) express inner life and personal history by the fossil repetition of certain key phrases different for each of them. These fixed forms they take for definitive. Narratively, the phrases are gestures depicting the personae's essences; but fictively, they are forlorn proof of a solipsism which puts the personae essentially beyond social experience. While these phrases may be evocative or explanatory for the persona in question, they have no social resonance, therefore, and are symptoms of a static life. The patterning of phrasal gesturalities, centred upon locked, non-fluid means to the denotation of selfhood, achieves its spectacular beauty deictically in the reader's experience, but does not amount to a society within the novel.

Hence Susan, whose selfhood was never nuanced by any doubts as to who she is, cannot understand creative uses of the phrase:

> I love with such ferocity that it kills me when the object of my love shows by a phrase that he can escape. He escapes, and I am left clutching a string that slips in and out among the leaves on the tree-tops. I do not understand phrases. (89)

Only Bernard develops into an unfolding continuity which may be storied or historied. The others are sooner or later frozen in typical, eternal postures, and have a sacramental rather than an experimental need for phrasing. For them, phrase is sufficient, itself form - excepting perhaps Rhoda, whose notions of joining-together prove to be pre-verbal at the last. For the older Bernard, society is form, which phrases seek to say and then transmit, and endless effort in the face of death. Words are not sacraments to the mature Bernard, for all that the younger man, and the child, had thought to use them as catalogues of experience. He thus passes through various disgusts and impotences to an awareness of personal and stylistic limitation, yet comes to know, too, that this experimental phrasing of social experience is just as inexhaustible a force as death. Forever, individuals will, despite the underswell, differentiate themselves from the mass in order to rejoin it; and this implies a dialectic experience of identity.

Bernard moves from a childhood in which phrases, being all, were himself, in which the pressing question was the Emersonian and Tennysonian one of finding the truly apposite word, to a maturing man concerned with what it is in the larger world that his phrases do. As a child he uses phrase to defend himself, giving himself solitude in which to become something:

> I must make phrases and phrases and so interpose something hard between myself and the stare of housemaids, the stare of clocks, staring faces, indifferent faces, or I shall cry. (20)

Wording as proof against being found out by others, is an Emersonian trait - adult in Emerson, juvenile in Bernard. This Bernard can never finish his stories (26). As he grows, a related problem comes to light. It is not just that, with respect to the phrasing needed for storytelling, 'soon I fail, unless talked to' (25). There is the radical problem of subjectivity, of who it is who is doing the phrasing:

> I am not one and simple /as are the four monoselves Susan, Jinny, Louis and Neville, the nonself Rhoda not being even this/, but complex and many. Bernard, in public, bubbles; in private, is secretive. That is what they do not understand ... They do not understand that I have to effect different transitions; have to cover the entrances and exits of several different men who alternately act their parts as Bernard. (51)

Other actors would, of course, understand this; but the others merely exist. Bernard's various dramatis personae are nourished by his privacy or solitude, however. Painful separation from those others who do not understand, engrosses him in a consolatory search for some essential or real self:

> But you understand, you, my self, who always comes at a call (that would be a harrowing experience to call and for no one to come; that would make the midnight hollow, and explains the expression of old men in clubs - they have given up calling for a self who does not come), you understand that I am only superficially represented by what I was saying tonight. (52)

Phrasing, from this later perspective, becomes the expressing of that underself who comes when called, with an ontological importance beyond stylistics.

How then does this sociable man experience his maturing need for a self, to be 'I ... Bernard, myself' (79)? Marriage in prospect renders him 'numbed to tolerance and acquiescence', since 'nothing we can do will avail. Over us all broods a splendid unanimity'; yet it also brings 'the burden of individual life ... a sense of identity' (75). This is then surrendered to the impulse of the mass, Bernard drifting in a new security of the social self, 'unmoored ... from a private being'. He is now assured of 'my confidence, my central stability' (77). He will join himself to a wife and 'visit the profound depths' of 'this omnipresent, general life' of society, of which he has become typical (76). The confidence, accompanying proof of sexual fertility, notes that, after all, 'we come up differently, for ever and ever'. The newfound identity comes and goes as it pleases, resting in Bernard's appreciation of himself as 'a natural coiner of words' like the Renaissance dramatists - the means whereby 'I ... differentiate myself' (77). These words are not content to be self-referring only, since, 'soliloquies in back streets soon pall. I need an audience. That is my downfall ... To be myself (I note) I need the illumination of other people's eyes, and therefore cannot be entirely sure what is my self', a problem of catching and returning the audience's eye-beams (78). Society defines the self for Bernard, calling forth a dominant persona from many possible personae. Solitude is never enough: 'I begin to be impatient of solitude ... Oh, to ... be active! Anybody will do. I am not fastidious'. Entering a restaurant, where a foregathering society may have its story told in phrases, he feels it confirmed: 'I am Bernard, myself' (79).

However, if society can confirm Bernard as himself through being his audience, it may also absorb him so that the persona it evokes is all the Bernard there is, leaving him no solitude:

> Had I been born ... not knowing that one word follows another I might have been ... perhaps anything. As it is, finding sequences everywhere, I cannot bear the pressure of solitude ... Different people draw different words from me ... [but] I shall never succeed, even in talk, in making a perfect phrase. (89,90)

Bernard is, then, a congenital phrase-maker; but what excites his phrases is a private being which would be communicant with others, which understands itself only through outgoing utterance tendered and received. His social panic frets that what others draw from him is feckless and inexhaustive, untypical, so that merely the effort will be recalled, and the man lost. In that mood, he doubts the possibility of telling stories at all:

> I could make a dozen stories of what he said, of what she said. I can see a dozen pictures. But what are stories? Toys I twist, bubbles I blow ... and sometimes I begin to doubt if there are stories. What is my story? What is Rhoda's? What is Neville's? (97)

But the momentary social fiction in and around the person of Percival suggests to Bernard that, if society is possible, so is he. 'We are creators ... We too, as we put on our hats and push open the door, stride not into chaos, but into a world that our own force can subjugate' (98). It is doubtful whether creation will yield to force conceived in quite this way.

A number of things are enduringly true for Bernard. For instance, 'the truth is that ... my being only glitters when all its facets are exposed to many people' (125). Also,

> I have made up thousands of stories; I have filled innumerable notebooks with phrases to be used when I have found the true story, the one story to which all these phrases refer. But I have never yet found that story. And I begin to ask, Are there stories? (126)

These awarenesses in play, along with Bernard's consciousness of an 'arbitrary design' to 'select ... detail', keep open the possibility of selving and phrasing, and reveal the role of creative faith. Even in middle life, he can never, despite the dangers, escape that social urge behind his need to phrase:

> each of you feels when I speak, 'I am lit up, I am glowing'. The little boys used to feel 'That's a good one, that's a good one', as the phrases bubbled up from my lip under the elm trees in the playing-fields. They too bubbled up; they also escaped with my phrases. But I pine in solitude. Solitude is my undoing. (146,147)

What Bernard is, is an oscillation between solitude and audience. His separateness is special. It is the separateness of the storyteller who, rising to and energising a much-needed audience, yet retains what is essential to himself, an interplay in solitude of private selves, all seeking voice and clamouring to phrase themselves into story. If pure solitude is one's undoing, then phrasing is doing, an acting lyricism. Percival's untimely death lets Bernard know that he is not Percival, that he is specific; and because death is over the chasm, opposed to life, metaphor becomes possible, also phrase and story, seeing that there are openings for them.

As for that irreducible self, 'who had been with me in many tremendous adventures', that last certainty, Bernard must know the horror of finding just how pervasive fictiveness is, leaning over a gate and realising the sheer evanescence of 'that self' who, unstoried and with not even an inner audience, 'attempted no phrase' (192). Radically in anguish, Bernard is terrified to find no objective inner continuity which forms a basis for guaranteed personal life story. This solitude is 'truly death' (192). So conditioned, Bernard might break into an Emersonian monody of the isolated existence which spectates without risk. But this pure being is in truth a non-selfhood - Rhoda's permanent state. There is no final self, then, though masks may be worn for this or that audience. Here, Bernard is liberated into his significance. For if being is not possible to utter, all expression is constructive. One fabricates the self from select memories, phrased into an artificial narrative which tells one's story. Autobiography, biography, historiography - all these modes dramatise, selecting gesture and token, presenting the creative fact, the fact which engenders. Once the artificiality of this is accepted, phrasing and narrating seem vindicated as meaningful. The future guarantees Bernard annihilation, but he has out-faced a worse death than that. Against the formlessness of mere annihilation, he pitches the phrasal gestures which produce communal meaning, which imply audience; and against society's death , he puts his narrative of several lives, among them his own. It becomes clear at length, that the voice throughout The Waves is Bernard's.

Bernard at his most Emersonian, not to say Whitmanesque, needs a 'little language ... a howl; a cry ... None of those resonances and lovely echoes that break and chime from nerve to nerve in our breasts, making wild music, false phrases. I have done with phrases. How much better is silence ... /and to/ sit on and on, silent, alone' (199). This silence, prior to all phrasing, is not social in bearing. It is not Bernard. Though The Waves does end on a note of tragic irony - Bernard coming into greater possession of his powers in time to be beaten by death, and wilfully defying that death - his postures are the newest surface wave differentiating itself above the underswell of a social impulse whose inertia is as great as death. From the perpetual antagonism of these forces comes the phrasing proper to narratives of the self. Whoever underrates social life is self-sufficient, and will not grasp this process. His own utterance, even if earnestly communicative in intention, will atomise and disperse, failing to flow into story. He will have proved to be a monoself, a singularly one-man society who treats words as sacraments and fixes upon key phrases as being eternally right. Undervaluing sensation, he will take the soul for fact in a world of facts, and will exhibit doctrinal development without social growth. He cannot be spokesman for any life other than his own. If he utters some general truth, it will be parallel and coincident to, rather than the voice of, the community at large. Emerson does everything for his reader, who is left no solitude. He imposes his own solitude, and gives up the lyric ghost.

Similar perceptions justify Woolf's 1917 essay, 'Thoreau', written for the Times Literary Supplement.[37] As in Emerson's case, she feels an affectionate appreciation, indeed a capacity for absorbing and learning; and, what is more, she has a delicacy of feeling for Thoreau which the more magisterial Emerson cannot bring out of her. Her interest is much taken up with Thoreau's withdrawal to Walden, the sheer sensitivity of the man, and his uncountable rewarding insights and affinities. Yet it does not escape her notice that he stood in a strained relation to his society. Quoting the Reverend John Weiss, she notes that '"he was cold and unimpressible ... He did not care for people; his class-mates seemed very remote"', and that he suffered '"reserve and inaptness"' at college. After leaving college, 'Thoreau decided emphatically', she says, in favour of a solitary not a communal life. What was the rationale of his doing so?

> He did anything he could to intensify his own understanding of himself, to foster whatever was peculiar, to isolate himself from contact with any force that might interfere with his immensely valuable gift of personality.

Owing to this wish, Woolf notes of his gifts that 'to confuse or waste them by living with the herd and adopting habits that suit the greater number [was] a sin - an act of sacrilege'. Thoreau '"wanted to live deep"'; and when he turned his eye critically upon society, it 'suffered a good many blows from his hand'. Woolf says Thoreau's feeling was that,

> All human intercourse was infinitely difficult; the distance between one friend and another was unfathomable; human relationships were very precarious and terribly apt to end in disappointment.

He was, she believes, torn between an older and a more modern sensibility, and had 'the self-consciousness, the exacting discontent, the susceptibility of the most modern' of men.

The crucial point in her essay comes when Woolf inquires after Thoreau's ultimate stance towards society, for she sees him as being 'possessed of an abnormal sense of responsibility to his kind'. This exaggerated sense of responsibility results in a literary passion:

> Thirty volumes of diaries which he would condense from time to time with infinite care into little books prove, moreover, that the independent man who professed to care so little for his fellows was possessed with an intense desire to communicate with them ... No one can read him and remain unaware of this wish.

Yet having read him, she insists,

> we are left with a strange feeling of distance; here is a man who is trying to communicate but who cannot do it ... He is never speaking directly to us; he is speaking partly to himself and partly to something mystic beyond our sight. 'Says I to myself,' he writes, 'should be the motto to my journal', and all his books are journals.

This is in fact the note on which she chooses to conclude: 'He was talking to himself of moose and Indian when, without a struggle, he died'. Withdrawal from society thwarts the capacity for truly communicative utterance; one cannot be finally intelligible from that distance. One's phrases, if fine gestures, are not dramatically gestural, since there is an insufficient sense of audience. In Emerson and Thoreau, we have what Woolf judges to be intriguing and important monoselves or singularities, determined and differentiated early in life and so unable to communicate, phrase, or relate (in both senses). Her own contrary need for utterance within some genuinely social existence, for the fluent phrasal gestures of a public lyricism, received by her audience, explains the engagement she brought to these Transcendentalist solitaries, and to the persona of Bernard in The Waves.

VI

Lyricism cannot be expected to dramatise experience, therefore, if it does not gesture phrasally to an audience, a society: Transcendentalist solitude is not replenishing in that sense. But at least there were Transcendentalist women, as also the notion of social joining. Marvell, however, whose voice can strike up various gallant and seductive postures towards fictional women young and old, famously in 'The Garden' excludes them from an ideal solitude. To do this, he denies the woman in himself; but Woolf finds and reinstates her. Solitude will not breed an active lyricism unless it is androgynous.

Around 1921, Marvell was being increasingly noted by critics. As

Eliot says in his essay on the poet, 'Marvell has stood high for some years'.[38] Woolf's treatment of this celebrated male spectator, with (like Eliot himself) his various masking poetic personae, is one aspect of her attempt to imagine and to figure an enstructured solitude. Her complaint about the minor Renaissance drama, as about Dickensian caricature - that it left audiences precisely no such thing - has already entered the discussion. So has The Years's use of 'The Garden', with the poem's contrast of 'society' and 'solitude'. Marvell's English verse is creaturely, and metrically limited, with no great ideational or lexical range, but having much fantasy and satire. Depending on the tenor he seeks, he can be univocal or equivocal. Within the narrow rhythms he prefers, he judiciously compounds his sense, loading the lyric with multiple entendre. The result is a watchful, perspicacious poetry, constricted in voice and cadence yet seeming ludic and illimitable. This illusion of expansiveness within form was attractive to Woolf, and also to Vita Sackville-West, whose study of Marvell appeared in 1929.[39] In both Woolf and Marvell, a passively watching, profound realism underpins fantasy and invention. There is comic incongruity, and a particularity, in much Marvellian imagery, the kind of astonished curiosity which would occur to an innocent onlooker. He is therefore a withdrawn poet who, in his political verse, judges it wiser and truer to equivocate; but who shows an increasing bent to satiric univocity before becoming, at the last, Hull's M.P. Rachel Bowlby is among a number of readers who have mentioned, in passing, Woolf's uses of Marvell. She finds Orlando's preoccupation with 'green' redolent of Marvell's own well-known penchant for that colour-symbolism. As a minor point, Marcus connects the man rolling the lawn in Mrs Dalloway's skywriting scene with Marvell's mower. As yet, there is no full study of Marvell in relation to Woolf's ouevre.[40]

In her diary for the twenty-ninth of April, 1921, Woolf writes of all that she might do 'had I time; which I have not (& that sentence reminds me that I mean to read Marvell)'.[41] This statement probably ought not to be taken as meaning she would now give Marvell a first reading. In an earlier diary passage from the seventh of October, 1919, she speaks as one already familiar with him. Interrogating herself as to why she should keep a diary at all, she there gives as one reason: 'Partly, I think, from my old sense of the race of time "Time's winged chariot hurrying near" - Does it stay it?'[42] Hence she can quote Marvell with ease before 1921, and may, depending on the inference to be drawn from that 'old sense', have known him even for some considerable time prior to 1919.

Woolf's awareness of Marvell may plausibly be detected even around 1904. The circumstantial evidence for this can best be outlined by some quotation from Marvell's 'Upon Appleton House'. At one point in that poem, the male solitary has withdrawn into a wooded area of the Fairfacian garden where he feels secure against female beauty, and able simply to observe. In this cocooned state, he comes to be at one with birds and trees:

> Thus I, easie Philosopher,
> Among the Birds and Trees confer:
> And little now to make me, wants
> Or of the Fowles, or of the Plants.

This pleasant and luxuriant fantasy, not at all the product of a mind disturbed, is the caprice of one whose solitude is a matter of choice. The secluded persona elaborates as to the conferring he has with these birds:

> Already I begin to call
> In their most learned Original:
> And where I Language want, my Signs
> The Bird upon the Bough divines.

As for conference with trees, among 'these scatter'd Sibyls Leaves', the solitary's 'Phancy' can read 'What Rome, Greece, Palestine, ere said'.[43] An eminent classicist like Marvell would himself be unlikely, for those purposes, to 'Language want'. Hence his persona sees the trees' leaves as if covered with Latin, Greek, and Hebrew script, for theirs is no vernacular of the English sixteen-fifties, but, like that of the nearby birds, a 'most learned Original'.

Roger Poole explains, 'The birds had been singing in Greek when Virginia lay in bed in 1904, they sang in Greek again in 1913 ... and they were singing in Greek to Septimus Smith after the Armistice and while Virginia was writing Mrs Dalloway, which was published in 1925'.[44] The major allusion here is to the legend of Philomela, cruelly deprived of her voice. Indeed, Woolf, in her 1925 essay 'On Not Knowing Greek', refers to 'the nightingale whose song echoes through English literature singing in her own Greek tongue'.[45] Yet the birds also sang in an arcane tongue - by association, a classical language - to Marvell's persona. He though, had not been forced into a resting solitude on any doctor's word (civil war is another matter), nor considered unbalanced. By contrast, during her emotional breakdowns, Woolf - effectively with no tongue - was indeed constrained within a pronounced, psychiatrically prudential aloneness, which reduced her to an ever purer spectatorship, annihilating her to a thought. Her hearing the birds sing in Greek, while alluding for obvious reasons to the Philomela story, may have in addition a Marvellian nuance, since Woolf also had strong contextual reason to wish for the luxury of indulged fancy within a truly chosen solitude.

Clarissa Dalloway's is an aptly Marvellian floral sensuousness (MD 13,14); for 'How could such sweet and wholsome Hours / Be reckon'd but with Herbs and Flow'rs!'[46] The Hours (a working title) shows the once-caricatured Clarissa fertilising time's passage from within a solitude that replenishes both social joining and metaphor: 'She must assemble' herself, before assembling her guests (165). In her solitude 'like a nun', 'cloistered, exempt', glimpsing the natural love of women, Clarissa is a judgement upon Marvell's satirised lewd sisterhood (27, 108,30). Birdlike, she still wears her body, where his bird-soul cast its body's vest aside. Despite 'death's enormous sickle', that mower was not at all unwelcome: for if it was true, that 'there was an embrace in death', then a mistress might be as coy as she liked. The solitude of a husband, but also of a wife, mattered (73,163,107). Clock time is to be dallied away, and Smith's is a conservative suicide. In Peter's ecstasy, 'the solitary traveller', when he is passing through woods, 'rapidly endows' Nature 'with womanhood'; and it is said that 'such ... visions ... proffer great cornucopias of fruit', much as feminised produce throws itself at Marvell's garden-solitary, and, more neutrally, at the rowers of 'Bermudas' (52). Miss Kilman, who is something of a nymph complaining, has in young Elizabeth her charge 'a fawn ... delighted to be free', however, rather than to await death from one's tutor as trooper (120).[47] Clarissa is woodenly impenetrable, then, her virginal self metamorphosed like maidens pursued (by Peter, by Richard), who become self-infolded (55,29). Out of this inviolate seclusion, she makes herself a creator of worlds (68). This Clarissa is not The Voyage Out's caricature. Fertilely sequestered, she blooms socially in a mode not to be identified with her husband's, who - like the older Marvell - is an M.P.

The narration's situating of itself within the characters' various consciousnesses and then spectating, shares spectacle with the reader. The thematic incorporation of solitude sensitises us to Clarissa's own secrecy, and is at once narrative and deictic:

> It is Clarissa, he said.
> For there she was. (172)

Life may, to some in the novel, seem like 'the five acts of a play', what with Sally's 'melodramatic love of being the centre of everything and creating scenes', not unlike Ethel Smyth (43,161). But Smith, unbalanced though he is, has the sense to grasp that self-murder might be 'melodramatic' too. It is, he sees, Holmes's and Bradshaw's 'idea of tragedy, not his or Rezia's', since the mode he contemplates is active and drastic (132). He (not they) had seen action at the war front; and, owing to a suppression of feeling which puts their personal repressions in the shade, he knows more about acting than either of them. But the bloody acts of warfare do not express his newfound tree-centred vision. It is not his being penetrated by rails which has any power to hearten Clarissa, but his rash embrace of death itself rather than being seduced by time, and his preserving thereby an essential virgin solitude. He also takes a dry view of denotation:

> 'We have been arranging that you should go into a home', said Sir William.
> 'One of Holmes's homes?' sneered Septimus. (87)

One cannot conceive of Holmes or Bradshaw punning like this. Dallying with the doctor's name, Smith repudiates psychiatric definition. Holmes may be his homes; but as for Septimus, he lives deep in a warren where secrecy breeds. Privacy remains, or is at least a prospect, if there can still be this discursive action - sardonic, deflationary - within one's very impotence. For after all, Smith's own name is as much paronym as Sir William's will, comprehending, and thus containing, the eponymic 'war'. Sir William, a socially powerful man, is minded to 'order ... rest in solitude'. Smith will nevertheless not be forced.[48]

Smith hears,

> A sparrow ... drawing its notes out, to sing freshly and piercingly in Greek words how there is no crime and, joined by another sparrow, they sang in voices prolonged and piercing in Greek words, from trees in the meadow of life beyond a river where the dead walk, how there is no death. (23,24)

The scenery is as Marvellian as it is evocative of Greek tragedy. Smith reclaims his right to fancy, as Marvell's pastoral fantasies are in part a ludic response to war and to the political impotence attendant upon it. Lunching with Lady Bruton, Richard ponders:

> He knew her country. He knew her people. There was a vine, still bearing, which either Lovelace or Herrick - she never read a word of poetry herself, but so the story ran - had sat under. (94)

Yet one cannot mention those cavaliers, without also recalling their contemporary who wrote: 'The Luscious Clusters of the Vine / Upon my Mouth do crush their Wine'.[49] The fictive Clarissa probably never reads him, but the narrator gives her the existential intoxication of bright parties backed by his vine's solitude. The fictional Smith does not read Marvell either; but, narratively, he shares the poet's fancy.

Woolf liked Marvell, but was not insensitive to his privileged defining of the poetry's women. Sackville-West noted this too, and in interesting terms:

> With Apollo he had hunted Daphne, and with Pan had sped after Syrinx, that he might at last clasp a tree in his arms ... That coy and tantalizing mistress is ... to blame [for any overly high hopes we might have of Marvell]: she, woman or myth, made Marvell strike a note such as he never really hit before or since. She, and not Cromwell, not Hull, not Bishop Parker, is the real enemy of Marvell for posterity. She it is who makes us constantly demand from Marvell more than he was ever temperamentally fitted to give.

She, in shorter phrase, is Marvell's nemesis.[50] Woolf therefore rewrites him as suits. So Clarissa - nunlike; an enjoyer of women; a virgin who will die rather than embrace; treelike; a woman alone and at peace in her garden, and none of this a matter of narrative apology, whatever it may be fictionally - is not the produce of any man's sexual dream, however gallant, as both Peter and Richard have their different reasons to know.

Nor is she just conveniently absent, either: she creates worlds, and public worlds at that, out of her solitude. This is a comic triumph. We are aware, though, that her use of a solitude not all of which could be called voluntary, is an achievement costing her secret pain which has to remain secret. The final sentences offer her as humorous or tragicomic spectacle, announcing her to imagining readers both delighted and moved. That audience has had its space respected, in which to realise Clarissa Dalloway: its own solitude untouched, it may if it wishes assemble her from it. Peter's choric function in Mrs Dalloway, which we share by sympathy, is ultimately revealed in the last sentences' blending of what Keir Elam distinguishes as proximal and distal deictics:

> the semantically marked 'proximal' deictics relating to the speaker's present context and situation of utterance ('here', 'this', 'these', 'now', the present tense, etc.) have a far more important function in the drama than the unmarked 'distal' variety regarding distant or excluded objects, times and places ('there', 'that', 'those', 'then', the past tense, etc.), which, instead, are typical of narrative language.

Peter's intense choric witness affords the last sentence its spectacular narrativity. Suzette Henke tells us that Woolf,

> took notes for Mrs Dalloway in a small black copybook that contained earlier reflections on themes ... in the Choephori of Aeschylus. She mentions in 1922 diary entries that she is working on the novel, reading Aeschylus, and planning her essay 'On Not Knowing Greek'. And several times in her holograph notebook she compares the fictional form to classical drama, asking, 'Why not have an observer in the street at each critical point who acts the part of chorus'?

To call this aspiration, as Henke says Marcus does, '"the aesthetic equivalent of a revolutionary political act, a socialist's demonstration of faith in the people"', is further to exteriorise what is already sufficiently exterior, and to miss Mrs Dalloway's brooding through figure upon readerly and writerly solitude. The Greek chorus is of course frequently agonistic, its lyricism freer and more rhapsodic than that of the episodes, its kinetics all of a piece with the rhythmos and melos that are now lost. It is an acting lyricism: it does, and drama, says Aristotle, is doing. Mrs Dalloway provides a lyric expressivity which is cousin to that mode, even as it inverts Marvell's greenness and finds other meanings for his Jamesian seclusion. But this lyricism, it must be said, never strains after historically lost action, to the point of compromising its secrecy.[51]

VII

Woolf's diaries reveal her cumulative sense of Marvell during the twenties and thirties. Lytton Strachey is, therefore, 'that old serpent'.[52] In December 1925, she fears 'death - as I always feel - hurrying near: 43: how many more books?' In the same month, Vita, her 'friendship ... never untinged with amorosity', winds up the 'wounded and stricken year' with her 'grape clustered' presence 'in full sail on the high tides', soon to go off 'across the desert'. The result of these delectations is a deepened sense of female 'solitude', only contingently lesbian, which is 'not oneself but something in the universe that one's left with ... One sees a fin passing far out'. That last 'dramatisation of my mood at Rodmell' is the germ of a work centred upon 'a solitary woman musing', in which, 'time shall be utterly obliterated ... My theory being that the actual event practically does not exist - nor time either. But I dont want to force this'.[53]

In Marvell's 'Hortus', the bee thinks its time - a point to return to. But one hears in the above quotation, the copulation of 'obliterated' (written off by being written out) with a notional Marvellian 'Annihilating'. Sackville-West thought the conceit of 'Annihilating all that's made / To a green Thought in a green Shade' 'a sudden, triumphant cry' whose colour 'cipher' he 'chased ... through poem after poem'. Woolf, somewhat less effusively, brings to Marvell's inwardness a due scepticism.[54] There is, accordingly, this deprivileging of 'actual event' in favour of the female solitary's musing, discursive action 'practically' foregrounding itself; and, to this end, that careful refusal of force is likewise important. These developments are broadly related to the difficulty of finding a solitude which is not merely a case of one's being deprived of society. 'This has been a very animated summer', Woolf writes in September of 1928,

> a summer lived almost too much in public. Often down here [at Rodmell] I have entered into a sanctuary; a nunnery; had a religious retreat; of great agony once; & always some terror: so afraid one is of loneliness.

The context of social over-exposure relieved (if that is the word) by a frightening aloneness, brings about thoughts of 'my next book' as self-providing fruit:

> I am going to hold myself from writing till I have it impending in me: grown heavy in my mind like a ripe pear; pendant, gravid, asking to be cut or it will fall.

Into her hands, these fruits themselves do reach. Even thinking about it makes her feel 'green & vivified'. It is not, like 'melancholy', 'a curious little spotted fruit'. On the contrary, the more Woolf's mind, from pleasure less, withdraws into its happiness, the more aloneness is valorised as something luscious:

> I have just eaten a pear warm from the sun with the juice running out of it, & I have thought of this device: to put
> The Lonely Mind
> separately in The Moths, as if it were a person. I don't know - it seems possible. And these notes show that I am very happy.

At a time (September, 1929) of 'curious plums ... falling unexpectedly', Woolf prays: 'Please God nobody comes to tea ... Please God I say these delightful & divine people dont come'. 'Never has the garden been so lovely', she says; and is bemused, as the reader of certain of Marvell's dramatic sleights might be: 'Who thinks it? And am I outside the thinker' of The Waves.[55]

Being 'stuck fast' in The Waves like a gummed fly, not needing to be always 'casting a line', Woolf begins to feel like that male solitary who fished lazily with 'Lines', 'Hooks', and 'Angles, idle Utensils', not to say, with flies, until young Maria cast her mock-apocalyptic shade, causing the Doomsday fish to hang 'As Flies in Chrystal overt'ane'. 'Azaleas massed like military bands' in the garden, recall Marvell's martial horticulture. 'Mr Johnson like a nectarine, hard, red, ripe' is reminiscent of the autumnal fifth stanza of 'The Garden'. Woolf's boughs come to be rather heavy with Marvellisms, her stance, a 'defiance of death in the garden'.[56]

Despite the anticipated criticism of The Waves ('it cant be popular'), 'it sells - how unexpected', surprising as a Marvell conceit. Woolf 'sold the ten thousandth copy of The Waves' by early 1932, which, she reflects, 'beats all my novels, unexpectedly'. Her puzzlement is to some extent resolvable by an earlier, 1925 remark:

> I am writing this at 10 in the morning in bed in the little room looking into the garden ... which led me to think of Marvell on a country life, so to Herrick, & the reflection that much of it was dependent upon the town & gaiety - a reaction.

Solitude is, then, 'reaction' in Marvell.[57] It is not ranged against a social life, she perceives, as it is in Emerson and Thoreau, but savours itself in proportion to what it leaves behind. This, of course, is most explicit in 'The Garden'. But Herrick is an interesting counterpoint. One simply cannot find, in Marvell, the sexual generosity, the comical social pleasure, of even Herrick's rural epithalamia. The Waves was, after all, 'popular'. People liked it. Its writer had been fruitfully living a happy solitude, and this curious solitude reached itself into the hands of an audience ripe for it. Ripeness was all. The discursive superficiality meant that readers' experience could be deictic even as the personae retained the essential privacy they seemed to sacrifice. Privacy of personal response, too, was guaranteed to an audience ready to receive the monologic spoken word as dramatic front. The near-caricatures and the secret pathos bred, with vegetable love, a spectacle both sad and comic, these almost-characters with their phrasal gestures ludicrously in search of self through discourse. If in 1924 Strachey could 'sit in his own green shade', Woolf could too, and the privilege was not merely monosexual.[58] Marvell's spectator felt 'safe ... and strong' behind Fairfacian oaks where threatening beauty 'Bends in some Tree its useless Dart'; and Woolf likewise knew how 'to be immune, means ... to be beyond the range of darts ... to be mistress of my hours'.[59] Clarissa had found this also, and had become mistress of The Hours. Yet this required solitude, not unmixed with pain.

VIII

If anyone ever proved,

> How vainly men themselves amaze
> To win the Palm, the Oke, or Bayes

- it is Mr Ramsay, with his power 'to shed all superfluities, to shrink and diminish' down to a pure 'intensity of mind' (L 44).[60] But his is sadly an infertile solitude. He can press conceit only so far as his own initial when, distraught, he must turn to his wife for lavished comfort - which she gives time, and time again, from out of her personal dearth of privacy. She is a spraying fountain, and also the fruitful tree in whose branches the rarefied male beak (when it is not preening) pecks for sustenance (38,39). She herself 'often felt the need ... To be silent; to be alone ... a wedge-shaped core of darkness' itself driven into, not unlike a green shade; but duties are always calling (60). The question of whether 'mother and child might be reduced to a shadow without irreverence' is one which exercises Lily, who is choric spectator for us of this married pair (52). She also 'longed to cherish' to herself the salient 'loneliness' of being, as she is and will remain, without spouse and family, a Marvellian liberty (27). A wandering industrious bee, she 'liked to be alone; she liked to be herself', and to decide for and by herself how best to place trees in the midst of things (51,50,95,163). Yet Mrs Ramsay too, is aware of the 'shadows of the fruit ... the rich purples of the lowland grapes ... the horny ridge of the shell, putting a yellow against a purple, a curved shape against a round shape' (100). Lily is rather like the fructification of all that Mrs Ramsay must repress of herself. What Ramsay's wife might do if freer is further suggested through her children, those percipient 'watchers, surveyors' (101). At the beach, they fantastically play, as Marvell before them, with 'vastness and ... tininess', inverting these curiously and at will, 'by the intensity of feelings which reduced /the/ body ... to nothingness', ad nihil (72).

Like (yet unlike) Marvell's persona of 'The Garden', Ramsay, apparently frugal, and looking at his tired wife,

> liked to think that everyone had taken themselves off and that he and she were alone. The whole of life did not consist in going to bed with a woman, he thought. (111)

A salutary reflection, this, since she is largely a wife on his terms, their (considerable) sexual activity relieved by these shared, therefore pseudo-Marvellian solitudes of which he feels the need, in keeping with which she is sexed or de-sexed, Daphne or a tree. Once they vacate their holiday house, the garden invades. There are strange matings of cabbage and carnation, happening naturally, however, and not of that forced sort deplored by 'The Mower against Gardens'. The cleaning women comically tame this wildness, Mrs Bast's son 'scything the /Appletonian/ grass' for the family's return (128,131). Some neutral spectator watches nature encroach, an unembodied mind occupied with its own thought, then seeing, in turn, nature newly subdued for human convenience. This advantaged mid-section catalyses our sense of looking on as Ramsay's caricature becomes pathetic in time, strengthening our pleasure in his wife's posthumous fecundity, which is a comic victory, but sullied by anguish. The choric spectacle accumulates its power retroactively and prospectively through the 'Time Passes' sequence, alerting us to the narrative's tragicomic praxis.

Lily, 'solitary figure', is capable of feeling the widower Ramsay's demands for her womanly sympathy as an imperious threat of 'complete annihilation' in that garden should she fail him (143,144). His wife gone, there is no female-erotic around to offset his sterility: 'the garden became like curves and arabesques flourishing round a centre of complete emptiness', travestying the lyricism of existence (166). Lily recalls how Bankes would secretly, thinking himself unwatched, chide the hole in Minta's stocking, because 'it meant to him the annihilation of womanhood', an end of conventional femininity (160). Knowledge of people, Lily reflects for the reader, amounts to this 'making up scenes about them' (161). Like the rowers of 'Bermudas', James feels about this same dead emptiness, en route to the lighthouse, as if 'he might escape; he might be quit of it all. They might land somewhere; and be free men' (154). But Marvell's Nun Appleton persona suffered a comic embarrassment as the conjugal Maria's advent showed him, adult and narcissistic that he was, to be callower than she. Maria overshadowed male indulgence. The sequel was hilariously shameful:

> And such an horror calm and dumb,
> Admiring Nature does benum.

Ramsay seated in the boat reading, 'as they hung about in that horrid calm, he turned a page' (170). What Macalister's boy does to the mackerel also reminds one, along with that word 'hung', of how 'The stupid Fishes hang' in Marvell.

In the still centre of these comic polarities - the ever-boyish Ramsay becalmed by the shadow of his ever-girlish conjugal partner - Cam, calm and dumb, trails her hand in the sea, creating a 'fountain' which sprays 'the dark, the slumbrous shapes in her mind; shapes of a world not realised but turning in their darkness ... Greece, Rome, Constantinople', appropriating not just Marvell's 'Rome, Greece, Palestine', but also,

> The [masculine] Mind, that Ocean where each kind
> Does streight its own resemblance find

- and which 'creates, transcending these, / Far other Worlds, and other Seas' (175).[61] It is the festively comic overshadowing of the living Ramsay by his fertile, dead wife which allows these secret and daringly personal dreams, these triumphs of fancy and productive solitudes, minor though they may seem beside his loneliness. Mrs Ramsay's shade consolidates itself in Lily's canvas, whose visual acumen is, as in 'Kew Gardens' and Jacob's Room, an imagining of audience, as much as in the mid-section's descriptiveness. One is being offered the spectacle of wedded caricatures becoming poignant characters, the old maid with her easel becoming epiphanic, the ludicrous, indeed the shameful, growing towards pathos, and the vanquished towards victory.

For if only one kind of male sterility exists, there are lateral female fertilities. Woolf's concern for her own, and a readership's, solitude is evident thematically in explicit subject, and procedurally by choric and lyric means. Her reclamation of privacy from that gallant, Marvell, is uncompromising. But unlike him, who published little in his lifetime, she enters her discoveries in the novel as public act. 'Two strange reflections ... suggest themselves', according to Sackville-West:

> the first, that Marvell should never have published any of these poems. Did he not know how good they were? The second - which appears almost to grow out of the first - that so true a poet should have abandoned the writing of poetry and turned, as the old lady said, to writing sense instead. From first to last, it was certainly a cavalier way of treating so pretty a muse.

Sackville-West has, wittingly or no, pinpointed Marvell's innocence of poetic passion as a spurning of courtship: he will not dally with any public. With pleasing irony, then, 'Mary Marvell' emerges to claim her 'husband' simultaneously with the posthumous 1681 edition of the poems. The wife and the poems come out from the shadow at once; and the Ramsays' situation is a variant of this, as the dead wife continues to make existence lyrical.[62] Woolf, shrewder and more shrewish than Marvell, puts her art on public record in her own lifetime; but still, this does not entail our being told what to think about the Ramsays. For Woolf's broad movement is reversed in Marvell's glass: he moves from private pastoral to more univocal satire, while Woolfian satire is leavened by appreciation of solitude. It would be easy to caricature the Ramsays, finding them simply tragic, or thinking them to illustrate an activism. To the Lighthouse is another case of Woolfian 'humour', the figurative and provisional enactment of the spectator's hidden power.

Woolf responds generously and in kind to Marvell's creatureliness, enjoying the woman, the ludic sensuous, in him. He well expresses her need for, and delight in, recreative time. His femaleness she takes as rewriting that positivism which, with its monosexuality and declared puns, excludes woman from the prospect of solitude. P.R. Nashashibi, however, describing Marvell's and Woolf's 'philosophies' as 'different', yet uncritically connects 'Kew Gardens' to 'The Garden':

> The drifting of the people into the green-blue atmosphere calls to mind another garden, that of Andrew Marvell. What in The Garden is an intensely personal experience, in spite of Marvell's suggestion that it should, ideally, be that of all mankind, is here extended through the androgynous observer to include the generality of people.

There is no point getting sidetracked, here, into a quarrel about whether anything at all in Marvell may justly be called 'intensely personal', or whether any given poem makes such a strange thing as a 'suggestion': the real issue is Nashashibi's missing of the latent sexism of the very idea of 'mankind'. Woolf though, is sensitive to Marvellian sexism: the private and exclusive lyricism is reclaimed as feminine, then made public in the 1917 story.[63] In staging her deictic fictions, in arranging this publication of solitude, Woolf would not rob her readers of privacy, but must, unlike the minor Renaissance drama, and unlike Dickens, give them something to engender in that solitude, appealing to the woman, to the lyrically sensuous, in them. It remains to consider, in that unexpectedly popular work The Waves, her most radical and explicit seizing upon Marvellian privilege.

IX

The pleasure of Marvell's poetry lies in the use it makes of its limits. Sackville-West said Marvell's could not be 'considered as anything approaching major poetry', and that he 'had his limitations'. But she could enjoy 'the healthy sensuality of his love for colour, scents, music'.[64] Woolf too, in her own way, insists on these limitations. Interludic framing passages in The Waves are a device akin to Marvell's floral zodiac, comprehending lifetimes in a day. But they procreate with his innocence, peck at, and vex, his logic.[65] His sun could be male ('him' in 'To his Coy Mistress'), but Woolf's, scrupulously neuter, is by association female. Sara Ruddick rather risks oversimplifying this nuance. In The Waves, she says, 'Nature ... wears its motherly garments. The sun is a woman or a girl'.[66] This is too explicit. Not only is the interludic temporal movement from womanhood to girlhood, away from conventional fertility, but the sun itself engenders in solitude through being ungendered: 'the rising sun came in at the window ... in the growing light its whiteness settled in the plate; the blade condensed its gleam' (50,51). A later interlude repeats this: 'The sun ... bared its face'. That neutrality is indeed in tension with the fact of the sun's there being 'no longer couched', the opening interlude having described it in terms of 'a woman couched' (72,5). In itself therefore, the sun is neuter, and this is revealed gradually. Metaphorically she is female, and this is evident from the outset. Temporally, she grows backward, from a duly sexed female adulthood, to pre-pubescence. Sex is annihilated to gender, gender to neutrality, metaphor to its literal grounding (the sun is sexless), and metaphoric time reversed and stilled. At zenith, the sun's asexuality is insistent: 'The sun had risen to its full height. It was no longer ... as if a girl couched ... It struck upon the hard sand ... it fell upon ... the desert ... It beat upon the orchard wall' (99,100). This is the essential sun, now revealed, and no more even 'as if' female.The relevant femaleness, then, though it begins as 'a woman', quickly becomes 'a girl', passing from womanhood to a more emphatic virginity, in so doing annihilating all that's not maid.

Images show in another light. A female mind's vegetable love finds, straight away and despite straits, its own resemblance in sun, sea, garden and birds. Marvell's worldling warns his mistress of how the worms will test her quaint honour; and urges that he and she become as predatory, time-devouring birds, these antitheses forming the second and third parts of that syllogistic in-joke which constitutes the poem. 'To his Coy Mistress' is, for Sackville-West, 'as nicely constructed as a geometrical problem in two propositions and a solution'. She seems unaware here of any pun on 'proposition'. But she finds 'the whole poem ... as tight and hard as a knot; yet as spilling and voluptuous as a horn of plenty'. Her diction, instinct with sexuality, is proof enough of sympathy. Although Marvell 'seldom strikes the more resonant chord', she says, he does achieve this 'once, and with firm fingers, in the centre panel of the Coy Mistress'. These bawdries are as comic as she is innocent of them.[67] Woolf's deeper worldliness, ideational and lexical, is less amorous in the real world. It is the enstructured logic which Woolf devours.

So Woolf has not the unstinting praise which Sackville-West finds it possible to give. Her early birds seize Marvell's worms, and violate his tight-drawn logic. They are, as he had wished, apprehensive, 'joy to be snatched quickly now at this instant'. But,

> one of them, beautifully darting, accurately alighting, spiked the soft, monstrous body of the defenceless worm, pecked again and yet again, and left it to fester. (49,50)

It seems the worm has turned. An image from Marvell's conclusion skewers another from his centre, in this mercilessly counterlogical bid for new metaphor. After sundown, 'the worm sucked itself back into its narrow hole' (159). Then why not have green shade with a vengeance? Marvell's signifiers shifted easily enough between female bodies and vegetation, without disturbing the notional female-erotic. Why not diffuse that desired signified further, beyond his laurels, towards sun and light, sea and air? It will be a far other sea. The sun (female by attraction) will not run, but will idealise time by stillness. 'Shameless, laughing boys' running naked may, if they so choose, shoot their arrows 'through laurel groves' (140). Let them do so: green-thoughted virginity is immune from their 'little pricks'.[68]

Woolf acquires Marvellian detail for herself and her readers, transvaluing his poetic solitude. Her touchingly immense understatement (the sky turned 'to a million atoms of soft blue' (5)), is vulnerable, because while he chooses to live in an order forbidding to her sex, his ideational play a luxury, hers is more necessary. In her garden,

> The skin of rotten fruit broke, and matter oozed too thick to run. Yellow excretions were exuded by slugs, and now and again an amorphous body with a head at either end swayed slowly from side to side. The gold-eyed birds darting in between the leaves observed that purulence, that wetness, quizzically. Now and then they plunged the tips of their beaks savagely into the sticky mixture. (50)

It is not altogether a pretty sight. Not fruit, but wasted dead virginity, threatens to go rotten in Marvell. Yet these Woolfian birds, which invert an overt Ramsayesque phallicism, do more than sit and sing in the boughs, pending longer flight. They pick at stinking apples fallen on grass, and fall upon what were melons. Perching, the Marvellian male soul gorgeously 'Waves in its plumes the various light'.[69] But Woolf disperses this vowelling and lexicality, slicing into its crafted secrecy:

> lawns sloped down to the water's edge [and] became green as birds' feathers softly ruffling their plumes (73)
>
> Through all the flowers the same wave of light passed in a sudden flaunt and flash as if a fin cut the green glass of a lake. (123)

The woman-soul atomises and re-delegates male diction, unable itself to preen under a milder sun. The sun is not mild. It 'burnt uncompromising, undeniable. It struck ... it searched ... It beat' (99-101). How is it to do otherwise, if the garden is ever to be seen in a true light, the worms duly severed, 'all the blades of the grass run together in one fluent green blaze', and 'the trees' shadow ... sunk to a dark pool at the root' - a short and narrow verged shade - so that the 'light descending in floods dissolved the separate foliation into one green mound' (100)? Such fluency is not a given, but issues from the solitude, part-voluntary, part-enforced, of Bernhardt's hard-eyed and literal-minded panorama.

X

Marvell's comically martial bee is a solitary which stings, password or no, or, it is an industrious, non-swarming reckoner of hours. Woolf would not be so singular as this, and would prefer to include all foci:

> the may tree /is/ like a breaking wave outside; & all the garden green tunnels, mounds of green ... The bees swarmed ... Bees shoot whizz, like arrows of desire: fierce, sexual; weave cats cradles in the air; each whizzing from a string; the whole air full of vibration: of beauty, of this burning arrowy desire; & speed: I still think the quivering shifting bee bag the most sexual & sensual symbol. So home, through vapours, tunnels, caverns of green.

There is no immunity from these darts. The garden's boys, shooting their arrows at laurels, letting whiz from bowstrings, and drawing from their quivers, are metaphorically relocated among the gynocentrically social bees, in a shower of lexical sleights. All minor fiercenesses, taken in turn, are relished. Those specifics zooming to the point, they signify the attractive queenly centre. The signifiers can forage confidently, and hive their materiality onto that swarming bee bag, all their strength and sweetness rolled into one ball.[70]

What Woolf attends to in 'The Garden' therefore, is its verbal surface as implying some subversion of its own masculinism. Pun, a device which notes that artificiality it shares with the floral zodiac, is a fecund lexical act which, sprung fully formed from referential division, dallies it away, as the gametes become fruitful and multiply. The pun word is always 'denotative', referring us to itself. Although, as Avital Ronell says,

> in some circles of truth's closure, pun has remained the name of an indictment, an accusatory identification of that which takes too much pleasure, disarranging academic languages, promoting a rhetoric of looseness within a comprehensive recreational linguistics, valuelessly succumbing to the most indefensible copulations of meaning

- nevertheless, Frederick Ahl retorts, 'why should one assume that a pun is accidental ... rather than the opposite: that the pun is likely to be intentional unless one can demonstrate that it is not?'[71] In that case, we would be dealing with strategy, not with succumbing. One does not wish to say, obviously, that all puns are intentional; but it does seem that puns, qua puns, must denote themselves as signifiers. What is more, they are not valueless: Marvell's parade the ludically masculine.

Marvell's punning claims more privileged secrecy even than first appears. For he wrote two garden-poems, which shadow each other in Latin and in English, and which are not mutual translations. In this correlation of 'Hortus' and 'The Garden', he is himself quite the coy mistress, deferring sense:

> *Sedula quin & Apis, mellito intenta labori,*
> *Horologo sua pensa thymo Signare videtur.*
>
> And, as it works, the industrious bee
> Computes its time as well as we.

'Hortus' has its bee use thyme as a clock by which to think the time as a set of pleasant duties.[72] There is no literal pun in the Latin. But in 'The Garden' we hear it environed among those 'flowers and herbs ... herbs and flowers', where 'Hortus' had offered it as conception and as transferred macaronic experience. Without our prior English, the ideational Latin pun vanishes. It hums from tongue to tongue, then, its virtuoso, virtual being oriented towards a secretive presence, as the idea withdraws into its embodied English happiness. Woolf dispassionately reinscribes this sleight. Her own usage explodes its pretence to a come-hithering secrecy, and is no mere reflex, or some easy dalliance with closure.

XI

The women in *The Waves* seem to be sexual like the bee workers. Susan is a ferocious monogamous breeder; Jinny is promiscuous; and Rhoda is Louis's mistress. But there is a lingering taste of the old maid about Susan and Jinny, while the true maid is annihilated. It is in the nursery scene, our first encounter with Rhoda's condition, that Woolf moves to deflower her coy master:

> 'Now Miss Hudson,' said Rhoda, 'has shut the door. Now the terror is beginning. Now taking her lump of chalk she draws figures ... on the blackboard. What is the answer? ... I see only figures ... But I have no answer. The others are allowed to go ... I am left alone to find an answer. The figures mean nothing now. Meaning has gone. The clock ticks. The two hands are convoys searching through a *desert*. The black bars on the clock face are green oases. The long hand has marched ahead to find water. The other, painfully stumbles among hot stones in the desert. It will die in the desert ... Look, the loop of the figure is beginning to fill with *time*; it holds the *world* in it ... The world is entire, and I am outside of it, crying, "Oh save me, from being blown for ever outside the loop of time!"'

> 'There Rhoda sits staring at the blackboard,' said Louis, 'in the schoolroom, while we ramble off, picking here a bit of thyme ... while Bernard tells a story.' (14,15. Emphases added)

The garden's children hear Bernard's stories because, their computing under the horologe now done, they are free to recreate their time. For himself, Louis welcomes the release: 'I do not wish to come to the top and live in the light of this great clock', he says, with true Marvellian gardenism (14). Forster said that 'in a novel there is always a clock', a narratorial temporality. Rendering this necessity erotic, is a project which defeats Rhoda.[73]

So Rhoda, unable to reckon, is detained. If her minutes could scout for water in the vast, eternal deserts of this threat, horologe time might well be honeyed labour. But there is to be no erotic computation of her lost, sweet, and wholesome hours. World and time exclude her, enforcing solitude. Rotating signifiers, ticking denotation - these both signify gardened time to Rhoda, irreparably exclusive. Had she enough of that, her vegetable love might grow. Reading The Waves through Marvell, one can see why Garrett Stewart is being reductive even though he means to be global: 'Confusing the circular clockface with the curvilinear figures of mathematical script on the board', Rhoda fails to see 'that numbers can calibrate without containing time'. Stewart concludes: 'One of the novel's most searching preoccupations, the relation of transcribed language to temporal endurance, is thus traumatically recast as the relation of mathematical script to the telling of time'. Factually, this is not incorrect, and one applauds its sympathy. But Rhoda has not world enough or time because she is detained until she can literally compute. The clock and the board are metaphors of lost garden-time. She does not confuse anything at all, but reads aright with the literality of the essential actress.[74] Her paranoid metaphorising is of course not enough to join her with the garden's society, since the metaphor, like the solitude, is enforced.

Hence despite union with Louis, Rhoda is unerotic. Sexual acts are for her imitative of the world's communal gestures, a bee line into that society. Of all The Waves's personae, it is Rhoda who is true maid and actress par excellence, who has no self apart from whatever she can discover publicly, and who, though inexpressibly alone, has no solitude. A virgin in truth, she is, so far as the garden's society is concerned, annihilated to Louis's green thought, so that the garden lacks any true maid. When her soul does at last make its longer flight into deserts of vast eternity, doubtless she finds the grave a fine and private place. Leaping as Septimus did, she knows (and Marvell's seducer may say what he likes to the contrary) that there is an embrace in death. Perhaps by this means she will become a social fact, like the dead Percival, death becoming metaphor, and thus socialised.

The clinching half of the time/thyme homophone lies in Louis's green thought, and neither he nor his future maid knows anything of it: he thinks of thyme, she of time. But it professes no narrative innocence, and this reminds us of how a judging, anonymous mind is outwith the fiction, assimilating to the undeclared interludic watcher, an observer annihilated to its own privileged thought. The reader need not fail to see the pun: it is thrice-repeated, which, tactless as it is, enforces while parodying the famous slight lyric grace. Its narrativity, rather than any fictionality, means that nothing erotic wings back and forth between Rhoda and Louis: fictive infertility leaves propagation to narrative. For Louis never really desires Rhoda; he is merely scared of everyone except her. And the narrator's conspiracy with the reader does not mean that this punning is nectar, to be stored and sipped. Its curiosity is a soullessly lexical fruit unsupported by cultivation. Rhoda never joins the audience for any of Bernard's garden-stories; she can bring nothing to them.

There is a sadly brutal logic in Rhoda's passage from a strained presence to pure absence. But even though she partners Louis, Bernard marrying elsewhere, many readers have felt a kinship between Bernard and Rhoda. One might, only half-frivolously, go so far as to think her the naught informing his something (reverting to Renaissance sexual pun), or, in poststructuralist argot, the absence traceable in his parousia. Bernard, as might have been expected, finally wearies of his many narrations. He is a fathomless phraser, but the faculty comes to seem merely technocratic, reminiscent of Emerson and Tennyson; he is foredoomed by it to erosion of faith. In that wave's trough, he will know what Rhoda always had, the horror of summoning a self who will not be called, and the forcible revealing of the unillusory real. This wave is minded to break on the littoral. But that terrible literal-mindedness, that intensely sceptical purity of witness, Bern(h)ard(t) can hardly bear, since the role threatens to leave no deposit. Stephen Miko says, 'Recognition that this often-noticed scepticism goes as deep as possible is ... necessary to understand both the frustrations and achievements of this book'. He continues: 'It is very hard to end a book over such profound disbelief in endings'.[75] This depends, of course, on what was Woolf's end here.

The virgin intrusion that the male voice suffers is a case of being entered by Rhoda's nothing, and is a little death. Miko's summary of Bernard's eclipse is: 'Bernard finally confronts the ontological question directly. He has a convincing nihilistic experience'. No objection can be raised to this language, except that it might be preferable to say Bernard has an 'annihilating' experience, as this preserves Marvell's word (whose Latin root Miko also uses).[76] Bernard is merely annihilated to mentation, and not in the first instance to anything with a colour. Rhoda, green shade, is the greening of that thought, and the inversion of its gender-colouring. The annihilating, thus experienced, might make anew some narrative erotics fit to outface extinction. If Bernard's stories were hitherto no more nor less than facility of the dramatic lyricist, Rhoda's real absence in an enforced solitude becomes necessary to any more creditable vocal plenitude, once her virginality is admitted to his garden. With an end to her withholding and also to the need for all his wordy seductions, time can at last be made to run, rolled into one sweet ball.

The waves do finally break over Bernard (though in a comic work they need not have: Orlando shows no sign of going under). The sun has awarded quite world enough and time. Yet death is negotiable, the worse death having been met. A milder sun exists, its time never that of the horologe, and it comprehends what it took Bernard a lifetime, and Rhoda a life, to know. It sees its tragicomic semblance in the female narrator's eroticised male voice. Not that there ever will be a commemorative dinner for Rhoda's shade. Bakhtin says of the communal meal or feast: they were 'always essentially related to time ... They were the second life of the people, who for a time entered the utopian realm of community, freedom, equality and abundance'.[77] Percival is admitted to this mythic communality, but not Rhoda. She was too green, too diffuse; but the discovery through her of a plied heroic and erotic narration amounts to something surplus over the exclusivity of Marvellian grace. For Woolf attempts in The Waves what is, according to Steiner, impossible:

> the lyric mode is profoundly alien to the dramatic. Drama is the supreme practice of altruism. By a miracle of controlled self-destruction ... the dramatist creates living characters whose radiance of life is precisely commensurate to their 'otherness' ... In the romantic imagination, expression invariably tends towards self-portrayal. Such a conception is radically inappropriate to drama.

The Waves, though, does want a dramatic lyricism.[78] Of course, Woolf did not mean this novel to be thought of as having any characters; so she has not been in pursuit of the dramatisation Steiner has in mind.[79] On the other hand, she has annihilated herself to a green thought, which is self-destruction by another name. The Waves as dramatic lyricism is possible owing to this effacement, and so acts publicly as private lyric.

The last tilt at death raises a smile, no doubt, but it has its burden of tears. The sub-characters are saved from pure caricature by the over-voice's dramatic monologues, which both succumb to that tragic passivity noted earlier in this discussion, and are actively, comically pathetic, producing thereby a humorous spectacle on Woolf's terms. Alan Sinfield has offered the view that dramatic monologue was useful to Victorians favouring that mode because it let them 'demonstrate dissatisfaction with the subjective "I" of the Romantics', and at the same time, did not 'allow the reader to rest in the objective "I" of an externalized character'. What he calls 'the unstable product' of such contrary needs is 'passed on to the next generation' of modernists.[80] The 'I' of The Waves is, on this reckoning, neither fully subjective nor objective, but is the 'I' of that mind which 'thinks it'. The novel wants a dramatic objectivity without being literally drama, and also the subjectivity of solitude, without being solipsistic. So readings of this work are variable and productive - a function of its own and its readers' privacy.

If Woolf worried that The Waves might lack humour, it does not in fact fail to deliver that complexly tragicomic overview. One is not willing to go along with DiBattista in thinking of 'Bernard's comic charge against death'. She believes,

> the anonymous narrator of The Waves restores to her creation the larger, disinterested, perhaps ruthless perspectives of comic time. But then comedy is ruthless in subordinating the fretful motions of 'one' life to the larger temporal movements of the historical and natural order.

Interestingly, the comic is here attended by ruthlessness and subordination. Woolf is actually insubordinate. One must resist the idea that we are somehow to find Bernard ridiculous.[81]

The work's surprisingly welcome reception was encouraging. A public which in the decade of the thirties would be inured to public acts, had uses for the figuring of solitude. Every bit as idiosyncratic as The Waves, that public secretly craved communality (and perversely, the two Wars would therefore be widely thought a good thing on this account). As a production, The Waves forces no one's privacy, but assumes the gender-colouring of two sexes, one of which does not wage war. But all vistas are comprehensible only by degrees. So it is, that what goes to yield Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, and The Waves as tragicomic or humorous, comes more fully into play nearer the end of those works, just as the overall search for dramatic form comes more explicitly to the fore near the end of Woolf's writing life.

FIN

I

For the general reader, puns are still what they were popularly during the nineteenth century. In the hands of Calverley, Hood, and others, they were a source of innocent merriment. It was not always so. The faculty of word-play which includes punning is not necessarily just entertaining, or light, or finally meaningless. In the condition known as Förster's syndrome, for example, automatic and compulsive punning occurs when certain areas of the brain, usually considered 'ancient', are touched, and this may happen while the subject is awake, aware of what is going on, and traumatised.[1] Thus the capacity for punning is in part involuntary, and need not be thought inappropriate as a symptom even of anxiety. As Freud shows throughout *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) and elsewhere, in literate subjects the border of the dreaming and the interpreting mind is often sited in puns.[2] Deployment of puns is quite compatible with these conscious or unconscious states of anguish, passion, and anxious moral or artistic purpose. Indeed, when the history of punning is viewed very broadly, it is the nineteenth-century punsters who look like a new phenomenon, one which even helps diminish the pun's scope as an expressive surface.

Woolf is of course well aware of the seemingly lighter uses to which punning might be put. When, in her 1940 biography, *Roger Fry*, she says of the 1910 Post-Impressionist exhibition, that one 'Mr Ricketts' did not 'make any bones about his contempt for the pictures'; or that philistine sophisticates who rejected the paintings were unlike art dealers and professors, insofar as they 'had not the excuse that their sales were hurt, or their pupils corrupted'; or when she observes, 'there were two rhythms in [Fry's] life. There was the hurried and distracted life, but there was also the still life', she is capricious on his behalf, and against his opponents (135,137,186). *Roger Fry*'s punning may seem sudden and isolated, unrelated to the fabric; but it serves more than just a local end, and stands with the biography's partisan purpose. Certain other puns, apparently made for fun, likewise adhere to what is at hand, as when Woolf admits, 'Mrs Radcliffe may vanish, but the craving for the supernatural survives'.[3] The present chapter will explore some of Woolf's other puns, and her dramatic end in making them. They stand close to, or are even identifiable with, her fiction's deepest assumptions and procedures as discussed throughout this thesis, and are consonant with those aims.

It is interesting to consider for the moment what Woolf's antecedents may have been. She is rather emphatically dismissive of Freud. In 1924 she writes to Molly MacCarthy: 'we are publishing all Dr Freud ... We could all go on like /he does/ for hours; and yet these Germans think it proves something - besides their own gull-like imbecility'. This is commonsensical.[4] But as Roger Poole and Stephen Trombley suggest, Woolf has reason to feel antipathetic to psychoanalysis: Holmes and Bradshaw in Mrs Dalloway are proof enough of this.[5] The facts of the summer of 1914: Leonard reading Brill's new 1913 translation of The Interpretation of Dreams; the likelihood that Freud, given Leonard's enthusiasm, will naturally have entered conversation; the congeniality of the material on the unconscious to Woolf herself, in view of her projected fictive praxis - all this might persuade one to think that Freudian influence at least figures in her lexical praxis. Yet her scorn for any such systematizing route to knowledge of the unconscious, and her jealousy for it as a feminine solitude in her own case, and in the life of the imagination, urge against too easy an assumption. It is not that unacknowledged influence cannot occur, even by a writer one rarely mentions and then unfavourably: we cannot readily believe that Freud's work went undiscussed at Asheham in 1914. But the most we may be able to say is, that while Woolf aims her sneer at Freud's believing psychoanalysis 'proves something', 1913 having been a bad year for her health, this need not preclude her being intrigued by the unglossed data he amassed. This source of ideas could have been assimilated by her own instinctual handling of word and symbolism; conscious and unconscious; being and suggestive utterance. Further than this it might be imprudent to go; but the question will be worth returning to.

Woolf's own puns are obviously distinguished from the broader play she offers at times. In *Roger Fry*, she says 'a theory impends, but it can be left pendant', and punning is not involved (210). On occasion, play functions poetically, as in these agnominations from *Night and Day*:

> Something she must keep of her own. But if she did keep something of her own? *Imm*ediately she figured an *imm*ured life, continuing for an *imm*ense period, the same feelings living forever, neither dwindling nor changing within the ring of a thick stone wall. The *imag*ination of this loneliness frightened her (248. Emphases added)

This impasto evokes Mary Datchet's panic, but none of the words 'does' for any other, and the effect is cumulative. Full punning is present, though with a light touch, in this moment from *The Years*:

> In the station yard at Wittering, Mrs Chinnery's old victoria stood waiting. The train was late; it was very hot. William the gardener sat on the box in his buff-coloured coat with the plated buttons flicking the flies off. The flies were troublesome. They had gathered in little brown clusters on the horses' ears. He flicked his whip; the old mare stamped her hoofs; and shook her ears, for the flies had settled again. It was very hot. The sun beat down on the station yard, on the carts and flies and traps waiting for the train. (149)

The heat, the clustering of insects and light vehicles, are a matter of atmosphere, and the pun is in fast flight, literal and metaphoric. The insects are named three times prior to the device, so the pun itself is more evanescent than subdued. Woolf's definitions allow one to experience, and also restrain one from experiencing much more than, the performative text which does these tricks for the reader at her behest.

In her graver punning, play is still a factor. In those puns, however, we discern how it can be that utterance, as surface, is not simply a given, but is ironically at odds with being, and with the need to become somebody. In the following instance from 'A Summing Up' (c 1925), the pun word hides and reveals, is self-contained whilst advertising multiple reference. It does not posture as surface only, but as denoting the real:

> Shy though she was and almost incapable when suddenly presented to someone of saying anything, fundamentally humble, she cherished a profound admiration for other people. To be them would be marvellous, but she was condemned to be herself ... Having satisfied his curiosity, and replenished, by a moment's silence, his bubbling fountains of talk, Bertram invited Mr and Mrs Somebody to sit with them, pulling up two more chairs ... Bertram talked and the somebodies - for the life of her she could not remember if they were called Wallace or Freeman - answered ... Then she asked herself, which view is the true one? ... She asked this question of that somebody whom, in her humble way, she had composed out of the wisdom and power of other people.

The 'somebodies' are vague, because Sasha has forgotten their names, and precisely achieved, because they contrast with her in being substantial personae. Sasha sees that Bertram's public utterance is one way of becoming a somebody, despite her sense that his talk is effete:

> Written down what he said would be incredible - not only was each thing he said in itself insignificant, but there was no connection between the different remarks.

The acting strikes her most when she envisages his talk as script. But in due social context, this talk is essential to acting as somebody. It can matter little whether Mr and Mrs Somebody are named Wallace or Freeman: they are somebodies. The pun names their namelessness, and also that apparent easy substantiality which is in need of no name. Paradoxically, it draws attention to an indispensable social discourse, as well as to the concomitant illusion of free, extranominal existences which that discoursing can produce. The device works as play, toying with the possibility of a social persona. Yet by functioning in this way, it invites reflection upon the tale's public ambition (as an act of utterance), despite the artificiality of this fictive achievement - the illusion of what the story is depending on readerly willingness to grant that it is, indeed, fictively something even if one cannot put a name to it.[6] This kind of Woolfian punning is of most immediate interest.

In Mrs Dalloway, the following jingling paronym is crucial:

> Sir William was master of his own actions, which the patient was not ... Naked, defenceless, the exhausted, the friendless received the impress of Sir William's will. (90,91)

Sir William's will is not peripheral to this novel. It is central: in it, we encounter the ethos which punishes Smith. It is a bitter and loaded device. In the fusion of Sir William with his method, and of Holmes with his homes, there is no saving disparity between word and thing, such as to allow the therapists to apprehend secret lives healthily uncommensurate with what is habitually said in the open. This failure of empathy is in a special sense childlike, for it is primary and infantile to confuse word with world as pun, homophone, and metaphor are run together in the time/thyme allusion of The Waves, which occurs when the personae are very young. The children's older selves will go on to distinguish what used to be confused. In turn, that is followed by an adult need for personal and social fusion, or failure to find it. For most of the younger ones, time may be picked like any plant, their casual thyme-plucking anything but a carpe diem, referring to itself literally and as pastime. Such metaphorising is a pleasure which depends on the welcomeness of distinctions that can easily be bridged verbally. For Rhoda, though, distinction is not welcome. The punitive 'six, seven eight' on the blackboard separates her from the pickers of thyme who hear stories told in the garden. It inserts between her and her experience of time in the social world, a signifier-dominated division. Forced by the signifiers to remain isolated, she is arrested and bewildered by them, and is excluded from Bernard's pronouns as he says, 'this is our universe ... This is our world' (14,15). The numerals are swollen with her time. Metaphor is one feature of that lyric phrasing whereby The Waves's personae would express life story; but it assumes bifurcations Rhoda can ill afford. Prior to self-exile, she will progress only to the joining up of nonverbal shapes - a union painfully made, which acts as a vague visual metaphor of its verbal analogues, and for the uniting personal and social integrations which metaphor betokens. Rhoda's suicide is an earnest attempt at metaphor, self-destruction as an entry into the list of dramatis personae, the actress's part taken over-literally. The pun's environing is the entire form and content of The Waves, since it encapsulates those relations of being to utterance which the whole fiction addresses.

The Years's explorations are almost entirely into those fissures that yawn between being, private saying, and public utterance, the divisions of the self which are expressed and confirmed by those irreconcilables. In that novel, the following paronomasia is directly relevant to the reader's experience:

> I will go to Uncle Patrick, who is standing by the sofa picking his teeth, and I will say to him - what shall I say?
> A sentence suggested itself for no rhyme or reason as she crossed the room: 'How's the man who cut his toes off with the hatchet?'
> 'How's the man who cut his toes off with the hatchet?' she said, speaking the words exactly as she thought them. The handsome old Irishman bent down, for he was very tall, and hollowed his hand, for he was hard of hearing.
> 'Hacket? Hacket?' he repeated. She smiled. The steps from brain to brain must be cut very shallow, if thought is to mount them, she noted.
> 'Cut his toes off with the hatchet when I was staying with you,' she said. She remembered how when she last stayed with them in Ireland the gardener had cut his foot with a hatchet.
> 'Hacket? Hacket?' he repeated. He looked puzzled. Then understanding dawned.
> 'Oh, the Hackets!' he said. 'Dear old Peter Hacket - yes.'
> It seemed that there were Hackets in Galway, and the mistake, which she did not trouble to explain, was all to the good, for it set him off, and he told her stories about the Hackets as they sat side by side on the sofa.
> A grown woman, she thought, crosses London to talk to a deaf old man about the Hackets, whom she's never heard of, when she meant to ask after the gardener who cut his toe off with a hatchet. But does it matter? Hackets or hatchets? ... How many people, she wondered, listen? This 'sharing,' then, is a bit of a farce. (268,269)

Comedy leads here, into tragicomic reflection upon what is metaphorically farcical and purely a matter of social acting. In the fictive experience no pun exists: one word is sacrificed for another, whereas a pun must zeugmatise at least dual reference. Yet in the reader's means to the fictive experience, that is, in The Years as narration, a paronomasia does occur, 'Hacket' for 'hatchet', and in addition, the gardener's having hacked his toes. This enacts the unlikelihood of any thoroughly intended communication through utterance, given the impediment of cultural deafness (also dramatised tragicomically in Mrs Paley of The Voyage Out). The artificiality of the novel form is incidentally noticed.

When, earlier, Woolf attempts her own drama (Freshwater, written and revised in 1923 and 1935), she again exploits puns, with tactical knowledge of what their functioning means. In that aesthetic burlesque, Julia Margaret Cameron would immortalise the subjects of her art, fixing ideal statements in the photographic emulsion. Watts the painter yearns to get his own subjects definitively symbolised on canvas; and the literary artist Tennyson believes his diction names the facts. But the youthful Ellen Terry, oppressed by Watts's demand that she yield to his sense of form, flees that environment, free at last to be theatrical, or silly, or down to earth - but free. The 1923 version has her say: 'I'm an abandoned wretch, I suppose. I have such awful thoughts. Sometimes I actually want to go upon the stage and be an actress' (Fr 60). Her impulse disrupts Tennyson's reading of Maud: A Monodrama, and her potential coexists uneasily with the formal impositions. With apparent seriousness, Lucio P. Ruotolo quotes David Richman, who remarks of this play:

> Not only does the play have an operatic quality; the structure of the three acts is much like that of a symphonic composition. The fast-paced first and third acts are similar in their abundance of thematic material to the outer movements of a classical symphony. The middle act, a lyric section which focuses on Ellen Terry and her lover, is in the nature of an andante.

This may all be true enough, but the play's mocking content is certainly pulling away from that assessment's solemnity.[7] Richman says the middle act 'focuses' on Ellen and Craig, but it is the philosophic Mr Cameron who declaims,

> Hocus pocus, hocus pocus,
> That's the rhyme to focus. (43)

Reading Freshwater, it is surely not possible to stand too much in awe of a High Art which is assumed to be present because Woolf wrote it, at the same time failing to take her own terms seriously enough. If in this burlesque's form she seems to do as her Cameron, her Watts, or her Tennyson do, it is so as to subvert such formal obsessions by ridicule.

Mrs Cameron, like Watts, wants her subjects to sit still that she might capture the moment forever. Watts best sums up this fixation, wishing that his painting of Modesty's drapery shall, like some pun, 'express two important but utterly contradictory ideas', which are, that 'Modesty is always veiled', and, 'that Modesty is absolutely naked' (17). To achieve this, he uses a high symbolism which drapes Modesty in The Milky Way. It is an immodestly excessive idea; and besides, it smacks of fish semen.

As for Tennyson and his muddle, the poet finally says he abhors fact: 'Facts? Damn facts. Facts are the death of poetry' (39). But the theory is incoherent. When Watts earlier asks him, 'Alfred, tell me. Is your poetry based on fact?', Tennyson replies,

> Certainly it is. I never describe a daisy without putting it under the microscope first. Listen.
> For her feet have touch'd the meadows
> And left the daisies rosy.
> Why did I say 'rosy'? Because it is a fact. (15)

Ruotolo comments: 'Ruskin singled out this line as a "pathetic fallacy." Thomas Wilson in Reminiscence quotes Tennyson as follows: "Why the very day I wrote it, I saw the daisies rosy in Maiden's Croft, and thought of enclosing one to Ruskin labelled 'A Pathetic Fallacy.'"'[8] Woolf's intuition about Tennyson is shared by Erich Fromm. Referring to yet another poem, Fromm notices how,

> Tennyson reacts to the flower by wanting to have it. He 'plucks' it 'root and all' ... Tennyson, it appears, needs to possess the flower in order to understand people and nature, and by his having it, the flower is destroyed.

In Freshwater, Tennyson's verse is a comically possessive attempt at monodramatic nailing down of facts whose independence of poetry, whose self-inhabited solitude, he resents. By finding the microscopically correct word, his lyricism will denote its object and fix it, as Cameron and Watts seek to define their own artistic subjects. As Ruotolo says, 'Mrs. Cameron, with clenched fists and threats of damnation, forced those around her to sit still' - unlike La Trobe, who threatened damnation if they did not move. Ruotolo continues: 'When doing a picture entitled "Despair," Mrs. Cameron is said to have locked her model in a closet for several hours in order to get the right expression on her face'. It is also true that 'Ellen Terry's autobiography reveals how demanding her first husband could be: "I remember sitting to him in armour for hours and never realising that it was heavy until I fainted"'. In 1923 Woolf has Watts exclaim, 'Where is Ellen? Has anybody seen Ellen? She must have slipped from the room without my noticing it' (63).[9]

This kind of possessiveness engrosses Tennyson in lingual and conceptual confusion. Woolf dramatises it, showing his attributions of sexual double entendre, his punning, and his being, nevertheless, at the mercy of a certain literalness not valued for what it is. He is aware enough of sex between the lines. Ellen rises to leave Watts for her lover:

> MRS. C. She's spoilt my picture!
> TENN. My picture too. (15)

His sense that the word is not everything, that it can be made to be sexually ambiguous, therefore emerges in the use he has for pun:

> MR C. (Looking at the marmoset)
> Life is a dream.
> TENN. Rather a wet one, Charles. (14)

Again, an 'ass' is a donkey, and anyone who praises Browning; and 'port' is a drink which relates to 'voyage' and 'sailors' (16,18). There is other punning besides Tennyson's. Ellen's repeated 'Titian. Titian. Titian' is taken by Craig for 'Sneezing'; and the letters of 'W.C.1' refer, for Craig, to a London postal district, as well as, for Watts, to a lavatory (22,40,41). But Tennyson's habit of imputing unlikely ambiguities, and of lecherous lexicality, is in truth a limitation. Seduced by the word's surface, he is yet antagonistic to nonverbal fact.

But he is not sensitive to others' verbal ambiguities, or even to their puns. Having seen Ellen elope with Craig, Watts cries, 'Ellen! Ellen! My wife - my wife - dead, dead, dead!' Tennyson responds: 'My God, Watts. You don't mean to say Ellen's dead?' Watts, indeed, does not mean to say that. But the woodenness persists after Watts explains that 'dead' is a metaphor:

> She is dead - drowned - to me...Our marriage is dissolved - in the sea. (33)

The pun is lost. Not hearing the qualifier, Tennyson takes 'dead' literally. Trying to make words do for fact will not necessarily render verse sensitive to possibility, or more lyrically communicative. The 1923 version also suggests that Tennysonian lyric and narrative do not cohere: 'Colvin has the temerity to say that my lyrics are better than my narrative. Gosse has the audacity to affirm that my narrative is better than my lyrics. That is the kind of criticism I have to endure' (60,61). If no gap exists between poetry and object, there is no room for the world's native solitude. Woolf's audience may take this comic perception from Freshwater, though the drama will not absolutely 'do' any more than word will do for fact. Puns signal that denotation is only aspiration; but lyricism wants to be suggestive rather than denotative. Tennyson does not take the point, but the audience may do so concerning the drama, which needs text, actors, and spectators in order to be what it is.

In Jacob's Room we come across 'the springy air of May, the elastic air with its particles' (34), and it is clear what 'springy' is doing. So too, as Hermione Lee observes, there is in this novel an elastic play upon characters' names - Budgeon, Sturgeon, Masham, Bonham, Stretton, Gresham, Sherborn, Gage, Graves, Barnett, Springett, Lidgett, Barrett, Pearce, Perry, Parry, Aitken, Askew, Pilcher/Pilchard. This really engenders their anonymity, inconsequence, and interchangeableness.[10] If naming them is arbitrary and one may unconsciously evoke another, this is a ground condition of signification as differential. If we insist that the rationale of Jacob's own surname is clear in his being killed in the Great War, if 'Flanders' is Jacob and the occasion of his fated death, then in naming him he ceases to be.

The subdued pun which requires our sympathy instead of the blaring pun announcing itself as end not means, is on one view more typical of the feminine handling of word, phrase, and sentence which Woolf sought. There is no need for the verbal dalliance of feminine fiction to mirror the traditional, more masculinist narrative and fictive modes, for 'Ellen Terry dressed up as a man' (Fr (1923) 70). Woolf expresses this well in A Room of One's Own:

> Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size ... mirrors are essential to all violent and heroic action ... if she begins to tell the truth, the figure in the looking-glass shrinks; his fitness for life is diminished ... So I reflected, crumbling my bread and stirring my coffee ... The looking-glass vision is of supreme importance. (35,36)

The lectures comprising A Room of One's Own are concerned with the token conditions which might permit women the gesture of fiction-writing; and Woolf is unready to be man's glass reflecting back what he wishes to see. So, at least, she 'reflected', with a subdued pun drawing to itself all aspects of what is under discussion. Any man - especially men of action, those for whom violence has glamour - looking into Woolf's speculations will see her reflections, which will be (in Augustan usage) a reflection on him, or, in our own usage, not much of a reflection on him. The quiet play wants our empathy with Woolf's feminizing aims. But Muriel Bradbrook complained of A Room of One's Own in the first volume of Scrutiny:

> The camouflage in A Room of One's Own ... prevents Mrs. Woolf from committing the indelicacy of putting a case or the possibility of her being accused of waving any kind of banner. The arguments are clearly serious and personal and yet they are dramatised and surrounded with all sorts of disguises to avoid an appearance of argument.

If Woolf's polemic really does avoid activism to this extent, then maybe the stage is the place for this tract; and that is where it ended up, in June of 1989.[11] Woolfian punning is part of the camouflage. At the same time, it summons to itself the case's essentials, dramatising while seeming to disguise them. Subdued that it is, it looks for a listening audience (which is what the lectures in question originally had). In 'The Lady in the Looking-Glass', to which Woolf added the subtitle 'A Reflection' (1929), the mirrored woman is as true as the real; but both are images in a fiction which, in its handling of constructed and unconstructed personae, is a speculum of the real, analogical process. The story's reality and fiction are alike fictional; the tale is a fictive mirroring of the world and a narrative meditation on it.[12]

Another story, 'The Duchess and the Jeweller' (c 1932), connects the jeweller Jew Oliver Bacon with the clothes which announce his wealth:

> 'Behold Oliver,' he would say, addressing himself. 'You who began life in a filthy little alley, you who...' and he would look down at his legs, so shapely in their perfect trousers; at his boots; at his spats. They were all shapely, shining; cut from the best cloth by the best scissors in Savile Row. But he dismantled himself often and became again a little boy in a dark alley.

To dismantle himself, Bacon must dismantle, because the self he has now become subsists in his clothes, public signifier of affluence. The acquired costume which betokens this must be shed, if he is to remember his origin. The clothes do not denote him: there is a prior self recallable through divestment. The pun has to do with, and for, the unfinished self-address, the internal dialectic which the fiction starts but then leaves incomplete, done for. His clothes suggest a differential self in a continuum of selves, but cannot signify a presence or transcendental signified any more than the fictionally broken self-address can be tailored by narrative punning, which in fact seeks to suggest rather than to denote. The pun is apt, enacting Bacon as midway between selves, being neither fully one nor the other.[13]

These examples from stories and from some longer fictions, from a drama, a biography, and a polemic, show how punning comes to be constant in Woolf's writing. It carries weight, and often points us to the fiction's engagement with the relation of being to utterance, standing as a signifier of that. Woolf's use of puns is congruent with the playful seriousness of her art. It is therefore interesting to consider what she says about the punning of various male practitioners, especially when she would not wish their usages on herself. Her remarks, if sufficiently generic, may be taken to judge of a praxis from which, through the act of criticism, she differentiates herself.

Woolf's response to Hood, for instance, has several components worth closer attention later.[14] She notices his commonness as well as his oddity; how he is influenced by Coleridge and Keats, and is by turns 'broadly farcical, or romantic, or satirical or wildly fantastical'. Most importantly, she sees his life and writing as a single unspeciated value. To distinguish with too much decision his light and serious verse is false, she says, as if there were two writers not one, and as though his life were not itself a pun. She is firm about this: there was,

> the necessary relationship between Hood's fun and Hood's tragedy; you could not have the one without the other - if he laughed in this way he must cry in that - and the faults which we find in his light verse surely reproduce themselves in his serious poems. (Emphases added)

She perceives Hood's unity, then; and understands how, for all that this unity seems to engage in different modes of tragic and comic discourse, these both receive its central, disabling impress. The comic turns only suppress tragic truth by dilution. In Hood, life and writing are one and the same, while in the writing itself, there is generic contamination from the fixity of his cast of mind. The result is not tragicomedy. She says nothing of his social conscience, or of his anti-aesthetic. The crucial thing in him is punning, because the pun, too, artificially comprises realms not always consciously diversified in the first place. It too, points here and there simultaneously, but 'must' in the main really advertise its own 'necessary' centripetal nature. Hood's end in punning, may be more suitably discussed along with Woolf's reflections on Sheridan, Joyce, and the Renaissance drama, after a digression on her own ends.

But, to Hood, the pun signifies fusion, and it is a facile fusion; whereas, to Woolf, it signifies division, and the division is real. Any word is a shape whose bearing reveals the existence of an intention, much as Lily Briscoe's sense of life as an arrangement of masses is educated by her knowledge of Mrs Ramsay's shaping myth. Reality prompts the word, but the word does not come simply on cue. As Kierkegaard has one of his personae claim:

> My life is absolutely meaningless. When I consider the different periods into which it falls, it seems like the word Schnur in the dictionary, which means in the first place a string, in the second, a daughter-in-law. The only thing lacking is that the word Schnur should mean in the third place a camel, in the fourth, a dust-brush.

If real experience is a cleft between selves which must fuse, or between solitude's private self and some acted social existence, or an existent and a projected future self, then language, alert to these openings, on one side of a like divide between being and saying, may be resorted to, aptly enough, in expression of those facts.[15] Utterance is an important attempt to discover such closure. Its units comprise words; among which, the pun indexes words' embodying all manner of dualisms - subjectivity and objectivity, private and public existences, silence and saying - and, perforce, the polyvalence of all discourse.

It cannot be said of Woolf's puns that, like Slater's pins, they have no point. She uses them to a creative end, understanding that end instinctively and originally, and also rationally, in her consciousness of tradition. Her uses of pun are more narratorial than fictional. The 1908 Hood essay seems, in this respect, an act of practical self definition. Before embarking on a general meditation concerning Woolf's ends, it remains to consider, in a more purely theoretical temper, what the pun appears to be in itself, and what it was to her.

There are doubtless many ways to describe what a pun is, and the following is only one. The verbal pun, like all words, is a formal signifier. Yet the distinctive thing about visual puns is that they have no necessary relation to utterance. Hence we may coax the written, lexical pun nearer to a working definition, by acknowledging it as a visualised and sounded signifier. Materially (in sight plus sound) and in referentiality (at least dual), the pun concretises two sorts of simultaneity. The verbal pun differs from the visual in just this graphic and acoustic combination, and definitively zeugmatises two ways of signifying, quite apart from the matter of referents. With its peculiarly self-aware denotative posture, and its postural positing of arbitrary ambiguity, the pun draws unusual notice to what is true of all words. The way in which verbal puns assimilate visual ones will need to be recalled, later, in discussion of The Years.

If we ask what it means to 'be somebody', we may concede to Orlando, that many possible selves brood within the personality, each assignable only differentially, which also goes for the possibility of a notional master self. We may take the point that interior utterance is a major way of seeking to discover a self. Moreover, between the self which currently signifies one's being, and the self which may do so futurely or which did so once, continuity is maintained by internalised discursive action. This is not to say, as in poststructuralism, that intersecting discourses constitute the subject's shifting positionality. But the continuous dialogue among possible selves, always with a view to the emergence of some comprehensive, hence humorous (maybe comic), self, and then between that identity and those past or future personae, is a matter of course, at least in Orlando's parodic world. Interior utterance, and the silence of achievement, are crucial to existence as significant form, to the lyricism of existence, and one experiences in them the importance, and inadequacy, of all wording.

Manifestly there are, in milieux such as those Woolf's creatures inhabit, inhibiting obstacles in the way of trying to utter any more private self within a public discourse, since language is not so much what individuals mean, as what society lets it mean. This perennial difficulty becomes crucial in societies inclined to accept social appearance for reality, and which are therefore given to 'acting'. In those cultures, once one's being has been heard publicly, its existence is taken as objective because uttered, and therefore harder to undo. Woolf's creatures often experience this simultaneous referring of utterance to exclusive realms: to what it was wished could possibly be said, if known, and to what was heard to have been said. Insofar as social talk is expected to bear this kind of dual referentiality, the dualism submitted to and in a strained sense meant through the suppression of awareness, it is like a massive resort to punning, given the pun's status as publicly sounded shape with intended plural referents. Yet even if the generality of utterance can never denote either subjective solitude or objective society, it can and does suggest both. It signifies as the pun does, participating in that sort of function, and so 'pun' comes to be a fit metaphor of utterance itself, In the societies mentioned, namely those of Woolf's fictions, interpersonal talk is an 'act'; and no words are more theatrical than puns.

Thinking too, of any public persona, we may concede our comic potential (the theory does come from Orlando) for a plurality of social selves, again along with some master persona. The breakdown of any productive dialogues between the public selves various people have, may be advertised in their habit of talking to themselves in public, rather than happily thinking to themselves in Marvellian solitude. Dialogue is indispensable, and the means to continuity between past, present, and futurely possible social personae. These are all elementary relations of utterance to being, but they are important to the fictional experiences of so many of Woolf's characters, and also to our experiencing of them as given in narration.

Finally, it has to follow that written utterance is in a special case. Other forms of public saying afford, perhaps, limited opportunities for revision, clarification, and amplification in the society harbouring Woolf's creatures. But writing - that done by her characters, and also her own - offers extensive scope for these elucidating acts. Writing may entail, between the acts, greater deliberation of utterance than any oral actions. Its self-consciousness is more far-reaching, and the correlative is a deepened sense of itself as artifice. Such self-awareness of the signifier as being artificially mimetic, is analogous to that reflexivity of word qua word embodied in the fact of the pun. Once again, a sense of the importance and inadequacy of utterance is central both to Woolf's narrative procedure and to the worlds she invents or recreates. Her writing would artificially fuse solitude's selves into what her society will admit is sayable; to transmit this sayable self, in other words, to that listening public or audience which will then confirm, or disconfirm, what it is that one is being and saying whilst possessed by one's fictional personae. Woolf's sense of an audience draws her towards incorporating the actorly speaking voice's script, to an inscription of voice, albeit in token, and never to the point of unsceptical parousia. Thus it is that her writing, in its self-aware and intentionally plural reference to mutually exclusive realms, proceeds globally as does the pun. Yet to talk like this of Woolf, is unconsciously to attribute to her more control than she either looks for or has. Her end in punning deserves further elaboration, therefore.

These concerns just outlined are already astir in Woolf as her creative thought encounters Hood around the time of her 1908 essay on him. She reads his subtext, and finds in him, as in most of the Victorians, an admirable, but fatal, natural loquacity which comes of being more able than modernists to take existence and identity for granted - though in Hood, for one, this is only an act. Victorian assumptions are not hers, and she distances herself from them. In doing so, she is not developing a Pun Theory of literature. It is simply that, in the case of the pun, she sees in it a local instance of what is true of all, and in particular of written, utterance.

II

Distinguishing Woolf's ends need not mean attributing to her a programme, reading the fiction as illustration. At the same time, that terminal decade of the nineteen-thirties had an unignorable effect upon her aims. So while one is not advocating for the reading of Woolf any crude entelechy, it would not be wise, either, to turn a blind eye to her responses to the ends of domestic and international action.

Samuel Hynes has written that young authors of the thirties were for obvious reasons unable in the Great War to display what, in their opinion, 'makes a man a Man. And they were uncertain of their manhood'. Therefore 'war's greatest appeal' during the thirties was the way in which 'it /made/ the nature and urgency of action clear' through the coveted literary-political masculinity. This, though, was more a case of 'misplaced adolescence' than an aspiring to adulthood, a transference of school games to the front. It could produce, in literary art, what Spender, in 1938, calls the 'absurd ... schoolboy ... caricature' and 'buffoonery' of the Auden-Isherwood poetic dramas.[16] Julian Bell, among others, accepted caricatures of both himself and the enemy, but could do so 'only because such simplifications did exist, the terms cited were bellowed, and bellowed in literary quarrels'. This tendency is not unnatural, considered in the light of the decade itself:

> the historical events of the 'thirties restored action, violence, melodrama, heroism, tragedy, the conflict of good and evil ... to creative imaginations. Whatever else it was, the decade of the 'thirties was dramatic.

It was moreover an apocalyptic drama. Steiner connects Wagner's imperious search for Gesamtkunstwerk with other, destructive imperatives of the thirties:

> By the enormous strength of his personality and by his cunning rhetoric, he nearly instilled his concocted mythology into the general mind. The Wagnerian note sounded throughout social and political life and had its mad echoes in the ruin of modern Europe.

Woolf's earlier recoil is thus worth pondering, in her prescient refashioning of Wagner's ends outside of his theatre of control. She does not hope for like control, despite the total art-work's attractions.[17] Hynes sees in that decade 'the shape of a tragic play ... /with/ 1936 ... the peripeteia' and 'Auden's "Spain" ... the third act'. This language seems just: 'the problem ... that every artist in the 'thirties had to face' was, 'what is the right relation between art and action?'[18]

Woolf is also concerned with these problems. The above remarks only serve to endorse her own polemic's linkage of masculinism, belligerence, and callowness, while reminding us, in the mention of Julian Bell (her nephew killed in Spain) that her insights are not academic. Even so, Spender (in 1967) and Hynes (in 1976) go on to misrepresent Woolf's argument in the 1932 'A Letter to a Young Poet'.[19] Spender calls it a complaint against poets' 'echoing public matters with a public voice and not writing out of a Wordsworthian isolation, solitary among the solitary reapers'. But since Woolf protests in her essay that poetry is being crippled precisely because poets are doing that - speaking too much of and from self - this is to misread. Hynes agrees with Spender: 'She had wanted beauty and fine language, and they /gave/ her politics and polemics'. These summaries only caricature Woolf's approach.[20]

Woolf speaks in her piece of how 'writers ... dress themselves up. They act their parts' for their audiences' sake. But there is a crisis of poetic address, she says, which issues from excessive occupation with solitary experience. It has not always been thus, however. 'Two or three hundred years ago you [poets] were always writing about other people. Your pages were crammed with characters of the most opposite and various kinds - Hamlet, Cleopatra, Falstaff' - all these, of course, characters from the Renaissance drama. She continues: 'Not only did we go to you for drama, and for the subtleties of human character, but we also went to you, incredible though this now seems, for laughter. You made us roar with laughter'. That was now a thing of the past. Woolf implies in its place, an unhealthily solipsistic solemnity.

The reference to English literature's great dramatic period is not a casual one. In returning to the poverty of language she finds in contemporary verse, Woolf urges no aestheticist self-renewal, but again invokes the publicity of the theatre:

> How can you learn to write if you write only about one single person? To take the obvious example. Can you doubt that the reason why Shakespeare knew every sound and syllable in the language and could do precisely what he liked with grammar and syntax, was that Hamlet, Falstaff and Cleopatra rushed him into this knowledge; that the lords, officers, dependants, murderers and common soldiers of the plays insisted that he should say exactly what they felt in the words expressing their feelings? It was they who taught him to write, not the begetter of the Sonnets.

What is wrong with contemporary poetry, as she sees it, is the absence of a dramatising imagination which loses itself through a plurality of personae. To recover some such praxis will itself replenish lyricism. The product will not be assertive in a callow sense, but mimetically active in the realising of scene and character. Hilarious comedy, and vocal and lexical richness - these are the desirable results of a poet's ceasing to be merely the dramatist *manqué*.

This plea for, in effect, some credible poetic drama means that Woolf, like other writers of the thirties, wants a public art which acts. The author of *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas* (with her longstanding attention to novelistic dramaturgy) cannot be thought anti-polemical in principle, or opposed to having a public voice in public matters. Nor is she sceptical about art as an active exterior. She merely doubts that the wished-for artistic effects can flow from a source like the too-isolated self which, by definition non-communal, has taken to an unsocial solitude. Woolf would have endorsed Spender's 1938 view, that 'finding an audience' was the 'most important' problem for 'a contemporary poetic drama', and also Hynes's defining that quest as one of 'reaching a popular audience'.[21] 'For the first time in history there are readers - a large body of people', she recognises. These are busy in all occupations, and they want to learn how and what to read. If writers cannot agree with the reviewers, the lecturers, and the broadcasters, who 'must in all humanity make reading easy for them' by bringing to the fore whatever is 'violent and exciting', they might still assume whatever roles amuse, not taking these too seriously (emphasis added). This adoption of personae is unavailable to the isolated, who in consequence are unable to give a more popular art to a wider readership.[22]

There are still other reasons to find Woolf politically wanting. Toril Moi, who explores the possibility of claiming Woolf for a materialist and activist feminism, deplores the readings of many feminists of the nineteen-seventies.[23] Moi cites 'the rejection of this great feminist writer by so many of her Anglo-American daughters', and summarises: 'To date /1985/ she has either been rejected by them as insufficiently feminist, or praised on grounds that seem to exclude her fiction'. Elaine Showalter, for instance, sees Woolf as denying 'authentic feminist states of mind', because Woolf is considered to have failed to name in her novels the public experience of women. This evasion, Showalter holds, is 'a commitment to the Bloomsbury ideal of the "separation of politics and art"'. Showalter follows Lukács, believing 'that politics is a matter of the right content being represented in the correct realist form'. But Moi calls this approach sterile, and counter-proposes a

Derridean and Kristevan reading which will 'locat[e] the politics of Woolf's writing precisely in her textual practice', enabling feminists to appropriate what is styled 'the political nature of Woolf's aesthetics'.

Elaborating on Kristeva's way of schematising feminism, Moi traces its progress through three stages, from the demand for sexual equality, through the assertion of superior difference, to the deconstruction of a difference merely metaphysical. 'In Woolf's case', she expands,

> the question is ... whether or not her remarkably advanced understanding of feminist objectives prevented her from taking up a progressive political position in the feminist struggles of her day.

Reading Woolf's polemics, Moi thinks not:

> The Woolf of Three Guineas shows an acute awareness of the dangers of both liberal and radical feminism (Kristeva's positions one and two), and argues instead for a 'stage three' position; but despite her objections she ends up firmly in favour of women's right to financial independence, education and entry into the professions - all central issues for feminists of the 1920s and 1930s.

Yet one notices Moi's unconscious tendency to take Woolf's politicisation too far, and to read the novels as though quasi-polemic, a habit she has disavowed. Constructions such as, 'Mrs Dalloway ... discloses the dangers of', and, 'To the Lighthouse illustrates the destructive nature of', are her favoured locutions. Woolf's fiction illustrates, as it also does for Jane Wheare. Hence it can seem finally, the fictive medium for the substance of her polemic.[24]

The argument of this thesis has tended to be, that Woolf's fiction does not illustrate anything, that it dramatises its personae beyond ready judgement, including feminist judgement. This is not to deny the right of poststructuralism to read Woolf in its own way, or to use its own methods of inquiry into the nature of her fictive acts. For example, John Sturrock considers that,

> Post-Structuralism has flourished in the literary field because literary criticism has in the past been much given to the illusion of 'phonocentrism' ... how often are writers not held to 'say' this or that, rather than to 'write' it; how often do we not read (or do I mean 'hear') of a writer writing for a particular 'audience', instead of a readership?

That illusion of phonocentrism - the speaking voice as present to itself while harking back to lost community, and to lost audience - is one Woolf actively courts in her own search for readers. The 'I' who does this is also ambiguous for her, a constructed subjectivity, which is the changeable deposit of many theatrical roles. In addition, the artifact's desired public anonymity cannot but inscribe writing as superior to speech.[25]

Deconstruction, clarifying these processes, may show afresh the problematics of Woolf's activity. But as for poststructuralist feminism, a particular reason existed for feminists of the seventies to have felt dissatisfied with Woolf. Moi uncovers it, but does not connect it to her earlier discussion of Woolf's general rejection by those feminists. Commenting upon what she calls 'the feminist struggle within academia', Moi cites Annette Kolodny's approaches (1975-80) towards a feminist literary theory and its applications. Kolodny felt that if feminists would clarify their theory of reading and writing, then 'the academic establishment's hostile reaction to feminist criticism might be"transformed into a true dialogue"'. Feminists of the seventies wished to be taken seriously in academic quarters, and so they resented earlier, and putatively major, feminisms (like Woolf's) which did not seem markedly congenial to their activism. They were not simply imagining the academic difficulties. Carolyn Heilbrun describes the academic feminist's predicament:

> More than a few male academics ... must put aside the fear of feminization in a profession that has always risked appearing effete, and in which the codes and flourishes of masculinity have long been fetishistically clung to.

There could be no point in just waiting for that situation to change; nor could the clarification of theory go amiss. Yet to do as Moi recommends, and read Woolf through Kristeva, will not necessarily deepen one's sense of Woolf's peculiar fictive action, even if it does render a plausible Woolf politics. Thus, Makiko Minow-Pinkney has used Kristevan psychoanalysis to read Woolf. She shows persuasively how, in Woolf, the Kristevan semiotic and pre-oedipal chora continually irrupts into the symbolic order. But it does not follow that such programmatic readings will be tactful. One catches Minow-Pinkney allegorising:

> Mrs. Ramsay ... represents the old Victorian order ... [and] the decaying summer house ... represents the body of the mother, Mrs. Ramsay, in ways to which the psychoanalysis of Melanie Klein has alerted us.

What this sort of reading does *not* alert us to, is the novel's dramatic life, which suffers as a result. The drift, here, towards finding Woolf crudely illustrative is not resisted. Perhaps this is an occupational hazard of approaching Woolf through a system whose ultimate rationale is academic respectability. The 1923 *Freshwater* had some lunatic burlesque of 'treating a glass of hot water allegorically' (*Fr* 66).[26]

Another way in which poststructuralism might seek actively to read Woolf's lyric expressivity, is through that parallel praxis known as *écriture féminine*, whose practitioners behave as nemesis to the younger Empson's notorious dismissal of Shakespeare's effeminacy. In 1930 Empson wrote of Shakespeare's punning that it,

> shows lack of decision and will-power. a feminine pleasure in yielding to the mesmerism of language, in getting one's way, if at all, by deceit and flattery ... Many of us could wish the Bard had been more manly in his literary habits.

Jane Marcus, for one, would subvert any such notion of Woolf's own play with words. It in fact 'signals to the woman reader ... conspiring [with] her audience's assent'. Neither Empson's, nor Marcus's, opinion is argued: these are simple assertions. Assimilation of verbal play to feminist activisms became programmatic during the seventies and eighties. In 1985 Showalter declares:

> Over the past ten years, French feminist critics have ... attempted to make criticism a mode of *écriture féminine*, emphasising textual pleasure and making extensive use of puns, neologisms, coded allusions, typographical breaks, and other devices.

The end of this behaviour is unfolded by Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron as being:

> the disruption of the symbolic order - bourgeois language, the language of the old humanisms and their belief in a coherent subject ... by dislocating syntax, playing with the signifier, punning outrageously.

But there are difficulties for such a systematically punning anti-patriarchalism. These have been noted earlier, and will surface again.[27]

What the programmatic feminist reading may mean for Woolf (apart from rejection), is evident in Sandra Shattuck's 1987 paper on Jane Harrison's influence in Between the Acts.[28] Shattuck discusses Woolf's 1927 essay 'The Narrow Bridge of Art'. Referring to its impulsive wish to draw readers' blood, she finds this 'a somewhat violent turn of phrase for a pacifist'. It shows, she says, Woolf's need 'to get to the reader, to induce thought, discussion and the possibility of social change'. Leaping to 1941 as though the thirties had not happened, she then reads 'Giles's bloody solution' of stamping on the snake and toad as, 'firmly underscor/ing/ Woolf's acknowledgement of violence in her own enterprise ... of uncovering suppression and oppression within myth and sexuality'. The novel constitutes in this way,

> Woolf's urgent call to her readers to take up their unacted parts, to take on the social responsibility of acting within the horrible arena of war, individually as well as within a group, by speaking out against the atrocities of nationally sanctioned murder and fascism.

Shattuck gives this approach emphasis, saying that 'La Trobe wants to "draw blood" from her audience, to bind them in an emotionally jarring grip just as Woolf wants to jostle her readers out of acquiescen ce and apathy'. And she considers it the pertinent note on which to end:

> Woolf passionately challenges her readers to cease being silent spectators and to take on the task of acting their unacted parts.

Between the Acts is itself meant to draw blood - a passionate, even a violent, challenge to readers to act in the external world. It is hard to see what prevents it, therefore, from being a polemic having Three Guineas for its subtext. But this is an example of forced reading. As Moi says, it can seem as though, for some feminists, Woolf is to be rejected for having offered ineffective polemic, or, readmitted, if her novels may be read polemically. As H. Groen cautions, 'literature in its aesthetic function is at all times more important to Woolf than any social or political issue'. For Patricia Waugh, however, as for many others, discussion of Woolf's novels is framed by a consideration of her polemics, despite the fact that in Woolf's writing as a whole that order of things is reversed.[29]

Some ambiguity notwithstanding, Moi's approach is preferable to the rejections of Spender, Hynes, and Showalter, and also to Shattuck's wholehearted support. Moi wants Woolf for an activism which shows more respect than is common for the independent life of her texts. That does seem to involve, as noted, a residual literalism which can find the fiction illustrative or revelatory, in effect adjunct to the polemics. So a suspicion remains that, if there should ever emerge within the suggested Derridean/Kristevan framework some academically unbearable strain, Woolf would be back where she started, namely useless to activist feminism. Moi does not seem to consider that Woolf's polemic may have siphoned off all that existed of her publicly political voice, leaving the fiction to do something other than illustrate. Even that polemic, as Bradbrook complains in 1932, tends to dramatise rather than argue. Shattuck reads the 1927 essay as if suddenly followed by the Second World War. For Moi, there are the polemics, and then (but she is not being wholly attentive to her own rhetoric) the satellite novels. It remains to let Woolf demonstrate her own ends.

For instance, need one side either with Showalter on that Woolfian 'androgyny' (Woolf fled to it, away from proper attention to her genderedness), or with Moi (Woolf denied essentialism, seeing the distinction as metaphysical)? What if Woolf valued androgyny as belonging to humour or tragicomedy, and as facilitating a genuinely panoramic overview of the world's life? That is how she describes the desired process in her 1905 essay. Since she does become explicitly polemic in the twenties and thirties, it may be best to admit her terms for art as they stand. It is not that one would wish on principle to deny Woolf to political movements, especially when there are common targets like fascism and patriarchy. But if she is endorsed or marginalised prior to elucidation of her own peculiar ends, the programmes which take her up or put her down are bound to do critical damage to her potential audience. Zwerdling beautifully summarises Woolf's tendency:

> typical of the way in which she rethinks politics slowly into her own tongue /is how/ she takes up a public issue under discussion in her society, translates its dry abstract language into a particular human situation, finds her way to the heart of the conflict, and gives it intense dramatic life.

The adverb 'slowly' is especially pleasing here.[30] If this is not recognised, because something besides Woolf presses more urgently upon the reader, there will be nemesis: the hasty readings may come to seem modish and narcissistic. As Gindin has said, 'the problem with the proliferation of academic books about Virginia Woolf is that they feed off each other, sometimes neglecting Woolf herself'.[31] This is a general problem, of which Woolf criticism is one example.

One should not assume any easy coincidence of one's own ends and Woolf's. It may well be that, oppressed by the solemnities of masculinist academic authority, some feminists turn towards the ludic in Woolf, so as to rediscover her comedy. Jane Tompkins's cri de coeur is typical:

> It is a tenet of feminist rhetoric that the personal is political, but who in the academy acts on this where language is concerned? We all speak the father tongue, which is impersonal, while decrying the father's ideas.

In expression of this structural disadvantage, Ellen Messer-Davidow details areas of 'rank, salary, /and/ tenure' in which, she has found, 'discrimination is pervasive' against university women.[32] The scenario is dispiriting; and it may be that Woolfian comedy is getting attention not so much because it is there, as because it is needed. After all, its caricatural butt is frequently the male psyche. Mitchell Leaska, says Virginia Blain, 'never verges on the kind of insight brought to /Jacob's Room/ by a recent feminist critic, Judy Little, who finds it to be a parody of the Bildungsroman form, primarily comic in intention and effect (It is perhaps more than a coincidence that both Jacob's Room and Night and Day, the novels in which Woolf explores the male psyche most conscientiously, have been interpreted by feminist critics as comedies)'.[33] Parody is an active mode, telling one what to think, which is perhaps appealing for those who need power. Woolf is found to be a satirising feminist with approved aims, and a good aim at that, an activist after all. As a tragicomic dramatist whose creatures live free of facile judgement, she is not yet fully open to view. If she were, the readings which would follow would have no necessary links to any given activism. Bowlby's is a salutary summation: 'elsewhere /than in Three Guineas/, it is not at all clear what for Woolf would constitute the "end" of feminism'.[34]

III

The Waves as 'play-poem' or verse drama was to include 'a garden under the window. But', Woolf adds in 1927, 'it needs ripening'. Dramatic and Marvellian tendencies here converge. Woolf's major impulse, as noted earlier in her discussion of the poetry of scene, is towards the dramatic as scenic:

> I can make up situations, but I cannot make up plots. That is: if I pass the lame girl, I can without knowing I do it, instantly make up a scene ... This is the germ of such fictitious gift as I have.

The Waves brought with it many formal problems - among them, 'how to pull it together ... I do not know; nor can I guess the end'. The end in doubt, Woolf yet saw a distant fin. 'I am dissatisfied with my own smart endings. I must get on to a peak & survey the question', she writes in 1930. The difficulty affects 'the last lap of The Waves'.[35] But by February 1931 there is no longer any need to guess the end, for she has reached that vantage:

> I must record, heaven be praised, the end of The Waves ... it is done ... Whether good or bad, its done; & ... I certainly felt at the end, not merely finished, but rounded off, completed, the thing stated ... I mean that I have netted that fin in the waste of waters which appeared to me over the marshes out of my window at Rodmell when I was coming to an end of To the Lighthouse. (Emphases added)

To be able to write fin under The Waves, the last lap done, the end having surfaced, was some relief.[36] But to what end does Woolf pun? If one is to end a discussion of her dramaturgic needs with reference to her verbal play, what ripening is this?

As Sara (in The Years) listens to North read Marvell, 'the words going out into the room seemed like actual presences, hard and independent; yet as she was listening they were changed by their contact with her'. Some of Marvell's 'words' are then given:

> Society is all but rude -
> To this delicious solitude...

Interrupted by a sound, North wonders, 'was it in the poem or outside of it...? Inside, he thought' (259). This is a sociable poetry, for North reads it to Sara; but it is also solitary, since Sara's listening privately alters the words. The poem receives extra sounds into its euphonies, as Parsifal received what lay between the acts. Woolf's fiction is likewise in search of audience; but her words, independent and intrinsically defined though they may be, change upon contact with each other and us. The fiction knows about and prefigures this. Play occurs as surface action to be witnessed, part of the voyage 'out' towards that externality drama has, and which also tends to comedy. Marvell's words metamorphose on contact with Woolf herself, and through her, on encountering her creatures and her readers.

But, in mentioning comedy, Woolf's praxis is to be distinguished from that of others given to punning - for example, Sheridan, Hood, and Joyce. Sheridan has, Woolf acknowledges, 'actor's blood' naturally seeking 'applause', though it also imparts a 'touch of melodrama'. He is, she is pleased to admit, exceedingly comic, but some scenes suffer from that 'voluble buffoonery', not at all related to the 'most profound humour' which is of all gifts the 'most honest'. This is a note on which to pause, and remind ourselves that the Sheridanesque 'acute sense of comedy' is not Woolf's own overall end, which was something subtler, namely that humour she speaks of.[37]

Her remarks on Sheridan date from 1909. The year prior sees her comment interestingly on Hood, whose 'abnormal facility' showed early, his 'brain full of puns' typifying 'something fundamental in the constitution of his mind'. She classes Hood's puns into two broad groups.

There are numerous 'happy matchings of sound' with so little content as to work in an 'almost purely verbal' fashion. Then there are the enigmatic puns springing from 'some strange association ... of two remote ideas, which it is his singular gift to illustrate by a corresponding coincidence of language'. Illustrator that he is, Woolf also cites lines from 'Ode to Melancholy', which is 'one of his most serious poems', and is not blind to that occasional end of seriousness: his punning need not be thought a priori comic.

In general, though, Woolf remains unsatisfied. Hood's way of being serious is in truth 'wild and incongruous ... grotesque and monstrous'. What else but 'a certain superficiality of conception' (unlike Woolf's own pursuit of the superficial as signifying-token) could have let him find 'such contrasts as the verbal one of "may" and "must" adequate'? His way of going on is 'supersensitive to the surface inflections of language'. Redfern's quotation from J. Clubbe's 1968 study Victorian Forerunner: The Later Career of Thomas Hood is apposite:

> he perceived the comic in the tragic and the tragic in the comic. But this discovery of incongruity caused him distinct unease ... Hood was, through puns, provided with a defence mechanism by which he could shy away from the full implications of his vision.

Roger Henkle endorses such an assessment:

> the inexorability with which the puns quake again and again throughout the literary expression suggests a frantic reflexiveness, dispelling the subterranean pressure of personal anguish. Punning seemed to serve Hood personally in that way.

Hood puts on an act in punning. Woolf's own tendency is, contrary to this, towards the fullest possible embrace of tragicomic vision, her play means to that end.[38] But Hood's comic suppressions of tragic truth mean that his punning becomes an end in itself, disappointingly finite.

Again, one should pause to register the essence of Woolf's complaint, which is like her reservation about Sheridan. That product of Hood's social conscience, 'Song of the Shirt', is castigated for a 'slight cheapness of effect, tending to the melodramatic, which has something in common, with the verbal dexterity, the supersensitive surface of mind already noticed'. This slight - 'melodramatic' - occurs within Woolf's dissent from Sheridan and Hood: she notes the quick, cheap effect, and does not fail to connect it with male buffoonery. Her Hood piece is not ungenerous. But one may suspect some underlying resentment of his supposed audience. Empson can be allowed to make the point:

> The nineteenth-century punster ... supplied something which could be shown to all the daughters of the house, which all the daughters of the house could see ... was very whimsical and clever ... /Hood/ felt, if the girls must read verse, let us see they get something that cannot possibly go to their heads.

This assumption about audience cannot be simply inverted, as Marcus does, to yield Woolfian punning signalling to female readers. It might be truer to say that Woolf signals to the woman in her reader, rather than to her woman reader. Forster did not hesitate to class 'all verbal coincidences, Pans and puns' under 'fantasy'. But that attitude to the pun is historically new, surfacing somewhere between the Augustans and the Victorians. Empson talked of 'the harmless nineteenth-century punsters who stress decent above-board fun'; and it is still mostly these who figure in the received wisdom about punning. Woolf's attitude to Hood may therefore be taken as judging an entire tendency.[39] The punning of Sheridan and of Hood was either artistically gratuitous, or an act. Woolf thought their seriousness compromised, though not, be it noted, because they punned. Play as end-in-itself is somewhat melodramatic, but Woolf is not saying that punning is drama's foe.[40]

Woolf's displeasure with Joycean structure has been noted: Ulysses failed because form mastered content. That novel's punning had been an aspect of characterisation, and, apart from Septimus Smith and La Trobe, there is in Woolf no one remotely like Buck Mulligan. She does not seem to have read Finnegans Wake: had she done so, she would have disliked it, and for the old reasons. Yet her response might have been interestingly complicated by the fact that this tragicomic work indistinguishably fuses fictional with narrative punning; and this is not irrelevant, since

Woolf's own puns are on the whole narratorial. Finnegans Wake delivers to the reader a near-opaque narrative screen, through which one can feel press the dim shapes of fictive character and event. Those entities are inseparable from the screen's translucency: the words, as pure narrativity, are the only sites of information. It is not really much to the point literalistically to trace all of Joyce's puns for explication. If one will only spectate, the experience is touching and funny. But that is also the problem, that for many readers, this is an enforced spectatorship. Performers of écriture féminine must be aware of similar criticisms that could be advanced against what they do. Deborah Cameron has faulted Mary Daly and others for just this:

> When we consider the demands put forward for a feminine 'language' ... it is very soon clear that the feminists concerned are thinking only of writing. For the kind of feminine language they envisage is literally unspeakable, however writeable it may be. It has puns made in the spelling, the punctuation and through diacritic markings; the structure is convoluted, needing considerable time to produce and to process ... [and] requir[ing] careful reading.

Woolf herself never goes as far as this. She is neither systematic nor doctrinaire, and does not risk alienating her audience.[41] In Joyce's case, there can seem little choice, but an obligatory readerly solitude parallel to the novel's tranced soliloquy. Readers may struggle with their enforced passivity by carefully unpicking the macaronics, puns, and portmanteaux - or not, as they incline. Nor does that cyclical work accept that it should have an end. Hence Kristeva justly discriminates Woolfian from Joycean verbal play: 'In women's writing, language seems to be seen from a foreign land ... Virginia Woolf describes suspended states, subtle sensations and, above all, colours ... but she does not dissect language as Joyce does'.[42]

Calling Woolf's punning narratorial, is to say that with the exception of Smith and La Trobe, none of her creatures is structurally a player with words. The play is not happening in the thing told, but in the telling. It occurs most notably among the experiments (Jacob's Room, Mrs Dalloway, The Waves, The Years, Between the Acts), and not where Woolf is more content with received form (The Voyage Out, Night and Day), nor necessarily even after crucial experiment (To the Lighthouse).[43]

It emerges along with greater concern for audience reaction. For instance, she feels, by January 1919, that the lack of demand for The Voyage Out is a judgement; and while thinking Night and Day true to life's strange, sad spectacle (though not for that cause hopeless), she wishes 'that some people, at least, will find it a pleasure', though even two editions are not anticipated. A few readers matter, she half convinces herself, 'the rest' (in telling theatrical metaphor) 'a senseless clapping of hands or hissing, are nowhere', since 'outside my own friends', she thinks, few are going to read 'a very long novel'.

This defensiveness turns out to be beside the point. 'N & D is a marked success ... & now I can write with the sense of many people willing to read' (emphasis added). Later, there is 'no news of the sale of N. & D. ... but private opinion highly pleasing to me. I see the public becomes a question' (emphasis added). After the success of 'Kew Gardens', 'did /she/ imagine a little shade' from Strachey? If so, it is 'instantly dispelled, but not before my rosy fruit was out of the sun'. One must get one's produce out from under that old serpent's, or any other's, green shade, or else lose nerve. Woolf's sense of a widening audience comes at precisely the moment when Yeats tells Lady Gregory the novel may develop more rapidly than the drama because it 'need not carry with it so great a crowd'. To 'prepare a stage for the whole wealth of modern lyricism', says Yeats, the audience must narrow drastically, to perhaps 'fifty people' - 'an audience like a secret society where admission is by favour and never to many', sustained by 'a feeling of exclusiveness'. What disappointed Yeats in the Abbey Theatre's efforts was that the politicisation of Irish life had made it hard to produce a truly mythopoeic national drama. He concedes 'discouragement and a defeat'. He, Synge, and Lady Gregory thought to ruralise the town with 'the old folk-life', having 'patriotic feeling to aid us'. But patriotism appealed to quite a different Irishness, one 'all objective with the objectivity of ... politics'. What Yeats calls 'rhetoric ... melodrama and spectacle' compel fine actors to 'harden, to externalise and deform'. It is a contagion from what is 'but political'. These problems find their echo over the water during the English thirties. But Yeats also senses what he feels as 'a counter-energy ... an always deepening un-analysable longing' in abeyance, but only for a time, to 'the discussions of politics'. This longing's style is revealed in 'the forms of subjective acting' which now 'have ceased'. For formerly, players would not have been so beholden to 'sympathy and observation', but would have carried their various roles 'wrapped in solitude'. That solitude is lyrically wealthy, but is best proffered to an exclusive audience. Woolf though, is at the same moment feeling towards a greater readership, even as her search for dramatic form and lyric solitude are becoming earnest. Especially during the decade which ends with Yeats's death, her art becomes even more dramatically public. Michael Schmidt connects Yeats's 'overmastery' with what a 'caricaturist' might do, and shows how his earlier lyric '"unmanliness"' is superseded by a poetry of 'activity, the early, unmanly, passive voice purged'. But the worry remained that art was 'finally passive ... affected without affecting', and Schmidt does not share the idea of Eliot, that Yeats 'held firmly to the right view which is between' '"Art for Art's sake"' and art as 'instrumental to social purposes'. Neither does Denis Donoghue, though from another angle, think Yeats so comprehensive. He relates Yeats's 'dramatic sense ... to tragedy', and cites 'his sluggish access to comedy, thinking of that form in sullen association with character, surface, mimicry, and intrigue'. Indeed, Yeats said tragic ecstasy was '"the best that art - perhaps that life - can give"'; and this meant, says Donoghue, that 'comedy has a low place' and is 'therapeutically useful, at best'. So the 'stillness ... trance and silence' which are Yeats's dramatic ends are those of tragic myth, the lyricism not unmanly but active in plays which are 'the natural culmination of Yeats's idiom: mask, role, opposites , conflict, discipline, body and soul'. '"Active virtue ... is ... theatrical, consciously dramatic, the wearing of a mask"', Yeats wrote; and Michael Hamburger says

Yeats complained of poets of the thirties that they refused 'to multiply personality', having 'pulled off the mask'. He did not remove his own personae, so his verse 'demands to be read with the kind of adjustments that we make for dramatic poetry'. The complaint is echoed by Woolf in her 1932 'A Letter to a Young Poet'. But it can be better seen by this comparison just what Woolf's ends are: the widening search for a dramatic-narrative gyre where the falconer can still be heard, with a greater not lesser audience; a form which signifies the tragicomic; which will not submit to the old active/passive dichotomy; and which also offers lyrical solitude as epiphenomenon.[44]

Night and Day likewise brought Woolf the gratification of her 'first taste of intelligent criticism' ('A Tragic Comedienne') for which, touchingly, she could 'even contemplate thanking the writer'. Her 'great pleasure' in composing Jacob's Room emerges out from under the immediate shadow of Eliot and Joyce. It takes heart from Cervantes, who will 'keep us entertained at all costs' despite the'sadness ... essential to the modern view', confirming thereby 'how splendid it is to unfurl one's sail & blow straight ahead on the gust of the great story telling'. Woolf too, 'mistress of things' providing 'all sorts of entertainments', increasingly has a public to think of, even as Jacob's Room is dallying with language. 'All my desired ends - Jacob's Room that is' must find due means.

And it is around this time that Woolf becomes newly conscious of the audience enshrined in the title of The Common Reader. Hitherto she has 'never enjoyed any writing more' than this volume of essays, 'or felt more certain of success'. That pleasured collection is conceived first in dramatic form, framed within 'Otway conversation ... A family which reads the papers'. As to the reason for such a form: 'I should very much enjoy it. I should graze nearer my own individuality'. However, the 'purely negative' reception of another dramatising experiment, 'a dialogue on Conrad' or 'my Conrad conversation', brings the idea to an end, for not any and all kinds of dramatic framing can be foisted upon readers. But the aim is, to provide something accessible to the more general reader.

Woolf can feel really quite supple about it:

> If they say this is all a clever experiment, I shall produce Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street as the finished product. If they say your fiction is impossible, I shall say what about Miss Ormerod, a fantasy. If they say, You can't make us care a damn for any of your figures - I shall say, read my criticism then. Now what will they say about Jacob?

Audience-author interaction is here cast dialogically; the retorts are not depressed, but jaunty and resourceful.[45] For the novelist, discursive action is the readiest available mode, and the word is a meeting place of writer and reader, where community occurs. It is a surface of the kind which drama also presents. But if the Jacob-voice thinks itself penetrating for foregrounding penetration, and the Betty-voice, immersed in its concerns, puns secretly, neither Jacob nor Betty themselves pun. If Rhoda has time on her mind, and Louis thyme on his, neither pun, though the narration does. Existing separately within the fiction, the homophonic elements are united narratively, neither fiction nor narration arrogating a global omniscience. More and more, active spectatorship is made available to the common or general reader.

The literary provenance of Woolf's punning has been broached, and her praxis clarified as against that of Sheridan, Hood, and Joyce. This is an eliminating exercise, and so it remains to think about her more positive influences. Here, Juliet Dusinberre usefully traces the effect of Lewis Carroll on Woolf's juvenile mind and on her later stance towards formal experiment. One thinks of Carroll (and Lear too) - themselves fine specimens of Victoriana - as subverting Victorianism in ways Bloomsbury approved. Dusinberre suggests:

> The question of readership dominates all Woolf's work. In refusing to impose herself on the world she created, the novelist carried to its logical extreme protests which many adults had made since the 1840s about the relation of author to child reader. In the two Alice books Carroll renegotiated for the children of Nesbit's, Grahame's, and later, Virginia Woolf's generation, the contract between reader and writer.

It will be obvious how these positions resemble Woolf's own.[46]

Dusinberre's explanatory power is further enhanced by referring to the Renaissance drama, Woolf's pleasure in which is evident, Relevant to this is N.F. Blake's exposition: 'the explosion in punning and other forms of wordplay in Elizabethan literature is part of the attempt to show that English could be used as expressively as any other language'. He continues, 'wordplay can be comic or serious, high or low class', and concludes: 'words may not make surface grammatical sense in Shakespeare's works because he often preferred to develop a witty sound effect since at that time such effects were more admired than grammatical logic'. What incited Shakespeare to this lexical behaviour, Blake suggests, was 'the delight of the audience' (emphasis added).[47]

Woolf's sense of the ubiquity of punning during that major period of drama is bound to have been influential with her. Part of the reading pleasure of Twelfth Night, she had said, was in experiencing its puns, which in practice only loaded the players with wordy mouthfuls, making Twelfth Night seem better as reading than as viewed stage action. Othello, too, 'when tension was slack', is an impressive 'volley & volume & tumble of ... words'. Shakespeare's mind 'tumbles & splashes among words when it is not being urged on' by the action, expressive lexicality doing instead. On a similar point, Redfern quotes from W.B. Stanford's 1972 Ambiguity in Greek Literature a view which Woolf anticipated:

> it was the quickness of the Athenian audiences to appreciate subtler plays on words and their delight in exercising this faculty that encouraged their dramatists and sophists to exploit the various types of ambiguity as much as they did.

Woolf was as steeped in the classical Greek drama as, during the twenties, she came to be in that of the English Renaissance. She makes an observation similar to Stanford's: 'my feeling [about Electra] always is that one can't read too carefully, or attach enough weight to every line & hint'.[48]

Woolf's use of sleight, then, invites its onlookers to witness, and take pleasure in, action within the very signifier. She has a point about some of Shakespeare's contemporaries. Much Renaissance drama does shout its way into auditors' lives, invading their solitude, and they withdraw bored, as she saw, into that same solitude. So Woolf is not about to carry-over - along with dialogue and scene - all that remains of the Renaissance verse drama, to the extent of mindlessly replaying its punning-obsession. The audience is to be courted, not pandered to. If her own play broadly seeks to do as that drama had done, it is with judiciousness and tact, and to enclose elements of the formal anarchy found in Carroll and Lear.

But pun also caricatures, because positing, denotation. Its arbitrariness (which is that of any signifier, made strange) is comic; its distance from knowledge might, however, be thought tragic. An apposite device for the apparently controlled abdication of control, it appeals to a community of understanders. The act which puns put on is in part gratuitous, under inner but not outer compulsions, and this preserves at least the notion of unforced grace. They are also, so Redfern says, conceptually 'androgynous: the area where man and woman overlap, the area of congress' between connotation and denotation. And Redfern helpfully adds: 'Many prefer the idea of a listening public, an audience, to that of a reading public, when it comes to puns'.[49] At once public and coy, should puns insist on offering comic knowledge, as in Hood, they caricature themselves, wilfully ignorant of a tragedy they should admit to knowing. When reticent, as with the subdued 'sale' pun in _Jacob's Room_, knowledge is what they suggest. And if this is also true of language itself, punning comes to appear paradigmatic. Woolf will not risk distancing the audience from her play as will the later Joyce and the performers of _écriture féminine_, but instead enlists their voluntary spectatorial capacities. Her puns say: 'Look how approximate all utterance is, and how humorous the sheer spectacle of its comic-pathetic pretence to truth. Is it not touchingly ludicrous? But let us make the best of it, giving language due scope in the erotics of our reading and writing'. That, then, is another of her ends in punning.

It is amusing to find that, symptomatically no doubt, Woolf omits a key word from her account of the concluding of To the Lighthouse: 'the blessed thing is coming to an I say to myself with a groan'. Perhaps that is because, while 'the novel is now easily within sight of the end ... this, mysteriously, comes no nearer'. Meanwhile, stories are continually sprouting to the left and right, all of them 'hopelessly undramatic' by comparison with the novel. Fame growing, life shoots towards death (an indescribably final experience) as to a Niagara, but it becomes possible to say retrospectively of the novel, 'I like the end', and to connect Shelley's visitant 'spirit of delight' with that 'fin rising on a wide blank sea'. Enjoyment of one's own ends works along with certainty of one's audience. Of Orlando, Woolf rejoices, 'people will understand every word' of 'these plain sentences; & the externality of it'. It is 'a serene, accomplished feeling, to write ... The End'. Sales are 'beyond our record for the first week', and this fact rather vindicates her feeling 'sure it was going to be the one popular book'. She is now (but again, one notes the comic self-deflation) 'two inches & a half higher in the public view ... now among the well known writers'. In the decade between Night and Day and Orlando, it becomes clearer that a Woolf readership does exist. One can hardly write any longer 'only for one's own pleasure', since 'the convention of writing is destroyed' by doing so. Sales of Orlando are 'still amazingly brisk', she enthuses, in December 1928, as Woolf's ends continue to find general acceptance. But none of these ends could ever have been reached had Sir Leslie lived: 'his life would have entirely ended mine' - not a consummation to be wished.

Orlando having 'done very well', what 'people say' naturally feeds into theory and practice. The admirable spontaneity and naturalness,

> came of writing exteriorly; & if I dig, must I not lose them? And what is my own position towards the inner & the outer? ... externality is good; some combination of them ought to be possible.

Acceptance produces refreshing relaxation from 'the fictitious self, for it is half so, which fame makes up for one ... I am more comfortable when shut up, self-contained as now'. That privacy is what informs The Waves.

It remains, all the same, a dramatising solitude:

> How am I to make one lap, or act ... more intense than another if there are only scenes? One must get the sense that this is the beginning: this is the middle; that the climax

- 'one' here being that conservative public for which Hardy spoke when, during Woolf's visit to him, he recommended an Aristotelianism of means and ends, not to say, of beginnings and middles. 'The Waves wont sell more than 2,000 copies', Woolf thought at one point. Yet its formal tactics still wanted to speak to that established readership's distally deictic sensibility: 'look at it (as the people in The Waves are always saying)'.[50] The Marvellian pun which The Waves singles out for rewriting is thus fictionally secretive while narratively explicit, as part of the presentation of surface to that novel's readers, for their participation.

IV

Spender says reproachfully of what Bloomsbury is supposed to have represented: 'the good life of personal relations and refined sensations ... could only be enjoyed by the individual in separation from society' - 'society' comprising in this case 'the public values of business, science, politics'. 'The aim of ... Virginia Woolf', he goes on to illustrate, 'was to create in/her/ novels isolated creatures of unique awareness with sensibility transcending their material circumstances'. Later in this essay he classes her with Eliot, Lawrence, and Forster as his generation's 'heroes', those whose 'end-games were our game-beginnings'. Spender assumes knowledge of Woolf's 'aim'. But what sort of endgames-cum-gambits are these? They include the temptation for Auden, Eliot, Pound, Wyndham Lewis and Lawrence to let their sense of what is poetically concrete be 'overwhelmed by /a/ secret yearning for a heroic public rhetoric of historic action'. It was 'a period when poets seemed imprisoned in their private worlds' (Woolf's 1932 point, exactly), so that 'their occasional acts of surrender to the excitement of a public world of action' are 'understandable'.[51] Woolf's social solitude belongs uneasily here: she prefers gesture to gesture politics.

Spender discusses why some writers of the twenties and thirties became involved in war, or else in writing in pointedly political ways as superior forms of action which permitted endorsement of, or opposition to, fascism. But Woolf's endgame likewise seems 'understandable'. She is sceptical about any society defining itself by the terms which Spender lists, distrusting patriotism's false community, widening the definition of fascism to include the home-grown kind, failing to see just how fascism was, perversely, to be fought by means of fascism. The sort of action which publics were becoming acclimatised to in the years up to 1939, she considered histrionic and small-boyish. Yet as an artist conscious of audience need, she expanded her appeal to scenic and dramatic sense, in discursive action asking for creative sympathy.

Woolf's tendency had for long been, since after The Voyage Out, not to turn her art over to any culturally diffused action rhetoric, but to seek a literary action mode, the drama, comprehending its praxes in her own. She believed that no future beckoned for the verse drama as practised by Eliot and Auden, but also that the genre was not dead: it had never really vanished, and enjoyed subterranean life in the novel. It so happens that the genre was not dead for political purposes, either. Gielgud's Lear at the Old Vic in the apocalyptic months of April and May, 1940, was escapist. Terence Hawkes avers:

> it would be mistaken to say that the 1940 Lear fails to offer a political reading of the play. For the Shakespeare Effect's apparent disengagement from everyday politics, and its anaesthetic commitment to the shadowy never-never land of Universal Human Nature constitutes and implements a political position of considerable power.

The same genre could, if needed, go into official reverse to render a more declarative politicisation:

> When we finally needed a precise and concrete commitment to a specific task, when an army and a people had to be convinced that an invasion of Europe was feasible and that an effete and cruel enemy could be materially defeated on the plains of northern France, then the Effect could be suspended and a production of a Shakespeare play could be overtly and precisely geared to connect with the politics of the time. The year was 1944, the occasion D-Day and its aftermath. Backed by Government funds, Olivier's film of Henry V spurred us, not out of ourselves, but into the final confrontation with the enemy.

This sort of indication that verse drama was alive suggested, paradoxically, that it was most alive as propaganda.[52] Shakespeare's lexical dalliance was celebrated as an alternative to the real world, or else linked to masculinist, real-world belligerence. The play was not the thing. But Woolf's insistence on the height of panoramic vision leads to Three Guineas's denunciation of universal fascism, at the same time as her literary art submits somewhat to being located within received notions of dramatic expressivity. This is not, therefore, a repudiation of common readers, or a spurning of the public realm. It is a retreat into the replenishing solitude which alone can save drama (Renaissance or otherwise) from pandering loudness; and her art moves to redeem the dramatic for a genuine, as opposed to a patriotically false, communality. The 1940 King Lear masked its commitment by pretending to a political passivity. The 1944 Henry V was openly politically active, but (pace Olivier's energy) it might be thought dramatically passive, since there was action far more urgent than the play's own. Woolf could not have been seduced by these active/passive oscillations. Her scepticism was proof against the pseudo-community which applauded either possibility. Importantly, the politicised Auden eventually left off composing verse-prose drama, but continued, in 1938 and thereafter, to endorse the goal of a lyrical comic-seriousness, holding that 'light verse' (a term he heavily modifies) is possible only in more settled and coherent communities:

> I suspect that without some undertone of the comic genuine serious verse cannot be written to-day.

Comic-seriousness and communality are interdependent, then, but satiric verse drama is not the genre which can speak to that communality.[53]

Like her own artistic generation, Woolf relegates political action in relation to art; but, like the younger anti-fascists, she is, to borrow Spender's words, 'persuaded that civilisation could only be saved by action'.[54] Her activity of writing therefore shows broad progression towards externality, and it is this which is further dramatised in the engaging verbal play.

Delight in the pure vocable is evident in Mrs Dalloway's old woman's song, hilarious and pathetic:

> ee um fah um so
> foo swee too eem oo (73)

It is there, too, in the girls' song at the end of The Years:

> Etho passo tanno hai,
> Fai donk to tu do,
> Mai to, kai to, lai to see,
> Toh dom to tuh do - (327)

This sonic subtext is what haunts all poetic minds, though never instantiated in any definitive form of words. The matter can be left there, even if traces of real language (in particular Greek) seem present, and if (maddeningly) it reminds one of something once heard but now unaccountably lost. It is pure surface action. What the audience of imagining readers may recognise in these ur-sounds' comic trochees is not really forehearable. One without French will hear Peggy's reading as surface, and so will any reader unable to pronounce or scan Sophocles's Greek (Y 292,315). To translate is not the invitation here, but to return to an earlier, though not more elementary, stage in our history as readers.

In discussing puns from The Years and Between the Acts, it is better not to dodge the problem of authorial control, the mode of aesthetic ordering which Freshwater lampoons. If we say that Woolf's narratorial punning leaves readers with things to do, that it therefore seeks no domain and forgoes manipulation, still, one cannot offer punning without indicating to readers what they are to think - once they detect the sleight. Has not Woolf posited of some of her words that they shall be puns? Then how are these to caricature denotation, when their own function has been denoted?

Woolf, agreeing with Meredith in 1905, says '"A witty woman ... is a treasure; a witty beauty is a power"', though she adds that 'no wit long outlives the echo of the voice that speaks it'. To return to a live metaphor encountered earlier in this discussion, that surely depends on the audience whose walls rebound the echo. Woolf's own punning depends on our receptivity. At any rate, Woolf - as writings, photographs, and others' impressions concur to show - was herself both beautiful and witty, and so powerful to that extent. This could, by no great stretch of imagination, have translated easily into a political force, in view of Leonard's contacts, influence, and activism. In one 1905 review, 'A Belle of the Fifties', Woolf writes of Virginia Clay-Clopton that she had 'real political power' not unrelated to her 'beauty, an impulsive wit, and great power of fascination' - the thrall, indeed, which held Leonard to courtship of his future wife and led him to sacrifice political power for her. 'Mrs Clay was famous for her wit ... and made so bold as to pun upon the English Ambassador's name when she asked him whether some lovely American lady was likely to be "Lyonised"'. But this dalliance could be thought nothing, force for force, against the imminent and bloody Civil War. Even so, to the front, and its centre of operations at Richmond, 'Mrs Clay ... brought some fine dresses... and with undaunted energy, The Rivals, in which she acted Mrs Malaprop, was given by the officers and their wives to the distant boom of the Northern guns'. Not headstrongly to force an allegory on the banks of the Nile, this is acting as displaced bellicose action, and Sheridan's spooneristic melodrama, with its masculinist buffoonery, was not ill at ease with those general aims, or with the aims of the generals. Without soldiers and soldiers' wives, not only could The Rivals not have been staged, but there could have been no theatre of war. The sexual and lexical power of women, Woolf would come to see, might choose other ends, though she enjoys Mrs Clay's spiritedness.[55]

As for punning in itself, does not R.A. Shoaf say, 'puns are about power - puns are power - and they unsettle those who want to be in control'? Derek Attridge also calls them 'the product of a context deliberately constructed to enforce an ambiguity'. Umberto Eco thinks punning 'a forced contiguity' which expresses 'the coercion to coexist'. And Redfern cites Annette Thau to show how puns 'can hardly be ambiguous or obscure: "The text's control of interpretation is complete," once the point is taken'. But Thau, in mentioning an entity which she names as 'text', really offers a third term between intention and reception; and it is in this textual mid-realm that puns denote or posit themselves. One cannot intend, or fail to intend, an _effective_ pun which does not draw notice inwards to itself, positing its materiality as against any putative signified.

This is, perhaps, the moment to return to Woolf's long evasion of Freud. _The Interpretation of Dreams_ and _The Psychopathology of Everyday Life_ are full of verbal cruces at the dreamwork's, or other, nodal points. Can Woolf really have been so close to Freudianism (her press famous for publishing him, Leonard proud of his own foresightedness) and not absorbed Freud's deployment of the pun as an interface of the conscious and unconscious?[56] But it has to be said that _Freud_ owed much to _artists_, while Woolf is shy of invasive determinisms.[57] She would not have needed Joel Fineman to caution her about the Bradshaw-like 'characteristically psychoanalytic rush to power'. She would have seen, with Vicki Mistacco, how Freud 'inserts puns into the hierarchical, binary system of the sign', in which the unconscious has 'the privileged status of a signified, in a word, of truth'. Woolf's laminating scepticism could not have settled for this. She did not in practice privilege inwardness as truer than outwardness. What is more, is privacy real, if Freud has explained it? Respecting the solitude of writer and reader means, practically, a certain tardiness about intrusive systematisations of the unconscious. Woolf did come around to reading Freud, but took her time: 'Began reading Freud last night ... Always take on new things'.[58] So, along with Woolf's marked puns, which on one reckoning are 'about power ... _are_ power', as Shoaf puts it, one ought to consider the much broader tendency of her _virtual_ punning, in those real verbal effects which it would be straining things to say she intended.[59]

To revert to the example used already in this chapter: in that diary entry which celebrates the end of Woolf's composing of _The Waves_, she writes, within very circumscribed narrative space, of:

> the end of The Waves ... the end, not merely finished ... I have netted that fin ... I was coming to an end of To the Lighthouse.

For the reader, multiple entendre is simply irresistable: fin (as image), fin (opening syllable of 'finished'), fin (French for 'end'). Yet it must be admitted that these phenomena are not proof of Woolf's having meant to make these puns. Something in the passage defers that kind of closure, though the materials for it are seductively present. Similar remarks would cover the 'quivering' pun in the bee-bag passage (where 'quivering' = a returning of arrows to their quiver; and trembling), and also the 'sale' pun from Jacob's Room.

There is likewise, in The Years, a 'Rose/rose' homophone which is as a matter of fact pervasive, its referents - the characters called Rose; the flower; the synonym for 'got up'; and clusters of associated references to pinkness, redness, blushing, and so forth - kept in play throughout:

> At length the moon rose ... He rose ... Mira ... got up ... The kettle/had/ a design of roses ... a little girl in a stiff pink frock came in ... a very large rose-sprinkled cup ... pinching Rose by the ear ... Martin got up ... The Colonel rose ... She got up ... The nurse rose ... Then she stood up. She rose ... Delia rose ... There were ... little pencilled roses to be worked. (6,9,10,11,12,14,16,18,20,22)

Nevertheless, it seems impossible to cite a passage which forces the reader to hear any such thing, even though the juxtapositions are often very close:

> Kitty got up ... 'I don't like to see your roses fade' ... Rose is dead, she thought - Rose who was about her own age ... her thoughts turned to Rose. Rose was dead. Rose who was about her own age ... She could see Rose /with/ her bright red hair. She could still see her blush ... He raised his cap ... men raising their hats ... Another man raised his hat ... a tall man ... raised his hat ... people on either side rose ... They were still rising ... everybody stood up ... A barrister had risen ... another barrister rose ... Morris himself got up ... She rose ... 'Tea, Rose?' ... 'Oh, Rose always was a firebrand!' said Martin. He got up ... If the bus stopped here, Rose thought, looking down over the side, she would get up. The bus stopped, and she rose. (64-68,85-87,120-122,124)

A Yeatsian echo is particularly strong in Sara's apostrophe - 'Rose of the flaming heart; Rose of the burning breast; Rose of the weary world - red, red Rose!' (127) - which probably alludes to 'Red Rose, proud

Rose, sad Rose of all my days!', and, 'Rose of all Roses, Rose of all the World!', in 'To the Rose Upon the Rood of Time' and 'The Rose of Battle', Ireland being understood under metaphor of Maud Gonne, the actress and activist. These are, at least, a few examples of what is meant; and while none is forcible, all are suggestive.[60]

This procedure differs from The Voyage Out's habit of prestructuring reader response by means of explicit encoding. Woolf's later praxes really show a saturated prefiguration which might even, in view of the collective influences, in and out of feminism, of Heidegger, Lacan, and Derrida, seem strange prophecies of fancy, were it not that these practitioners' punning is systematic and has, outside of very limited circles, helped cost them a wider audience. Keats is a better point of comparison. Christopher Ricks explains of him: 'Keats's mind, so alertly prefigurative, was especially liable to puns and to portmanteaux ... Keats ... knew that the imagination has its pre-intention'. This has strong family resemblance to Woolf's process approaching the end of The Waves : 'I seemed only to stumble after my own voice'.[61] So Woolf's marked puns emerge as intention from a pre-verbal pre-intentionality not entirely under her control. For this reason, much must hang upon readerly steeping in the surface erotics Woolf has both consciously and unconsciously provided.

Of course, no erotics which looks to enforce itself can be erotic in fact. Sympathy disappears if demanded. At this juncture, one can see the beauty of Garrett Stewart's reading of The Waves, when he demonstrates its tendency to give the base matter of paronomasia without closure, syllables detaching themselves and flaunting across intervening words, lines, and paragraphs, to be echoed and replicated elsewhere in other words. But Stewart has difficulty admitting that this cannot be a case of manipulation. Writing which achieved these effects entirely consciously, by deliberate controls, would seem self-caricaturing. In trying to handle this phenomenon, Stewart becomes muddled. He shows how 'it is only in the reading, and only in some sense aloud, that the textual syncopation is materialized to the ear - *and then only if the ear wants to hear it*'. This stylistics 'often falls at the lowest limit of intentionality, *a near accident* of voicing implicated but not legible in script'. The near-accidents are 'a *manipulation* of language' (emphases added). Usages like 'near accident' and 'manipulation' reveal the difficulty of letting go the notion of a fullness of intention. Yet we should let this go. It makes the difference between *The Waves*'s being sensual and forcible, or erotically rewarding.[62]

Woolf's true emotion, immersed in its material, moves towards the distant glimpsed fin. Much of what looks fiendishly clever is profoundly automatic, a sleepwalking lexicality like some deep undertow expressing its sociable froth of puns. If a sympathetic reader is willing to go under with the author, that reader is drenched. Possible puns, some fanciful, others trivial, still others the reader's own invention, flow freely in a fluency neither conscious nor otherwise. Woolf's marked puns break surface in this abyss, but only a desire to control her meaning would seize on them as the hermeneutic code which will explain her. One might play with them so as to angle a way of reading, then throw them back. They do exist; they give a specific signal; their explicitness is sometimes satiric. But they also come off a broad back, and are minor acts on that expanse, whose current they finally follow.

Borne by these points in mind, one might briefly look at how some verbal surfaces act, or how some verbal acts surface, in *The Years* and *Between the Acts*. 'Miriam Parrish was reading a letter', for example. 'Eleanor was blackening the strokes on her blotting-paper', bored at an activists' meeting. What 'strokes' these are, is revealed in their synonym: 'Why must we do it? Eleanor thought, drawing a spoke from the hole in the middle'. The strokes are a doodle, spokes radiating from a centre. But Hewitt misses the whole point of this passage:

> we are never told what the committee meeting is about ... The effect ... is not merely to assert that Virginia Woolf has no interest in the purpose of the committee and feels that we do not need to know what it is; it is also to make us feel, whether Virginia Woolf desires this or not ... that Eleanor herself has no interest [in] the committee.

However, we do know what the committee 'is': it is essentially a committee, and evidently uncongenial to Eleanor.[63] And so, 'Mr Spicer rose ... She made a note as Mr Spicer spoke', the comic narration doodling alliteratively. Eleanor is in two minds - one listening to Mr Spicer, the other, doodling and dawdling off into what else she could be doing.

> She drew a line on the blotting-paper. Now Pickford ... she said, looking up again. Mr Pickford spoke. She drew more spokes; blackened them.

Outside, pigeons croon, as they do throughout, their calls transliterated: 'Take two coos, take two coos, tak...', the nonce word mimetically broken. The 'tak...' form affects not pronunciation, but inflection, as pigeons abruptly stop in mid-song. In real life, one then has the comic impression that the birds could have gone on. This is in keeping with Eleanor's tapping into a public discourse, then, by way of alternative, into her own reserve.

'She drew another stroke' - and we are back with the originary word. Hence, 'she drew another stroke on the blotting-paper. The dot was now surrounded with strokes'. The spoke/spoke antanaclasis is clearly signalled, if evanescent. It is a fine stroke; but why should it occur at all? It appears within Eleanor's reverie, when the unsuitableness of political activism becomes apparent. Its own action-mode answers to her residual way of being, whereas action committees were something she never really rose to, even though Rose became an activist. Simultaneously, the pun seems as if mechanical and somewhat echoic, and it intimates a tedium. The script splits Eleanor in two and reads her. The signature is entirely narratorial. At no point does Eleanor rise into the consciousness that she is making, on paper, a visual pun which has a lexical analogue: the pun only surfaces into lexicality atop the surf of script, as surfeit not present to the fictive Eleanor. It is narrative's business, not hers, to be aware of this, and for the reader to see and hear, thereby recreating how 'she seemed able to divide herself into two', homophone-fashion. Rising to this activity means for the reader neither a passive nor an enforced spectation. If it asks sympathy, it gives back discursive action (Y 135-137).

In the final novel, which only partly, because not brought to a finish, achieves Woolf's ends, the script is strewn with exhibited sleights. Mrs Manresa, raiser of men, comes in a cloud of knowing, a flurry of Renaissance and modern bawdries - 'corkscrew', 'cocking', 'pricked', 'tossing', 'pinch', 'tart', 'stones', 'clapped' (BA 33,34, 35,37,40,63). Dodge, Page, and Budge sound Dickensian, or like Bottom's mechanicals. 'Sole' (the fish) and the 'soul' are ludicrously juxtaposed, but both are only dubiously fresh, and neither is solely itself, the witchlike Sands with her cat-familiar and her sandwiches brought into play alongside (15,16,27,28). La Trobe's script puns compulsively. The ground/ground homophone was noticed earlier. But there is also that 'Damon ... the dawn ... don ... adown' paronomasia which wilfully evokes Renaissance praxis, as does the sport with 'will' (volition/document of inheritance), these externals borrowing (they hope) reflected glory from past drama and meaning to mimic past communities of understanding which will in turn sharpen the mirror-satire at the end (93). Jazz rhythms are heard, like Eliot's Shakespeherian rag: 'What a jangle and a jingle!' - itself a jingle (133). La Trobe rails like Jacques against 'the lady of the manor - the upper class manner' so resented, in attempted social and political criticism (136).

The lyricism rises to meet the action La Trobe craves, as her rhetoric becomes obsessed with its lack of power to yield social effects. We laugh at her because she misses something essential: she hates the audience she so needs. But we do not finally disrespect her for failing to find means to her end, that of rendering art the antidote to modern life's fragmentation and its tragic loss of communality. If at the last she is as pathetic as she is comic, we feel this partly because the novel has habituated us to surfaces, and we have become spectators included by our sympathy in the fictive audience. Woolf's last fictions, then, show her getting into her stride. The inner logic of metaphor, the engagement of spectators, appeals to scenic sense, the provision of unsupported dialogue, narratorial abdications and invisible controls - are all present in *The Years* and *Between the Acts*. So is, more and more, the effect of 'humour', that tragicomic overview which bespeaks, and speaks to, solitude.

The sweep and particularity of the attempt are uttered in Virgilian and Marvellian 'sibyllants', units of sound dispersed at the site of saying, yet oracular and female. One can hear Tennyson's moan, in the 1923 *Freshwater*:

> Oh, oh, oh - twelve *s*'es in ten lines - twelve *s*'es in ten lines! The pro*sss*perity of the Briti*sss*h - the *sss*pawn of the Horse Marines - con*sss*umption of *sss*pirituous fi*sss*hes - Oh, oh, oh, I feel faint! (67)

Nevertheless:

> Out of these scatter'd *Sibyls* Leaves
> Strange *Prophecies* my Phancy weaves
>
> ...
>
> Thrice happy he who, not mistook,
> Hath read in *Natures mystick Book*.

Marvell's persona was there referring to those trees which held the birds singing to him in their 'most learned Original', the archaic speech of '*Rome, Greece, Palestine*'. 'A language one doesn't understand is always unaccented', Woolf wrote in her 1932 diary, 'sibyllant, soft, wavy, unidentifiable with words'. Woolf's punning in her books' leaves is strangely prophetic, not of meaning, but of the solitude of fancy itself, and it is not identifiable with her diction. If - on moving yet further into Marvell's book - one were to feel mystically or melodramatically dispirited by reading there this nice derangement of epitaphs:

> But, where the Floods did lately drown,
> There at the Ev'ning stake me down

it might be well to remember that, from the broadest tendency down to lexical sleight, Woolf's sense of an audience was gradually finding its end, and her game in that sense beginning, when between acts of necessary revision, and not for the first time, she became suicidal.[64]

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4. Jane Wheare, *Virginia Woolf: Dramatic Novelist*, pp. 84,85.

5. B.H. Fussell, 'Woolf's Peculiar Comic World: *Between the Acts*', in *VWRC*, pp. 263-83 (pp. 269,263,271).

6. The chapter on 'Solitude' assumes the reader's acquaintance with these pastorals: the group of 'Mower' poems, 'The Nymph complaining', 'The Coronet', 'The Garden', 'Bermudas', and 'Upon Appleton House'; and, in addition, 'To his Coy Mistress'.

7. *Orlando*, p. 143.

8. *D* II, pp. 151,152 (19 December 1921).

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The Sense of an Audience

1. I will say more in due course about Woolf's punning. At various points in the developing argument, starting here, Woolf's puns will be given freedom to speak for themselves.

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31. *D* V, pp. 215,301,306 (15 April 1939; 12,26 July 19 0); *D* I, pp. 153,217 (7 June, 15 November 1918).

32. *D* II, p. 302 (5 May 1924).

33. *L* V, pp. 227,229,230 (19 September, 7 October 1933).

34. '*Twelfth Night* at the Old Vic' (1933), in *DM*, pp. 34-37 (further references follow the text's citations). Lopokova was a famed ballerina.

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6. *D* IV, p. 238 (21 August 1934).

7. Q.D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public*, pp. 222,226.

8. Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, II, p. 180; John Mepham, 'Figures of desire: narration and fiction in *To the Lighthouse*', in *The Modern English Novel: the reader, the writer and the work*, pp. 149-85.

9. 'The Opera' (1909), in *EVW*, pp. 269-72 (p. 271).

10. 'Women and Fiction' (1929), in *GR*, pp. 76-84 (p. 79); 'A Summing Up' (c 1925), in *The Complete Shorter Fiction*, pp. 202-05 (p. 203).

11. 'Joseph Conrad', in *CR* I, pp. 223,226,227 (further references follow the text's citations).

12. Shirley Neuman, '*Heart of Darkness*, Virginia Woolf and the Spectre of Domination', in *Virginia Woolf: New Critical Essays* (hereafter *NCE*), pp. 57-76 (pp. 57,58).

13. Alex Zwerdling, *Virginia Woolf and the Real World*, p. 306.

14. *The Poems & Letters of Andrew Marvell*, I, p. 78 (all further references to Marvell's verse will cite page numbers from this edition, fuller details of which appear in the Bibliography); T.S. Eliot, *Collected Poems 1909-1962*, p. 17.

15. Douglas Hewitt, *English Fiction of the Early Modern Period 1890-1940*, p. 92.

16. *D* II, pp. 49,52 (23 June, 6 July 1920).

17. 'Joseph Conrad', p. 229.

18. J.A. Cope, *The Theatre and the Dream: From Metaphor to Form in Renaissance Drama*, pp. 100,116.

19. 'On Not Knowing Greek' (1925), in *CR* I, pp. 23-38 (pp. 24,25); *D* V, p. 347 (29 December 1940).

20. Judith Johnston, 'The Remediable Flaw: Revisioning Cultural History in *Between the Acts*', in *VWB*, pp. 253-77 (pp. 266,267).

21. Ann Lane, 'A Strength Won from Weakness: *Between the Acts*', *CR*, 26 (1984), pp. 101-13 (pp. 110,111); J. Brown, 'Eight Types of Puns', *PMLA*, 71 (1956), pp. 14-26 (p. 18); L. Marks, 'The Life of Riley', *Observer Magazine*, 2 July 1989, pp. 44-47 (pp. 45,47).

22. Walter Redfern, *Puns*, p. 101.

23. Sandra Gilbert, 'Woman's Sentence, Man's Sentencing: Linguistic Fantasies in Woolf and Joyce', in *VWB*, pp. 208-24 (p. 222); J. Johnston, in *VWB*, pp. 264-6.

24. P.J. Rabinowitz, '"What's Hecuba to Us?" The Audience's Experience of Literary Borrowing', in *The Reader in the Text*, pp. 241-63 (p. 258); L. Marin, 'Toward a Theory of Reading in the Visual Arts: Poussin's *The Arcadian Shepherds*', in *The Reader in the Text*, pp. 293-324 (p. 296) J. Dusinberre, *Alice to the Lighthouse*, p. 309; M. Minow-Pinkney, *Virginia Woolf and the Problem of the Subject*, p. 57.

25. Johnston mentions 'the final version' of *Between the Acts*, and it is clear what is meant by this expression. Scrupulous as it might seem, I prefer to insist that Woolf never got around to producing any version of this work which could, in her own opinion, be regarded as final (*VWB*, p. 267).

Humour

1. *D* III, p. 203 (7 November 1928); Carol Mackay, 'The Thackeray Connection: Virginia Woolf's Aunt Anny', in *VWB*, pp. 68-95 (p. 83).

2. Susanne Langer, 'The Comic Rhythm', in *Comedy: Developments in Criticism*, pp. 124-30 (p. 129).

3. *D* IV, pp. 347,295,309 (16 October, 2 April, 6 May 1935); Zwerdling, p. 45.

4. *D* V, pp. 214,215 (13 April 1939).

5. J.J. Wilson, 'Why is *Orlando* Difficult?', in *NFE*, pp. 178-84 (pp. 174, 175,179).

6. *D* II, pp. 17,65,71,72,73,270,299 (4 February, 15 September, 1 and 25 October 1920; 15 October 1923; 5 April 1924); 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street' (1925), in *The Complete Shorter Fiction*, pp. 146-53; Zwerdling, pp. 58,143; J. Gindin, 'Politics in Contemporary Woolf Criticism', *MLQ*, 47 (1986), pp. 422-32 (p. 426).

7. *D* III, p. 34 (27 June 1925).

8. Zwerdling, p. 22; Mason, p. 30; *A Room of One's Own*, p. 94.

9. Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p. 459.

10. F. Dürrenmatt, 'Comedy and the Modern World', in *Comedy: Developments in Criticism*, pp. 131-4 (p. 133); *The Art of the Novel*, pp. 109,116, 113,106,112.

11. *D* II, pp. 321,251,272,263 (1 November 1924; 8 July, 15 October and 30 August 1923).

12. For instances of Woolf's resort to the common synonym ('humour' = 'comedy'), see *D* I, pp. 192,196 (10 and 23 September 1918); *D* II, pp. 26, 27 (18 March and 10 April 1920); *D* III, p. 24 (20 May 1925): these examples are not exhaustive, and were chosen at random.

13. *D* II, pp. 166,162 (16 and 14 February 1922).

14. *D* III, p. 17 (9 May 1925).

15. *D* IV, p. 158 (15 May 1933).

16. *D* I, pp. 255,256 (19 March 1919).

17. K. Stierle, 'The Reading of Fictional Texts', in *The Reader in the Text*, pp. 83-105 (p. 105).

18. *D* III, p. 299 (4 April 1930).

19. *D* V, p. 135 (26 April 1938).

20. 'The Value of Laughter' (1905), in *EVW*, pp. 58-60 (further references follow the text's citations).

21. George Meredith, 'An Essay on Comedy and the Uses of the Comic Spirit', in *Comedy: Developments in Criticism*, pp. 57-61 (pp. 58,59).

22. Kierkegaard, pp. 464,491; C.I. Glicksberg, *The Tragic Vision in Twentieth-Century Literature*, p. 151.

23. *A Room of One's Own*, pp. 93,94.

24. R.G. Collins, 'Nineteenth Century Literary Humour: The Wit and Wisdom of Wiser Men?', *Mosaic*, 9 (1976), pp. 1-42 (p. 21).

25. I. Donaldson, 'Justice in the Stocks', in *Comedy: Developments in Criticism*, pp. 103-14 (pp. 112,113).

26. DiBattista, pp. 193,194,221; R.B. Henkle, 'Spitting Blood and Writing Comic: Mid-Century British Humour', *Mosaic*, 9 (1976), pp. 77-90 (p 90).

27. 'Laughter', in *EVW*, pp. 58,59,60; Kierkegaard, p. 465.

28. Christine Brooke-Rose, 'The Readerhood of Man', in *The Reader in the Text*, pp. 120-48 (p. 123).

29. 'Rachel', in *EVW*, pp. 351,352,353,354; Charlotte Brontë, *Villette*, pp. 341,342.

30. Kierkegaard, p. 408.

31. Madeline Moore, 'Some Female Versions of Pastoral: *The Voyage Out* and Matriarchal Mythologies', in *NFE*, pp. 82-104 (pp. 94,95,97).

32. Eric Bentley, 'On the Other Side of Despair', in *Comedy: Developments in Criticism*, pp. 135-50 (p. 148).

33. Mason, p. 161.

34. 'Laughter', in *EVW*, p. 59; 'Sheridan' (1909), in *EVW*, pp. 303-15 (p. 308).

35. 'An Andalusian Inn' (1905), in *EVW*, pp. 49-52.

36. Virginia Blain, 'Narrative Voice and the Female Perspective in Virginia Woolf's Early Novels', in *NCE*, pp. 115-36 (p. 131).

37. Blain, p. 129; Hewitt, pp. 125,126; Deborah Guth, '"What a Lark! What a Plunge!": Fiction as Self-Evasion in *Mrs Dalloway*', *MLR*, 84 (1989), pp. 18-25 (pp. 21,22).

38. Blain, p. 120.

39. Barbara Hill Rigney, '"A Wreath Upon the Grave": The Influence of Virginia Woolf on Feminist Critical Theory', in *Criticism and Critical Theory*, pp. 73-82 (further references follow the text's citations).

40. John Mepham, 'Mourning and Modernism', in *NCE*, pp. 137-56 (pp. 143,144); Tony Davenport, 'The Life of Monday or Tuesday', in *NCE*, pp. 157-75 (pp. 157,158,161,162,166,167).

41. *The Complete Shorter Fiction*, p. 141; Paul Taylor, 'Waiting in the Wings', *The Independent*, 22 July 1989, p. 32.

42. Nancy Topping Bazin, *Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision*, pp. 80, 81.

43. J.J. Wilson, in *NFE*, p. 180.

44. M. Bakhtin, 'Comedy and Carnival Tradition', in *Comedy: Developments in Criticism*, pp. 95-102 (p. 97).

45. Rigney, pp. 77,79,80,81.

46. H. Cixous, 'Reaching the Point of Wheat, or A Portrait of the Artist as a Maturing Woman', NLH, 19 (1987), pp. 1-21 (p. 2).

Imagining Readers

1. 'A Sketch of the Past' (1939,1940), in Moments of Being (hereafter MB), pp. 74-159 (p. 74).

2. 'Reminiscences' (1908), in MB, pp. 32-69 (p. 42).

3. Bell, I, pp. 38,39 (compare Gordon, p. 25: 'All through Virginia's childhood ... her father was grinding out immense numbers of biographies').

4. 'Sketch', in MB, p. 94 (see also Gordon, p. 28, who calls To the Lighthouse 'a curious biographic experiment').

5. MB, p. 72.

6. 'The Bluest of the Blue' (1906), in EVW, pp. 112-14 (p. 112).

7. 'Coniston' (1906), in EVW, pp. 115-16 (pp. 115,116).

8. 'The Glen o' Weeping' (1907), in EVW, pp. 138-9 (p. 138).

9. 'Philip Sidney' (1907), in EVW, pp. 139-43 (p. 142).

10. 'A Swan and Her Friends' (1907), in EVW, pp. 150-54 (pp. 151,152).

11. 'A Vanished Generation' (1908), in EVW, pp. 239-42 (pp. 241,242).

12. 'Taylors and Edgeworths' (1924), in CR I, pp. 106-17.

13. 'Sterne' (1909), in EVW, pp. 280-8 (further references follow the text's citations).

14. 'Sketch', in MB, p. 74.

15. 'Sterne', pp. 280,281.

16. 'The New Biography' (1927), in GR, pp. 149-55 (further references follow the text's citations).

17. 'The New Biography', pp. 153,150,151,152,154,155.

18. 'The Art of Biography' (1939), in DM, pp. 119-26.

19. 'A Talk About Memoirs' (1920), in GR, pp. 156-61 (p. 157).

20. Gordon, pp. 7,8.

21. 'A Talk', p. 158.

22. Gordon, p. 85.

23. NFE, p. xiv.

24. J. Little, 'Jacob's Room as Comedy: Woolf's Parodic Bildungsroman', in NFE, pp. 105-24 (further references follow the text's citations).

25. D II, pp. 13,14 (26 January 1920).

26. F. Kazan, 'Description and the Pictorial in Jacob's Room', ELH, 55 (1988), pp. 701-19 (further references follow the text's citations).

27. D III, pp. 189,190 (12 August 1928).

28. Little, pp. 106,118,109; Kazan, pp. 704,715.

29. Gordon, p. 170 (see also 'Our Silent Life: Virginia Woolf and T.S. Eliot', in NCE, pp. 77-95 (p. 84); and 'A Writer's Life', in Virginia Woolf: A Centenary Perspective, pp. 56-68 (p. 61)).

30. J. Marcus, '"Taking the Bull by the Udders": Sexual Difference in Virginia Woolf - a Conspiracy Theory', in VWB, pp. 146-69 (p. 166); D. Dowling, 'Virginia Woolf's Own Jacob's Room', SR, 15 (1982), pp. 60-72 (p. 67).

31. 'A Woman's College from Outside' (c 1920), in The Complete Shorter Fiction, pp. 139-42 (further references follow the text's citations).

32. The Complete Shorter Fiction, pp. 294,295.

33. 'Laughter', pp. 58,59,60.

34. The Complete Shorter Fiction, pp. 141,139,140,142.

35. VWB, pp. 164,165.

36. The Complete Shorter Fiction, pp. 33-62, 63-73; and CR I, pp. 106-33 (further references follow the text's citations).

37. Gordon, p. 168.

38. Mason, p. 106.

39. Baldry, p. 49.

40. The Complete Shorter Fiction, pp. 80,82,83; A Room of One's Own, p. 81.

41. The Complete Shorter Fiction, pp. 87,108,109,111,112.

42. The Complete Shorter Fiction, pp. 35,61,56,57,58.

43. The Complete Shorter Fiction, pp. 68, 70,73,71; Q.D. Leavis, 'Caterpillars of the Commonwealth Unite!', Scrutiny, 7 (1938), pp. 203-14; The English Auden, p. 280:

> Do not speak of a change of heart, meaning five hundred a year and a room of one's own,
> As if that were all that is necessary. In these islands alone there are some forty-seven million hearts, each of four chambers:
> You cannot avoid the issue by becoming simply a community digger,
> O you who prattle about the wonderful Middle Ages: You who expect the millenium after a few trifling adjustments.

Paul Fussell similarly misapprehends Woolf. He points out that, during 1940, 'it was easily believed' that German paratroopers had infiltrated the country dressed as nuns. So, 'it is not particularly surprising that so bright an observer as Virginia Woolf once insisted to Leonard "in a stage whisper" that a nun who had entered their railway carriage was really "a Nazi paratrooper in disguise" ' ('Anybody here seen Kelly?', The Guardian, 29 August 1989, p. 21).

44. CR I, pp. 113,112,117,119,120,118,122.

45. Gordon, p. 171.

46. Ellen Moers, Literary Women, p. 149.

47. Redfern, p. 47.

48. William Empson, 'Virginia Woolf', *PNR*, 13 (1986), pp. 29-32 (p. 31).

Solitude

1. 'Narrow Bridge', p. 18.

2. 'Narrow Bridge', p. 22.

3. T.S. Eliot, 'Andrew Marvell' (1921), in *Selected Prose*, pp. 161-71 (p. 162).

4. V. Sackville-West and H. Nicolson, *Another World Than This...*, p. 131.

5. *D* III, p. 203 (7 November 1928).

6. 'Phases of Fiction' (1929), in *GR*, pp. 93-145 (further references follow the text's citations).

7. 'Phases', pp. 101,102,106,108,110,111,112,117,122,123,125,135,136,137, 138,139,140,109.

8. 'Flumina Amem Silvasque' (1917), in *BP*, pp. 190-93 (pp. 192,193).

9. 'Mr Kipling's Notebook' (1920), in *BP*, pp. 80-83 (p. 81).

10. *D* I, pp. 178,179 (4 August 1918).

11. 'Donne After Three Centuries' (1932), in *The Common Reader: Second Series* (hereafter *CR* II), pp. 24-39 (pp. 25,29,35,36).

12. 'These are the Plans' (1919), in *BP*, pp. 114-17 (pp. 114,115,116,117).

13. 'Mr Sassoon's Poems' (1917,1918), in *BP*, pp. 118-22 (pp. 118,119,120, 121).

14. *D* I, p. 193 (10 September 1918).

15. 'The Intellectual Imagination' (1919), in *BP*, pp. 111-13 (pp. 111,112).

16. 'Rupert Brooke'(1918), in *BP*, pp. 105-10 (pp. 108,109).

17. *D* I, pp. 218,219 (15 November 1918); *D* II, pp. 68,178 (20 September 1920; 23 June 1922); *D* I, p. 223 (3 December 1918).

18. *D* I, pp. 180,181 (7,8 August 1918).

19. 'Narrow Bridge', p. 18.

20. 'Aurora Leigh' (1931), in *CR* II, pp. 202-13 (pp. 203,208,209,210,211, 213).

21. 'Narrow Bridge', p. 23.

22. 'Elizabethan Play', p. 54; 'Modern Fiction', pp. 149,150,152.

23. 'Impassioned Prose' (1926), in *GR*, pp. 32-40 (pp. 32,33,35,40).

24. 'Phases', p. 143.

25. *D* III, pp. 203,131 (7 November 1928; 4 March 1927).

26. 'Phases', p. 136.

27. Eliot, *Selected Prose*, p. 162.

28. 'Emerson's Journals' (1910), and 'Thoreau' (1917), in *BP*, pp. 84-98, 90-98 (further references follow the text's citations).

29. L. Buell, *Literary Transcendentalism*, pp. 97,159,163.

30. *D* I, p. 80 (22 November 1917).

31. Buell, pp. 77,100,131,157.

32. 'Emerson's Journals', pp. 88,85,86,87,89.

33. Buell, pp. 81,89,91.

34. 'Self-Reliance', in *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, pp. 18-38 (p. 37).

35. *D* I, p. 59, ftn. 16 (14 October 1917).

36. *D* I, pp. 10,35 (6 January, 15 February 1915).

37. 'Thoreau', pp. 90,91,92,93,95,96,97,98.

38. Eliot, *Selected Prose*, p. 161.

39. V. Sackville-West, *Andrew Marvell* (references follow the text's citations).

40. Rachel Bowlby, *Virginia Woolf: Feminist Destinations*, pp. 142,143; J. Marcus, 'Thinking Back Through our Mothers', in *NFE*, p. 6.

41. *D* II, p. 114 (29 April 1921).

42. *D* I, p. 304 (7 October 1919).

43. 'Upon Appleton House', in Margoliouth, pp. 76,77.

44. Roger Poole, *The Unknown Virginia Woolf*, p. 180.

45. 'On Not Knowing Greek', p. 28.

46. 'The Garden', p. 50.

47. 'Upon Appleton House', pp. 61-7; 'The Garden', p. 49; 'Bermudas', pp. 17,18; 'The Nymph complaining for the death of her Faun', pp. 22-24.

48. B.K. Scott acknowledges and explicates this pun, but somewhat unsurely: 'The original pun has the additional dimension of metonymy, where Holmes becomes the architecture those of his profession have constructed to confine and convert mental and verbal disorder. Woolf's choice of a male outsider as punster may indicate a connection of word play with male expression. Woolf was capable of such punning in her letters, most notably in reaction to Wyndham Lewis' attack on her feminine version of modernism'. Scott's linkage of punning with masculinism would not please the practitioners of *écriture féminine*; but her comments on metonymy are useful ('The Word Split its Husk: Woolf's Double Vision of Modernist Language', *MFS*, 34 (1988), pp. 371-85 (p. 378)).

49. 'The Garden', p. 49.

50. Sackville-West, pp. 39,62,63.

51. Elam, p. 143; Henke, in *NFE*, pp. 125,126,145.

52. *D* III, p. 44 (24 September 1925); *D* IV, p. 56 (27 December 1931); *D* V, p. 222 (29 January 1939); 'The Coronet', p. 14.

53. *D* III, pp. 51,52,113,114,118 (7,21 December 1925; 30 September, 30 October, 23 November 1926); 'To his Coy Mistress', pp. 26,27; 'The Nymph complaining', pp. 22-24; 'The Garden', p. 49; 'Bermudas', pp. 17,18.

54. Sackville-West, pp. 38,39.

55. *D* III, pp. 196,209,236,241,251,255-7,285 (10 September, 28 November 1928; 23 June, 15 August, 4,21,22,25 September 1929; 26 January 1930); 'Upon Appleton House', pp. 70,71.

56. 'Upon Appleton House', pp. 79,80,68-70; 'The Garden', p. 49; *D* III, pp. 300,317 (11 April, 8 September 1930).

57. *D* IV, pp. 49,47,79,40 (17,9 October 1931; 26 February 1932; 14 September 1925).

58. *D* II, p. 322 (18 November 1924).

59. 'Upon Appleton House', p. 77; *D* IV, p. 117 (14 July 1932).

60. 'The Garden', p. 48.

61. 'Upon Appleton House', pp. 79,80,77; 'The Garden', p. 49.

62. Sackville-West, p. 18.

63. P.R. Nashashibi, 'Alive and There: Virginia Woolf's Presentation of Reality', *DQ*, 7 (1977), pp. 184-99 (pp. 191,192).

64. Sackville-West, pp. 60,61.

65. 'The Garden', p. 50; 'The Mower against Gardens', pp. 40,41.

66. Sara Ruddick, 'Private Brother, Public World', in *NFE*, pp. 185-215 (p. 201).

67. Sackville-West, pp. 52,59,60.

68. *D* IV, p. 132 (19 December 1932).

69. 'The Garden', p. 49.

70. 'Upon Appleton House', pp. 68,69; 'The Garden', p. 50; *D* IV, p. 109 (13 June 1932).

71. Avital Ronell, '*Le Sujet Suppositaire*: Freud and Rat Man', in *On Puns: The Foundation of Letters*, pp. 115-39 (p. 121); Frederick Ahl, 'Ars Est Caelare Artem (Art in Puns and Anagrams Engraved)', in *On Puns*, pp. 17-43 (p. 25).

72. 'Hortus', p. 51; 'The Garden', p. 50 (this insight could not have occurred to me, and I owe it to the late John Norton-Smith, formerly Professor of English Literature at the University of Dundee).

73. Forster, p. 37.

74. Garrett Stewart, 'Catching the Stylistic D/rift: Sound Defects in *The Waves*', *ELH*, 54 (1987), pp. 421-61 (pp. 436,437).

75. S.J. Miko, 'Reflections on The Waves: Virginia Woolf at the Limits of her Art', Criticism, 30 (1988), pp. 63-90 (pp. 76,84).

76. Miko, p. 77.

78. Steiner, pp. 138,139.

79. D IV, p. 47 (8 October 1931).

80. A. Sinfield, Dramatic Monologue, p. 64.

81. DiBattista, pp. 188,189.

Fin

1. Arthur Koestler, The Act of Creation, pp. 315,316.

2. Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, pp. 403-13.

3. 'The Supernatural in Fiction' (1918), in GR, pp. 61-4 (p. 62).

4. L III, pp. 134,135.

5. R. Poole, The Unknown Virginia Woolf; S. Trombley, 'All That Summer She Was Mad': Virginia Woolf and her Doctors.

6. 'A Summing Up' (c 1925), in The Complete Shorter Fiction, pp. 202-05 (pp. 203,204,202).

7. Freshwater, pp. 50,51.

8. Freshwater, pp. 48,49.

9. Erich Fromm, To Have or to Be?, pp. 26-28; Freshwater, pp. 45,46,47.

10. Hermione Lee, The Novels of Virginia Woolf, p. 87.

11. M. Bradbrook, 'Notes on the Style of Mrs. Woolf', Scrutiny, 1 (1932), pp. 33-38 (p. 38); A Room of One's Own was staged at The Playhouse in Northumberland Avenue, London, between 5-24 June 1989, with Patrick Garland adapting and directing, and Eileen Atkins playing Woolf.

12. 'The Lady in the Looking-Glass: A Reflection' (1929), in The Complete Shorter Fiction, pp. 215-19.

13. 'The Duchess and the Jeweller' (1938), in The Complete Shorter Fiction, pp. 242-7 (p. 242).

14. 'Thomas Hood' (1908), in EVW, pp. 159-64 (further references follow the text's citations).

15. Kierkegaard, Either/Or, I, p. 35.

16. S. Hynes, The Auden Generation, pp. 323,23,50; S. Spender, 'The Poetic Dramas of W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood', in The Thirties and After, pp. 54-61 (pp. 56,57).

17. Steiner, p. 322.

18. Hynes, pp. 196,197,257,193,255,104.

19. 'A Letter to a Young Poet' (1932), in DM, pp. 132-44 (further references follow the text's citations).

20. Spender, 'Notes on Revolutionaries and Reactionaries' (1967), in *The Thirties and After*, pp. 186-208 (p. 190); Hynes, p. 393.

21. Spender, 'The Poetic Dramas of W.H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood', in *The Thirties and After*, p. 60; Hynes, p. 77.

22. 'A Letter', pp. 134,140,142.

23. T. Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics* (references follow the text's citations).

24. See my comments on Jane Wheare in the Preface, pp. i,ii.

25. J. Sturrock, *Structuralism*, p. 145.

26. Moi, pp. 1,18,3,7,16,17,14,12,13,73; Carolyn Heilbrun, 'The Politics of Mind: Women, Tradition and the University', *PLL*, 24 (1988), pp. 231-44 (p. 234); Minow-Pinkney, p. 98.

27. W. Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, p. 88; Marcus, in *VWB*, p. 148; *The New Feminist Criticism*, p. 9; *New French Feminisms*, pp. 32,33.

28. S.D. Shattuck, 'The Stage of Scholarship: Crossing the Bridge from Harrison to Woolf', in *VWB*, pp. 278-98 (pp. 283,290,291,294,296).

29. H. Groen, 'The Problematic Nature of the Feminist Criticism of Virginia Woolf', *DQ*, 16 (1986), pp. 109-24 (p. 113); P. Waugh, *Feminine Fictions*, pp. 88-125.

30. Zwerdling, p. 31.

31. Gindin, p. 422.

32. J. Tompkins, 'Me and My Shadow', *NLH*, 19 (1987), pp. 167-78 (p. 174); E. Messer-Davidow, 'Knowing Ways: A Reply to My Commentators', *NLH*, 19 (1987), pp. 187-94 (pp. 192,193).

33. V. Blain, in *NCE*, p. 131.

34. Bowlby, p. 80.

35. *D* III, pp. 139,160,285,332,336 (18 June, 5 October 1927; 26 January, 11 November, 12 December 1930).

36. *D* III, p. 10 (7 February 1931).

37. 'Sheridan', pp. 306,307,308,309.

38. Redfern, p. 63; Henkle, p. 81.

39. Empson, *Seven Types*, pp. 109,110,103; Forster, p. 115.

40. 'Thomas Hood', pp. 160,161,162.

41. Deborah Cameron, *Feminism and Linguistic Theory*, p. 166.

42. J. Kristeva, 'Oscillation du "pouvoir" au "refus"', in *New French Feminisms*, pp. 165-7 (p. 166).

43. I do not claim to be aware of every pun which ever occurs in Woolf. Thus I was blind to certain macaronics in *Mrs Dalloway* which Patricia Clements notes in passing ('fawn/*faune*' - after Mallarmé, and 'eclair/*éclair*', *MD*, pp. 117-20). Yet I would claim that the summary I offer is broadly trustworthy (P. Clements, '"As in the rough stream of a glacier": Virginia Woolf's Art of Narrative Fusion', in *NCE*, pp. 11-31 (p. 28)).

44. *D* I, p. 238 (('Am I jealous? Do I compare the 6 editions of Eminent Victorians with the one of The Voyage Out?') 31 January 1919); *D* I, pp. 259,307,315,318,280 (27 March, 23 October, 28 November, 28 December, 10 June 1919); W.B. Yeats, 'A People's Theatre: A Letter to Lady Gregory', in *A Modernist Reader*, pp. 79-83; compare Yeats, 'The Irish Dramatic Movement', in *Autobiographies*, pp. 559-72; M. Schmidt, *An Introduction to 50 Modern British Poets*, pp. 50,51,53,56; T.S. Eliot, 'Yeats', in *Selected Prose*, pp. 248-57 (p. 257); D. Donoghue, *Yeats*, pp. 99,109, 110,114; M. Hamburger, *The Truth of Poetry*, pp. 82,86,87.

45. *D* II, pp. 38 and ftn,67,68,55,56,14,51,35,261,259,265,178 (15 May, 17 September, 5 August, 26 January, 6 July, 8 May 1920 17 August, 28 July, 5 September 1923; 23 June 1922).

46. Dusinberre, p. 48.

47. N.F. Blake, *Shakespeare's Language*, pp. 19,25,27.

48. *D* III, p. 182 (24 April 1928); Redfern, p. 41; *D* I, p. 184 (19 August 1918).

49. Redfern, pp. 26,28.

50. *D* III, pp. 109,106,117,132,153,162,164,176,177,200,198,201,212,208,209, 222,229,101,285,311 (13,3,5 September, 23 November 1926; 26 March, 4 September, 22 October, 20 November 1927; 18 March, 27 October, 22 September, 7 November, 18 December, 28 November 1928; 13 April, 28 May 1929; 25 July 1926; 26 January, 6 August 1930).

51. Spender, pp. 188,189,203.

52. T. Hawkes, 'Battle of the Bard', *Weekend Guardian*, 11-12 February 1989, pp. 20,21 (p. 21).

53. 'Light Verse' (1938), in *The English Auden*, pp. 363-8; *Collected Poems*, p. 643.

54. Spender, p. 208.

55. 'Their Passing Hour' (1905), in *EVW*, pp. 61-65 (p. 61); 'A Belle of the Fifties' (1905), in *EVW*, pp. 17-22 (pp. 17,18,19,20).

56. Freud, *Dreams*, pp. 37,173,262.

57. Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, p. 271: 'psychoanalytic observation must concede priority to imaginative writers. It can only repeat what they have said long ago'.

58. *D* V, p. 248 (2 December 1939).

59. R.A. Shoaf, 'The Play of Puns in Late Middle English Poetry: Concerning Juxtology', in *On Puns*, pp. 44-61 (p. 44); D. Attridge, 'Unpacking the Portmanteau, or Who's Afraid of *Finnegans Wake*?', in *On Puns*, pp. 140-55 (p. 141); G. Ulmer, 'The Puncept in Grammatology', in *On Puns*, pp. 164-89 (p. 173); Redfern, p. 98; J. Fineman, '"The Pas de Calais": Freud, the Transference and the Sense of Woman's Humour', in *On Puns*, pp. 100-14 (p. 111); V. Mistacco, 'The Theory and Practice of Reading Nouveaux Romans: Robbe-Grillet's *Topologie d'une cité fantôme*', in *The Reader in the Text*, pp. 371-400 (pp. 393,394).

60. W.B. Yeats, *Collected Poems*, pp. 35,42.

61. Christopher Ricks, *Keats and Embarrassment*, pp. 69-73; *D* IV, p. 10 (7 February 1931).

62. Stewart, pp. 445,423.

63. Hewitt, p. 126.

64. Virgil, Aeneid, pp. 88,89,149; 'Upon Appleton House', p. 77; D IV, p. 99 (10 May 1932).

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