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Virginia Woolf and the Mediated Modern Subject: Class System, Spacetime, and the Aesthetics  
of Creative Labor

By

David Del Rey Menilla

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

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Committee in charge:

Professor Ann M Banfield, Chair

Professor Dorothy J Hale

Professor Pheng Cheah

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Virginia Woolf and the Mediated Modern Subject: Class System, Spacetime, and the Aesthetics of Creative Labor

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## Abstract

### Virginia Woolf and the Mediated Modern Subject: Class System, Spacetime, and the Aesthetics of Creative Labor

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David Del Rey Menilla

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Growing up in a privileged home but also existing “outside” it gave Woolf the space and time to look critically at the social forces of repression and oppression which structured her reality. As a self-described “outsider,” Woolf formed her social critique through an engagement with political as well as new scientific ideas. I discuss the synergy she sees between Marx’s work and Einstein’s theories of Special and General Relativity. I argue that Woolf combines Marx’s interest in the cultivation of our natural desires, the return to the body, as the way out of estranged labour—the ideology of private property—with Einstein’s idea of *spacetime*, in which time is relative, which for Woolf means that characters are not confined to the “present” but can re-experience the past or even the future. Woolf presents characters whose minds and bodies can encompass a vast expanse of *spacetime*. For Einstein, the notions of the past, present, and future are a figment of our imaginations. Where we are in time is a function of where we are in space. Woolf plays with Einstein’s theories to portray characters like Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe in *To The Lighthouse* who are able to revisit the past through their labor—making “patterns.” The rhythmical quality of what I define as their “creative labor,” a Marxist notion of being in the body, allows them to overcome the physical and mental boundaries of abstract space and time which structures religious and capitalist social relations.

In many ways, we can think of Einstein as representing a further development of Marx’s ideas since the abstract notions of space and time which structure religion and capitalism also structure the Enlightenment’s pursuit of knowledge. The various systematic forms of repression which are rooted in religion and develop further in capitalism have neglected the body and instilled the belief in abstract, mediated, truths. Not bound by the narrowness of the “present,” and the momentary illusion of power promised by the class system, Woolf’s characters are able to revisit and deconstruct the causes of trauma. Free from the boundaries which keep them apart from themselves and others, they are now able to connect intimately with others across *spacetime*. They are able to use other senses to relate to others. Woolf shows characters who can feel and think what other characters experience. Capitalist social relations based on establishing distinct economic boundaries between the self and others are transformed into fluid boundaries of embodied exchange. The self becomes part of a larger whole where social

relations shift away from what Marx calls egotistical, “*vulgar need*” (90), to the recognition that we need others to develop our latent powers. For Marx as for Woolf, “human essence” (89) is creative; the selfishness which Freud ascribes to the libido only exists as a basic human need to survive.<sup>1</sup> The selfish ego is not innate but a product of socio-historical forces. I discuss how Woolf, synthesizing Marx and Einstein, shows characters who can deconstruct the past in order to reconnect with their creative essence.

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<sup>1</sup> “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844,” *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1978)

For my parents, whose journey paved the way.

## Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations:	iii
Introduction:	iv
Chapter One: Mediation and the Class System:	1
Chapter Two: <i>Spacetime</i> in <i>Mrs. Dalloway</i> :	56
Chapter Three: Creating Intimacy in <i>To The Lighthouse</i> :	87
Works Cited:	134
Appendix:	140

## List of Abbreviations

<i>1844</i>	<i>Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</i>
<i>GI</i>	<i>The German Ideology</i>
<i>MD</i>	<i>Mrs. Dalloway</i>
<i>TTL</i>	<i>To The Lighthouse</i>
<i>BPP</i>	<i>Beyond the Pleasure Principle</i>



## Introduction

A human being is part of the whole, called by us “Universe”; a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest—a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely but the striving for such achievement is, in itself, a part of the liberation and a foundation for inner security.

Albert Einstein<sup>2</sup>

In many ways, this dissertation addresses the question of what we know and how we know it. For Woolf, growing up in a patriarchal society, access to knowledge was limited. It was the domain of men. While her father played an important role in her early education, Woolf was largely self-taught. The breadth of her knowledge is reflected in her writing which is filled with literary allusions. At first glance, this investment in scholarly citation would seem to suggest that Woolf was compensating for the lack of access to knowledge she experienced in her youth. But Woolf’s display of learning suggests a positive project that reaches beyond biographical limits. Her work was not a show of knowledge but an “attempt at something,”<sup>3</sup> as Lily says in *To The Lighthouse*, while finishing her painting. And that “something” is to reverse the long tradition of repression of the mind and body in Western reality. Woolf seeks to liberate the repressed desires of the individual, what Marx calls the “*natural powers of life*...forces [which] exist in him [and her] as tendencies and abilities—as *impulses*.”<sup>4</sup> Woolf, like Marx, stresses the importance that the development of the senses—“the objectification of the human essence” (89)—plays in subverting the dominant model of oppressive, capitalist social relations.

Woolf’s definition of desire can be seen in opposition to Freud, who locates desire in the selfish impulses of the libido. The infant’s need for immediate gratification differentiates into proper object cathexis of the mother, and so on, through the introduction of repression. Woolf, I argue, sees the mediating values of repression as being oppressive by nature. It is in his later work in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, where Freud attempts to come to terms with the

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<sup>2</sup> From Louise Westling, “Virginia Woolf and the Flesh of the World,” *New Literary History*, Vol. 30, No. 4, Case Studies (Autumn, 1999), 855.

<sup>3</sup> *To the Lighthouse* (New York: Harcourt, 1981), 208.

<sup>4</sup> *1844*, 115

repetition-compulsion of traumatic events, that we can locate Woolf's own psychoanalytic project. Freud first explains the repetition of traumatic events as the desire to die, the Death instinct, the instinctual desire to return to an inorganic state of rest. He later adds to this a psychological explanation that the repetition of traumatic events is the subject's desire to master the repressed experience of loss while still maintaining the conditions of repression. In other words, the subject desires to experience the repressed desires of the Id while *imagining* that *it* has brought about their original loss, the introduction of the Ego. Instead of repression being "imposed" on the subject, by becoming an active participant in the experience of loss, he/she controls the mechanism of repression. But since Freud argues that the desires of the body remain inaccessible, they can only be experienced through the mediated, socially acceptable behaviors, defense mechanisms of the Ego—projection, displacement, etc. Thus Freud concludes that the "organism [which] wishes to die only in its own fashion" (614), is moved by the forces of Thanatos, death and destruction in constant struggle with the forces of Eros, life, creativity, community, co-operation, etc.<sup>5</sup> The duality of Eros and Thanatos structures our existence.

Yet, I argue that the parallel that Freud draws in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* between Eros and the sadistic impulse, the self-mastery of the repressed turned outward, suggests that the values which inform social relations are not those of Eros but of Thanatos. Freud argues that the sadistic impulse only appears in a "minority of individuals" and "only in rare cases that the *economic* situation appears to favor the production of the phenomenon" (616). By situating the emergence of the sadistic instinct in an "*economic* situation," Freud seemingly inadvertently aligns his thinking with Marx and Nietzsche who claim that the emergence of the priest coincides with the transvaluation of social values, the good, "abstract" values of society over and against the "bad" desires of the body. The values that structure social relations in Western society, and which I contend inform Freud's definition of repression—what it means to become socialized—are based on the attempt to master the repressed experience of religious loss, a loss which is then projected on others directly or through systems of oppression. This places Freud's developmental process, the psychological repression of the Id and the subsequent development of civilization, Eros, as part of a sadistic tradition. This reveals a double error on Freud's part: he attributes psychological "selfish" qualities to the libido, and fails to investigate the socio-historical nature of moral values (the latter of which he seems to begin investigating as he attempts to define the Death instinct). Eros is not creative, as he contends, but destructive; the selfish, unfulfilled, desires of the mediator—priest, capitalist, etc, structure the values of community. Woolf, I argue, understands this phenomenon. We can see it in her description of the values of "Proportion" and "Conversion" in *Mrs. Dalloway*, which correspond with Freud's concepts of Eros and Thanatos. Proportion, embodied by Dr. Bradshaw, represents "non-violent" forms of oppression, social norms, etc, while Conversion has a taste for blood. Conversion is depicted by Woolf as the experience of pleasure from the immediate oppression of others—the Death instinct turned outwards—that we see in Mr. Ramsay and Doris Kilman. Woolf, thus follows Marx and Nietzsche in locating the selfish impulses of the ego in an economic, historical, locale instead of the biological as Freud had argued.

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<sup>5</sup> "Beyond the Pleasure Principle." *The Freud Reader*. Ed. Peter Gay. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989).

For Woolf this meant, as opposed to Freud, that the causes of trauma as well as the body could be recuperated. Through her depiction of Mr. Ramsay and Doris Kilman we can see how Woolf analyzes the various forms of repression as they manifest themselves in Religion and capitalism. She uses the term “subconscious”<sup>6</sup> instead of the Freudian “unconscious” to designate the possibility of recuperating the repressed. For Woolf, the “subconscious”—the social system and the philosophy which upholds it—could be unearthed and understood, as the narrator in *Mrs. Dalloway* suggests with Hugh, who is described as not “going deeply” (102). Her use of the term is significant since The Hogarth Press published works by Freud at the same time that *Mrs. Dalloway* was being published, so she most assuredly came across Freud’s work and had invested enough time in understanding his theories to distinguish her own ideas on the psyche from his.

If the forces of capitalism have conditioned us to see through the eyes of estranged labor—our labor does not belong to us—Woolf sought to find a way in which the individual could re-connect with its body—its creative essence—in order to re-connect with the life activity of the species. While Freud argues that the subject’s inability to immediately satisfy his libidinal impulses leads to coping strategies to prevent the unpleasure of unfulfilled desires, for example, the Oedipus Complex, for Woolf and Marx, it is not “loss” of the object of pleasure which structures social relations but “need.” As Marx states in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, “man is not lost in his object only when the object becomes for him a *human* object or objective man. This is possible only when the object becomes for him a *social* object, he himself for himself a social being, just as society becomes a being for him in his object” (88). It is only by moving beyond what Marx calls the “egotistic” (113) “*one-sided*” (87, 113) relationship with the object—“that an object is only *ours* when we have it—when it exists for us as capital, or when it is directly possessed, eaten, drunk, worn, inhabited” (87) that can we see the object as existing not for *our* “*vulgar need*” (90) but for us to discover ourselves, to develop our natural powers. We need others because we can only develop our talents through the objects they create. The object exists as that which has been created by others not simply so that *I* may live but primordially so that *I* may express my human essence. I depend on others. And insofar as the object others have created gives me the opportunity to experience myself as a sensual, creative being, the objects I make exist equally for others to find themselves. I become part of the object. The object becomes a human object: “Thus, the objectification of the human essence both in its theoretical and practical aspects is required to make man’s *sense human*, as well as to create the *human sense* corresponding to the entire wealth of human and natural substance” (89), comments Marx. Our human essence becomes objectified when the object loses its selfish quality. We recognize it as that which allows us to express ourselves, to create objects which allow others to do the same.

The history of man and woman becomes the history of their labour, the work put into developing the senses instead of the desire to escape their suffering. As Marx further states, “suffering, apprehended humanly, is an enjoyment of self in man” (87). Suffering, or the desire

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<sup>6</sup> See, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 1925 (New York: Harcourt, 1981), 102. See also, “Hogarth Press: The Translations,” *University of Delaware Library*, 21 December 2010. Web. 24 March 2014. <http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/exhibits/hogarth/transln.htm> Also, Julia Briggs, “Virginia Woolf meets Sigmund Freud,” *Charleston News*, 13 January 2011. Web. 24 March 2014. <http://www.charleston.org.uk/virginia-woolf-meets-sigmund-freud/>

to strive for self-mastery of our latent powers is the foundation for community. It is the “objectification of our human essence.” It is what we give to others. It could be argued that Freud shied away from suffering. The defense mechanisms of the ego can be seen as attempts to escape from the body. While Freud theorizes that the subject, driven by the Death instinct, seeks to return to the past to die, or concomitantly, to master the experience of loss, it does so only to affirm *its* self-repression. The mastery *it* achieves is a mere illusion—it is inherently abstract. For Woolf and Marx, on the other hand, it is only by returning to the body, through the death of the socialized self, the ego which maintains the repressions, that we can begin to achieve self-mastery. Mastery for Woolf and Marx occurs by rediscovering our body and connecting with our human emotions. It is only by getting behind the illusion of ego relations that we can begin to discover our common humanity as Marx had argued and Einstein had envisioned. The unconscious desire to re-connect with the body will become evident in my discussion of Mr. Ramsay and Doris Kilman. Thus, for both Woolf and Marx, the subject is not primordially a selfish being but as Marx says,

As a natural being and as a living natural being he is on the one hand furnished with *natural powers of life*—he is an *active* natural being. These forces exist in him as tendencies and abilities—*impulses*. On the other hand, as a natural corporeal, sensuous, objective being he is a *suffering*, conditioned and limited creature, like animals and plants. That is to say, the *objects* of his impulses exist outside of him, as *objects* independent of him; yet these objects are objects of his *need*—essential *objects*, indispensable to the manifestation and confirmation of his essential powers (115).

For Marx *and* Woolf, “need” instead of “loss” structures the acknowledgment of suffering as our suffering, the time it takes to master our powers. Self-mastery becomes a real, embodied, experience. This challenges Freud’s dualism between Eros and Thanatos by acknowledging suffering as the process of exploring our bodies and not the suffering that is sadistically imposed on others. Suffering becomes synonymous with the history of human labour and the evolution of the human senses.

Woolf’s economy of “gift-giving,” analogous to Marx’s definition of free labor, attempts to subvert the ideology of private property, which is focused on competition for power—a power which remains an illusion of self-mastery—by encouraging a dynamic of production and consumption. In Woolf’s economy of gift-giving, by consuming our desires we become producers; through the objects we create, we thus encourage others to consume, to develop their senses. Gift-giving serves as an antidote to the egotism of capitalist social relations by emphasizing the co-operative development of the senses of the individual and the collective whole. *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To The Lighthouse* can be understood as Woolf’s gifts to the reader. Insofar as they compel us to think critically about the nature of space and time, they help to liberate our reified senses. In this way, Woolf’s “gift-economy” harkens back to Marx’s ideas on the repressed reality of free labor which exists behind estranged labor. For Marx, when we own our labor, we recognize that the objects we produce are an expression of our creativity. Not hindered by the estranged labor which fosters the repression of our creativity, free labor allows us to recognize others as also creative. The individual recognizes itself as part of the species. Woolf seeks to turn on its head the values of Western reality by encouraging the emancipation of the body, as does Marx, instead of having desire mediated by an elite few. Einstein’s idea of

*spacetime* provided Woolf with the evidence to suggest that we were not beholden to the traditions of the past, but that the past could be investigated and the causes of trauma could be understood.

For Woolf, Einstein's theories were inherently democratic; they introduced a different way of thinking about how characters experience space and time by suggesting that they could revisit the past to root out the belief in self-sacrifice which structures the abstract and linear model of change of religion and capitalism, or equally, to experience moments of intimacy which linger through the cosmos. Space and Time are no longer mediated abstract realities but become an experience of the mind and body. Einstein's theories provided a solution to the problem of isolated perspectives and the need for the *aether* or other forms of mediation to suture the infinite space between self and other underlying Newtonian mechanics. Instead of the Newtonian, linear view of time, Woolf presents "character and event as non-causal" (22), Dennis Bohnenkamp argues.<sup>7</sup>

If Woolf, like Marx, was interested in the development of the *human* senses, then she needed to find a way to show how her characters could access and deconstruct the causes of repression so that they could reconnect with their body and its desires. Woolf finds the solution by combining Marx's and Einstein's ideas. In *To The Lighthouse*, Woolf combines Einstein's idea of *spacetime* with Marx's idea of free labor to show how characters could revisit the past to free themselves from the causes of trauma, to as Marx says in *Capital*, "decipher the hieroglyphic"<sup>8</sup> of exchange value which reduces experience to economic relations of power. For Woolf, it is only by moving away from her family home in Kensington to Bloomsbury, and picking up her pen and writing—to begin the process of reclaiming the body—that she is able to analyze the social forces which make trauma a social convention. This idea can be seen in Marx's and Woolf's reading of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. I discuss how for both Woolf and Marx, Crusoe's ability to deconstruct the forces of capitalism hinges on his venturing out of the dark ages<sup>9</sup> of his bourgeois mercantilist society. Through his labor, Crusoe is able to re-connect with his body to understand the value of his labor and in the process deconstruct the values of capitalism. Crusoe subsequently grasps the importance that Friday, the slave, plays in his self-development.

In contrast to *To The Lighthouse*, where creative labor is part of a more self-conscious, deconstructive process of the past, in *Mrs. Dalloway*, freedom is presented as a choice: the choice to live freely, to be able to "see" beyond the confines of the present in order to connect intimately with the self and others or to die figuratively by succumbing to the edicts of "civilized" life. Characters like Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus are able to re-connect with each other when they forfeit the values of the class system. Woolf shows them as literally throwing away shillings into the Serpentine. Through their literal and figurative death, they are able to connect intimately with each other across *spacetime*. This occurs either through "moments" of concentration, as Clarissa experiences, which blur the boundaries between past and present—an

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<sup>7</sup> "Post-Einsteinian Physics and Literature: Toward a New Poetics," *Mosaic* 22.3 (1989).

<sup>8</sup> "*Capital*," *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1978), 322.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 325.

example of Special Relativity—or by being able to recapture the feeling of intimate moments that linger through space which blur the boundaries between self and other—an example of General Relativity. Clarissa Dalloway, Septimus, and his wife Lucrezia, are able to connect intimately with each other across *spacetime* when they free themselves from the reductive social and economic values based on self-sacrifice. They are able to “see” the past, present, and future. Woolf portrays them as rays of light which connect across *spacetime*.<sup>10</sup> Their sense of self can inhabit a large expanse of *spacetime*. This is something Mrs. Dalloway is unable to do because she has succumbed to the reductive forces of patriarchy, which alienate her from her mind and body. Einstein’s Special Theory allowed Woolf to depict characters in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To The Lighthouse* who are no longer limited to the “present” but who can stretch their *minds* and *bodies* across the vast reaches of *spacetime* to connect with events from the past and future (Woolf’s “space of time”).<sup>11</sup>

Through my discussion of *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To The Lighthouse*, I argue that for Woolf individuals have the tools and capacity to investigate the material conditions of existence in order to free their senses. This emancipation of their creative essence then allows for a different model of social relations based on a different understanding of their environment, how they exist in space and time. Woolf effectively moves beyond the egotism which drives the pursuit of private property. While there has not been much work done on this topic, Michael Tratner comes closest to linking Woolf’s interest in liberating desires and Einstein. His work in *Deficits and Desires* plays an important part in the connection I make between Woolf, Marx, and Einstein, and the move away from the egotistical self.

In order to understand how Woolf arrives at the notion of making patterns, what I call creative labor, it is important to discuss the ideas Woolf is reacting to. In the first chapter of my dissertation, I discuss Woolf’s criticism of the role of the mediator, which emerges in religion and develops in capitalism. From the priest to the capitalist (of which the purveyor of knowledge, Mr. Ramsay, arises), I discuss how violence perpetuated by a social system which oppresses individuals and prevents them from exploring their desires. I see Woolf as attacking Western reality and what I argue she sees as its distorted values of good and evil. By contextualizing this attack through a Marxist critique of the class system and the philosophy and religious systems which sustain it, I develop a correspondence between the early Marx’s thinking of freedom as the development of the senses and Woolf’s own interest in liberating desire from the values of capitalism and religion. Furthermore, Woolf’s attempt to uncover the repressed has interesting parallels to Nietzsche’s own archeological work on religion and the psyche. The importance of contextualizing Woolf’s attack on the sadistic nature of the priests, philosophers, doctors, etc, by alluding to Nietzsche becomes evident when I contrast her socio-economic model to the containment of desires Frederic Jameson advocates in the introduction to the *Political Unconscious*. Discussing Jameson’s work is important since I contend that his reading

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<sup>10</sup> Whitworth provides different examples of this idea in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To The Lighthouse* (170-197).

<sup>11</sup> In “A Sketch of the Past,” she describes her experience of childhood as lasting in “that space of time . . . from 1882 to 1895.” 79. I will discuss this idea further in chapter 3 where Lily “stretched her body and mind to the utmost.” (*TTL*, 208).

of Marx disregards aspects of Marx's thinking which are critical of the rational method which informs the narrow scope of History and role of the mediator that Jameson supports. While their methods are different, both Marx and Nietzsche are interested in uncovering the genealogy of religious morals which had been overlooked by Hegel's description of history, and which largely informs Jameson's own idea of history. In this sense, both Marx and Nietzsche bring to the surface the repressed values of capitalistic society whose origins have been forgotten and which Jameson implies cannot be uncovered by the individual. What becomes evident in Woolf's project, and what my close-reading analysis seeks to reveal is that Woolf seeks to identify the symptoms of repression, understand its causes, and provide solutions.

In the second chapter, I contextualize my close-reading of *Mrs. Dalloway* by discussing the difference between Newton's mechanical causality and Einstein's *spacetime*. Through close-reading, I seek to show the importance that Woolf places on Einstein's idea of *spacetime* as an alternative model of reality. I discuss how Woolf develops a contrast between characters who live within the constraints of the class system and the linear time which structures this social life positing instead an unbounded freedom where the boundaries between the past, present, and future, and between self and other are dissolved. While various critical attempts have been made to organize *Mrs. Dalloway* through the marking of time by Big Ben, the importance that Woolf places on Einstein's *spacetime* has largely been overlooked. Both Michael Whitworth's *Einstein Wake*, and Holly Henry's, *Virginia Woolf and the Discourse of Science* do a great deal of work to contextualize Woolf's interest in Einstein and provide examples and close readings of Woolf's work which help support the close-reading analysis I develop.

In the third chapter, I bring together Woolf's critique of the social system, discussed in the first chapter, with the innovations in representing reality I take up in the second chapter. If one of Woolf's main interests, as I contend, is to show how the individual can free himself/herself from capitalist social relations, then her work in *To The Lighthouse* shows the importance that she places on the ability that creative labor, making patterns, has in allowing characters to investigate the past in order to connect intimately with others across *spacetime*. In other words, I discuss how Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe self-consciously investigate their past in order to deconstruct the abstract systems of philosophy and religion which attempts to deny their ability to experience an unbounded reality. In this vein, Micahel Lackey's essay, "Modernist Anti-Philosophicalism and Virginia Woolf's Critique of Philosophy" plays an integral part of what I see as characters' self-conscious critique of religion and philosophy in *To The Lighthouse*. Lackey develops the idea that characters like Lily and Mrs. Ramsay are able to "understand and appreciate the inner lives of others"<sup>12</sup> only after they have searched the semiotic, what correlates with Woolf's concepts of the "subconscious," in order to root out the causes of trauma.

The kind of intimacy with each other that Lily and Mrs. Ramsay achieve also becomes an integral part of Woolf's aesthetic project. Lily's painting, her labor, challenges our assumptions about how we perceive reality by presenting the opportunity to "see" reality differently. In other words, reading for Woolf is creative labor. It requires that we deconstruct the way we "read" novels and by extension, the way we perceive reality. This can, in part, be described as a

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<sup>12</sup> "Modernist Anti-Philosophicalism and Virginia Woolf's Critique of Philosophy," *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (Summer, 2006), 94.

conscious process in which Woolf asks us to engage with the novel through various questions, and through a process of contextualization of certain key words. As I demonstrate, these key words include the “thing itself,” “Shakespeare,” and the “tablecloth.” Understanding the particular significance Woolf attributes to these concepts can help us see her arguments against abstract notions of space and time. Along with the project of contextualization, Woolf also encourages an “unconscious” process of reading in which we let the text’s underlying, interconnected reality rise to the surface. For this, Melba Cudy-Keane’s *Virginia Woolf, the Intellectual, and the Public Sphere* was an important source. Cudy-Keane’s discussion of “unconscious” reading as the process of making associative connections helped me to clarify what I see as the reader’s process of making patterns. Lorraine Sim’s discussion of Woolf’s use of color in *To The Lighthouse*, as compelling the reader to make associative connections with, for example, the color green, helped to frame my discussion of how Woolf uses colors to represent emotional connections across *spacetime*. This strategy corresponds with how Lily’s painting allows her to connect intimately with characters across *spacetime*—it allows Lily to solve the problem of space. Our own ability to make connections between different characters in *spacetime* is based on our openness to critique the assumptions we have about how we perceive reality. In other words, the conscious interrogation that Cudy-Keane sees Woolf encouraging through her use of questions, and which I suggest also takes place through the contextualization of certain key words, opens up our ability to make patterns. Creative labor is both an act of the body as well as a process of the mind. Situating Woolf’s interest in color within a critical context reveals Woolf as part of a tradition of artists who are interested in developing the senses.

I see the work of my dissertation as following critics like Whitworth and Henry who have provided the necessary philosophical and scientific context to understand Woolf’s work. While over the past twenty-five years various critics have discussed Woolf’s interest in the marketplace and commodities, an explicit connection between Woolf’s and Marx’s work has not yet been made. By pushing beyond the connection which has been developed through the discussion of Woolf’s interest in commodities, I see my attempt to connect Woolf’s and Marx’s discussion of labor as a new contribution to Woolf scholarship. Similarly, the connection between Woolf and Einstein has also been touched upon by various critics but even less so than the less obvious connection between Marx and Woolf. I hope that my close-reading analysis of *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To The Lighthouse* contributes to Whitworth’s and Henry’s observations regarding Woolf’s use of Einstein’s ideas. By foregrounding the importance that Einstein and Marx have in Woolf’s interest in recovering the body, I seek to provide a new way to understand how Woolf treats space and time in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To The Lighthouse*.



## Chapter 1

### Mediation and the Class System

“I want to criticize the social system, & show it at work, at its most intense—”<sup>13</sup>

In the past few years, Virginia Woolf’s relationship to consumerism<sup>14</sup> has been explored by various critics.<sup>15</sup> Unlike earlier studies of Woolf which portrayed her as a “high” modernist writer detached from consumer culture,<sup>16</sup> she has been shown to be deeply engaged in the economic realities of her day. Ruth Hoberman states that “Despite Woolf’s traditional reputation as an ascetic priestess of art and inwardness, she repeatedly insists on the important role commodities play in her own and her characters’ lives” (449). The nature of her relationship with the forces of capitalism has been a subject of debate. In one of the earlier investigations, Reginald Abbott claims that Woolf was an

ambivalent witness to commodity culture. . . . Privately and in her fiction, Woolf reveals a fascination/repulsion with shopping and with the potential power of consumerism over the individual. Although Woolf observes and uses the collective mechanisms of commodity culture in her fiction, she also betrays a preference for aristocratic consumption (194, 196).

Abbott bases this image of Woolf as exempt from the dirty quarrels of the marketplace—of buying and selling—on her “upper-middle class background, her cultural heritage as part of

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<sup>13</sup> *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, Vol. 2. ed. Anne Olivier Bell (London: The Hogarth Press, 1980), 248.

<sup>14</sup> I use the concept of “consumerism” as Stuart Ewen has defined it: “mass participation in the values of the mass-industrial market.” From, Reginald Abbott, “What Miss Kilman’s Petticoat Means: Virginia Woolf, Shopping, and Spectacle,” *Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol. 38. 1, Spring (1992), 193. Consumerism thus entails “commodity culture/consumer culture/commodity fetishism” as the act of *buying* fetishized commodities that have been attributed with a particular social status while “commodification” represents the act of *selling* this artificial social value to the masses. “Consumerism” has also been used to describe an individual’s informed, “conscious,” interaction with the marketplace. See “Consumerism.” *Wikipedia: The Online Encyclopedia*. Wikimedia Foundation Inc. 22 July 2004. Web. 6 Jan. 2014.

<sup>15</sup> See Ruth Hoberman, “Woolf and Commodities,” *Virginia Woolf in Context*, Byrony Randall and Jane Goldman eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 449. Kathryn Simpson, “The Paradox of the Gift: Gift-Giving as a Disruptive Force in ‘Mrs. Dalloway in Bond Street,’” *Woolf Studies Annual*, Vol. 11, ed. Mark Hussey (2005), 53-75. Michael Tratner, “Consumer Cooperation, Gender Cooperation: Virginia Woolf’s Answer to War,” *Deficits and Desires* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 91-120. Jennifer Wicke, “Coterie Consumption: Bloomsbury, Keynes, and Modernism as Marketing,” *Marketing Modernisms*, Kevin J. H. Dettmar and Stephen Watt eds. (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996), 109-132. Jane Garrity, “Virginia Woolf, Intellectual Harlotry, and 1920s British *Vogue*,” *Virginia Woolf in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, ed. Pamela L. Caughie (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 185-218. Paul Delany, *Literature, Money and the Market* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 58-64. Also, Ruth Hoberman, “Collecting, Shopping, and Reading: Virginia Woolf’s Stories About Objects,” *Trespassing Boundaries*, Kathryn N. Benzel and Ruth Hoberman eds. (New York: Pagrave, 2004), 81-98. Michael Tratner, “The Value of Difference: Economics, Genders and War in *Three Guineas*,” *Virginia Woolf and the Arts*, Diane F. Gillespie and Leslie K. Hankins eds. (New York: Pace University Press, 1997), 302-309.

<sup>16</sup> See Simpson, 53.

Britain's intellectual elite, her peculiar socialism/pacifism, her personal temperament, and, ironically, her gender" (194). While Woolf did have the means to hire a private dressmaker,<sup>17</sup> it has become clear that she did not sit comfortably apart enjoying the "privacy of her own class," as Abbott claims (197). In *Virginia Woolf and the Real World*, Alex Zwerdling describes how Woolf "felt trapped in her own class enclave" and looked for a way to escape what she felt were its oppressive confines.<sup>18</sup> Zwerdling states that

Woolf did move quite a distance from her moorings, despite her own dissatisfaction with how far she had managed to travel. She turned her back on many of the conventions of her set and sex; some of her most important life decisions reflect a conscious rejection of traditional limits. The move from Kensington to Bloomsbury was a move from an upper-middle-class preserve to a semiderelict world of "offices, lodgings, nursing homes and small artisans' workshops," as Duncan Grant described it. Woolf's decision to live there went against her class's obsession with the desirable location and proper address. Her contempt for finery—fashionable clothes, jewelry, dressing for dinner, stylish furnishings—was so extreme that it amounted to a declaration of independence (114-115).

While the move to Bloomsbury might not have freed her entirely from the influence of her past, it gave Woolf the emotional distance to deconstruct the abstract values of capitalism, and by extension, patriarchy, which had informed much of her youth. Diane Gillespie notes that "men traditionally have controlled the property and the educational institutions in England and thus have controlled women (TG 17-18)."<sup>19</sup> In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf recalls her experience upon visiting a library:

I was actually at the door that leads into the library itself. I must have opened it, for instantly there issued, like a guardian angel barring the way with a flutter of black gown instead of white wings, a deprecating, silvery, kindly gentleman, who regretted in a low voice as he waved back that ladies are only admitted to the library if accompanied by a Fellow of the College or furnished with a letter of introduction.<sup>20</sup>

Abbott's inclination to see Woolf as upholding class distinctions, an aristocratic consumer separated from the base and undifferentiated desires of commodity culture, overlooks her criticism of a social-economic system which treated women as second class citizens and alienated them from their desires.

Woolf's comments on the sense of enclosure and oppression she felt as a result of her privileged social upbringing and the feeling that "participation in capitalist market economies also signals a complicity in a patriarchal system . . . [she] sees as tyrannous" (Simpson 55) are

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<sup>17</sup> Abbott, 197.

<sup>18</sup> *Virginia Woolf and the Real World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 114. See also, 87-119.

<sup>19</sup> From "Political Aesthetics: Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson," *Virginia Woolf: A Feminist Slant*, ed. Jane Marcus (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 133.

<sup>20</sup> "A Room of One's Own," *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 7th ed., M.H. Abrams and Stephen Greenblatt eds. (London: W. W. Norton, 2000), 2156.

further supported by her diary entries and novels. Woolf described herself as an “Outsider.” Zwerdling notes that,

Even in a diary entry written when she was twenty-one and still under her family’s tutelage, she saw herself and Vanessa as outsiders, alienated from the close-knit social group to which they officially belonged (Berg Diary, Hyde Park Gate, June 30-Oct. 1, 1903, 10). She was not certain at that point whether her marginal identity was imposed or chosen. In her maturity she came to see it as a badge of honor and associated it with being a woman (115).

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa and Sally’s discussion about “how they were to reform the world” and “meant to found a society to abolish private property”<sup>21</sup> shows that Woolf was acutely aware of the prison of social conformity capitalism engendered. Kathryn Simpson states that Woolf recognized the independence which capitalism afforded her— “Women’s right to earn money and to have a profession is liberating” (55)—but also understood it as a

rational system focused on calculation and fixing of value, intent on maintaining clear boundaries and distinctions (between buyer and seller), and rigorously organized by the laws of profit and loss. As Tratner argues, Woolf (along with Joyce, Eliot and Yeats) is critical of hegemonic capitalism and the limitations it imposes. He argues that capitalism hides and represses certain aspects of the social order, silences and denies certain groups of people, and represses elements of the psyche which Woolf (and other modernists) sought to release (*Modernism 11*) (55-56).

And as Evelyn T. Chan observes,

Throughout history, the availability of money accelerated specialization until the goal for work often became money itself, alienating people from the greater purpose of their work. This is a problem which Woolf would have been aware of. Leonard Woolf calls this “[t]he curse of the capitalist system,” which “produces states of mind in individuals and classes which contaminate society by inducing a profound, instinctive conviction that the object and justification of everyone’s work, trade, profession, in fact of nine-tenths of a person’s conscious existence... [Chan’s ellipsis] are and should be money” (41).<sup>22</sup>

The Woolfs understood that the freedom capitalism promised was only an illusion. The ideology of private property is driven by the dominant ideals of the ruling class which require the self-sacrifice of individual desires and the subsequent projection of this loss onto others, as a repression of their desires, namely through the exploitation of labor, in *exchange* for the glorified values of capital, class status, etc. Woolf was not interested in the privileges afforded by her class. She wanted to be free. Thus, on the one hand, she states, “what I want, [is] money,” (*L3*: 154), but money for Woolf did not hold the enchanted quality of a fetishized commodity.<sup>23</sup> It was a means to an end: “I shall sell my soul to Todd [her editor at *Vogue*]; but this is the first step

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<sup>21</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, 1925, (London: Harcourt, 1981), 33.

<sup>22</sup> “A Balancing Act: Specialization in *Between the Acts*,” *Woolf Studies Annual*. Vol. 18., ed. Mark Hussey (2012).

<sup>23</sup> Jane Garrity, 196.

to being free” (*L3*: 250)<sup>24</sup> from what she saw as an oppressive economic system which alienated individuals from each other and themselves through the belief in the ideology of private property.

The expression of desire is at the core of Woolf’s sense of self. Much of her work seeks to unravel the knots of repression formed by patriarchy and capitalism. Michael Tratner discusses *Three Guineas*, where she introduces the concept of “infantile fixation”:

The key examples she gives of this infantile fixation are of fathers refusing to allow daughters to get money from any source other than the fathers themselves: neither from work nor from other men, until they enter approved marriages. The essence of this infantile fixation is then to define fathers and approved husbands as producers while women remain passive consumers, spending money they did not earn. . . . Instead, she wants women to join men as producers, but, and this is her radical revision, she wants women to maintain their values as consumers, the values that have in the past kept them out of the role of producer. Production has been exclusively the role of those who sought to increase the stockpile of objects and so resisted consumption or pleasure in favor of hard labor (99-100).

The role of “passive consumer” did not suit Woolf because it required that she submit to the patriarchal institution. In distancing herself from her upper-middle class identity and the reified “values of the mass-industrial market”<sup>25</sup> in which she existed as a fetishized commodity, Woolf was able to immerse herself in the concrete reality of her labor, in her desires. It is only by losing her class status that Woolf was able to “consume” her desires—desires that men actively repressed—in order to find herself as “producer.” Woolf seeks to shift the values assigned to the concepts of production and consumption away from the fetishized commodity to the production and consumption of “real” desires—the development of the senses. Production and consumption become associated with cultural exchange. This idea corresponds to Marx’s own discussion of free labor in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*.<sup>26</sup> It is an idea which informs my discussion of *Robinson Crusoe* later in this chapter, and in the third chapter where I discuss what I see as Woolf’s creative labor. While *Three Guineas* is one of her later works, Woolf’s full-fledged engagement with the forces of capitalism and patriarchy can already be seen in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To The Lighthouse*. As such, in contrast to Abbott, Woolf’s views on consumerism and capitalism can be seen more clearly emerging from her experience as a writer for *Vogue* magazine from 1924-1926, during which time she was also writing and publishing *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To The Lighthouse*, a co-owner of the Hogarth Press beginning in 1917, married to a Marxist thinker and attending meetings of the Co-Operative movement, and was a friend with the prominent economist John Maynard Keynes, who was also a member of the Bloomsbury group.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>25</sup> See note 14 above.

<sup>26</sup> See, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (London: W. W. Norton, 1978), 76.

Instead of distancing herself from the economic problem, Woolf engaged directly with it to find a solution. Simpson cites Michael Tratner's article "Why Isn't Between the Acts a Movie," where he argues that

Woolf... [Simpson's ellipses] sees the demise of capitalism not in the elimination of private experience, but in the elimination of private property, of the ownership of private space by a single dominant individual. Joint ownership and multiply generated experience mark the step beyond capitalism ("Why" 132) (54).

As co-owner of the Hogarth Press, where she spent many years reading the manuscripts of other authors and setting the type to works like T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Woolf could be characterized as espousing socialist ideals.<sup>27</sup> Yet, thinking along with her husband Leonard Woolf, she did not see the solution to capitalism in socialism: "Workers and capitalists are both exclusive groups, Leonard suggests, so the contest between them inevitably leads to repression and war. Leonard and Virginia had both become disillusioned with the Labour Party when it chose to support the British effort in World War I," argues Tratner (94). Both socialism and capitalism represented a form of private property; in the competition for power both only served to reenact the same system of repression and oppression each purportedly sought to overcome. Instead of advocating overt physical force or supporting a political stance with its basic premise of victors and losers, which only compounded the problem of private property, Woolf challenged the oppressive top-down structure of the social-economic system by providing an alternative model of inclusion, The Cooperative Commonwealth, whose vision of freedom looked very much like Marx's own.

The correspondence between Woolf's and Marx's early thinking on what it means to be free can be seen in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* where Marx states that, We have seen how on the premise of positively annulled private property man produces man—himself and the other man; how the object, being the direct embodiment of his individuality, is simultaneously his own existence for the other man, the existence of the other man, and that existence for him. . . . Thus the *social* character is the general character of the whole movement: *just as* society produces *man as man*, so is society *produced* by him. Activity and consumption, both in their content and in their *mode of existence*, are *social*: *social* activity and *social* consumption. (85).

And shortly after he says,

Not only is the material of my activity given to me as a social product (as is even the language if which the thinker is active): my *own* existence *is* social activity, and therefore that which I make of myself, I make of myself for society and with the consciousness of myself as social being (86).<sup>28</sup>

For Marx, the relations we have with others are not mediated by the competition that characterizes the pursuit of the fetishized commodity; the commodity becomes part of a shared

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<sup>27</sup> "Woolf's 'studio' was the storage room for bound books, and she composed most of her novels in this basement room while employees traipsed in and out," notes Ursula McTaggart, "'Opening the Door': The Hogarth Press as Virginia Woolf's Outsiders' Society," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*. Vol. 29.1 (2010), 67.

<sup>28</sup> From, 1844.

experience.<sup>29</sup> The object loses its selfish fate. When we recognize that the object is an expression of others creativity, an expression of their labor, we realize that it exists for us to discover our essential powers.<sup>30</sup> The object affords us with the opportunity to experience ourselves as primordially sensual and creative beings by uniting the past and present in their common creative essence. The objects we create then exist for others to develop their abilities. This social dynamic moves beyond the narrowness of capitalist social relations to an inclusive space where social relations are not defined by selfish need but by the recognition of our common creative essence. We need others to develop our powers just as others need us. This can only occur for Marx when we see others as integral to our development as human beings and vice versa. A similar idea can be seen in Woolf. Tratner connects the notion of consumption with Woolf's economy of "gift-giving": "The artist enjoys the work of art; it becomes a form of consumption. And crucial in that pleasure is the sense that the artist is giving away her mind to the art as one gives one's body to a person one loves: consumption is identified in Woolf as an act of gift-giving" (101). In the economy of gift-giving, the gift cannot be privately owned or commodified, abstracted from circulation—it is always in circulation, always out there to be shared. The gift's gift of self-knowledge has the capacity to transform the nature of social relations. In consuming—exploring and expressing—her desires, Woolf encourages others to do the same: Woolf "tells writers to 'give up their loathsome labour' and do only what is 'pleasurable' to themselves and gives pleasure to their readers—in other words, she advocates a form of production directed by consumers for consumers" says Tratner (100). Woolf's "gift-giving," like Marx's ideas social "activity" and social "consumption," seeks to acknowledge repressed desires: "According to underconsumption economic theories, all people have treasure inside them that remains repressed and unused in conventional economic morality, and that treasure is demand or desire. Unleashed, that treasure would energize the economic system. Pleasure, indulging desire, is a way to create wealth" (Tratner 109). The wealth that would be created in the freedom to express ourselves and develop our senses would encourage others to do the same—to enjoy the pleasure of their labor. Woolf, like Marx, seeks to transform social relations from the accumulation of capital and denial of the body, to the enjoyment of exploring our desires, developing our senses. Tratner says that "Woolf is trying to find a way to allow for pleasure, but finds pleasure is so tied up with luxury, with excess, that it is difficult to recognize the value of pleasure, its role in the development of the human senses" (103-104). Marx argues that it is

Only through the objectively unfolded richness of man's essential being is the richness of subjective human sensibility (a musical ear, an eye for beauty of form—in short, *senses* capable of human gratifications, senses confirming themselves as essential powers of *man*) either cultivated or brought into being. For not only the five senses but also the so-called mental senses—the practical senses (will, love, etc.)—in a word, *human* sense—the humanness of the senses—comes to be by virtue of its object, by virtue of *humanized*

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<sup>29</sup> See Ruth Hoberman, "Woolf and Commodities," 449.

<sup>30</sup> 1844, 88.

nature. The *forming* of the five senses is a labour of the entire history of the world down to the present (88-89).

Woolf, like Marx, sought to move beyond the selfish impulses of the ego to establish our common creative impulses—the desire to develop our powers—as a more primordial reality in which “need” for Marx, and “desire” for Woolf, instead of “loss,” structures social relations.

The Cooperative Commonwealth encouraged the “development of the human senses” as part of “an effort to create a synergistic effect of circulation of *consumption*: as individuals indulge in pleasurable acts, the entire party [Clarissa’s party] takes on an energy of its own and the pleasurable acts reinforce each other,” states Tratner (*my emphasis* 117). In being free to take pleasure in our sensual development, the selfish impulse and competition which motivates the acquisition of private property, and hence, disregard for others, is dismantled and we are able to recognize others’ creative and sensual nature. We encourage others to consume and express their desires. In the Cooperative Commonwealth, as with Marx, social relations are grounded in an “inherently expansive and inclusive” (Tratner 96) social-economic space of exploration and self-discovery. As Tratner states,

The problem of restraint affects all classes in the social order: those who are rich have to be freed from the anxiety, the fear that leads to the storing of wealth in walls of gold rather than consumption; those who are poor have to be given enough money to indulge in consumption. The desires inside everyone must be unleashed so that people are no longer self-abnegating (118).

Marx and Woolf transformed desire from the acquisition of private property to the desire to develop of our innate powers. What is compelling about what I would describe as Woolf’s Marxist inclinations is, as Tratner suggests, how

Woolf thus advocates the elimination of capitalists, but not at all as socialists would have it: she wants to turn capitalists into consumers, not laborers. In the twenties in England, a number of prominent members of the Labour Party, including Virginia and Leonard Woolf, switched from socialism to a consumerist movement known as cooperation. . . . Focusing on the consumer rather than the worker is a way to bring about radical social change without having to choose between separate parts of the social order because, as Leonard writes, “[C]ooperator consumers represent the whole of the community in a way in which the capitalists or the workers could never represent it” (94).

Instead of a top-down social-economic model, the Cooperative Commonwealth was rooted in the desires of the consumer.

The Hogarth Press, established in 1917, actualized Woolf’s economy of gift-giving. It provided Woolf with the liberty to avoid censorship of her voice in pursuit of a few guineas, as well as the opportunity to foster a space, like Clarissa’s party, where class distinctions could become obsolete.<sup>31</sup> In one of her letters she writes, “When the publishers told me to write what they liked,’ she recalls, ‘I said No. I’ll publish myself and write what I like’” (*L*, IV, 348) (Zwerdling 107). Having the freedom to express herself without restraint, Woolf had found a

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<sup>31</sup> See also, Leslie Kathleen Hankins’ reference to *Three Guineas* in “Virginia Woolf and Walter Benjamin Selling Out(Siders),” *Virginia Woolf in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, ed. Pamela L. Caughie (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 30.

way to free herself from the “curse of the capitalistic system.” Simpson cites Laura Marcus’ article, “Virginia Woolf and the Hogarth Press” where Marcus argues that “The Hogarth Press represented work, but work that cut out the middleman and escaped literary commodification. It gave Woolf a way of negotiating the terms of literary publicity, and a space somewhere between the private, the coteries and the public sphere (144)” (54). While making money was always an important part of the Press—“Woolf was interested in markets and profit margins” (Simpson 54),—money was a means to encourage others to consume and produce. As Tratner states,

Woolf changes the idea of what produces value when people labor: not merely the physical energy extorted but also the cultural background that laborers bring with them. Woolf suggests a new kind of production, namely cultural production, the production of culture and the production from culture. Production should not transcend cultural and gender differences . . . rather production should gain value from [them]. The more different sources one can draw upon or consume before one labors, the greater the value of that labor (101).

This expansive vision of freedom existed in tension in the early years with the realities of earning a living. As a writer for *Vogue* in the 1920’s, Woolf “aligns her financial freedom with prostitution, using such terms as ‘bought,’ ‘sold,’ and ‘bound hand and foot.’” (L3: 415-416), notes Garrity (196). Garrity also mentions that Woolf “regarded commercial culture as a form of ‘intellectual harlotry’ (94) from which women were not at all exempt” (196). Unlike the alienation she felt writing for *Vogue*, the Hogarth Press became for Woolf a place of dialogue. McTaggart has suggested that Woolf saw the Hogarth Press as “her personal space, the room of her own, as simultaneously private and public—from its position of privacy came one voice in an international dialogue (*my emphasis*).”<sup>32</sup> The Press’ inclusion of “writers whose connections spanned racial, national, and gender boundaries”<sup>33</sup> set the example. “Literature,” Woolf insisted in a 1940 Lecture to the Workers’ Educational Association, “is no one’s private ground; literature is common ground. It is not cut up into nations; there are no wars there. Let us trespass freely and fearlessly and find our own way for ourselves” (McTaggart 64).

The Hogarth Press nurtured a space which disregarded the capitalist belief in a “private space [owned] by a single dominant individual.” Its inclusion of other voices paralleled the economic inclusion of other desires. Instead of the capitalist psychology of victors and losers which promulgated wars and fostered the “worship of property” (Tratner 93), Woolf helped to nurture a social-economic space<sup>34</sup> of gift giving:

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<sup>32</sup> “‘Opening the Door’: The Hogarth Press as Virginia Woolf’s Outsiders’ Society,” 64.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 77. See also Helen Southworth, “‘Going Over’: The Woolfs, Hogarth and Working-Class Voices,” *Leonard and Virginia Woolf, the Hogarth Press and the Networks of Modernism*, ed. Helen Southworth (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 206-233; Laura Marcus, “Virginia Woolf and the Hogarth Press,” *Modernist Writers and the Marketplace*, Ian Willison, Warwick Gould, and Warren Chernaik eds. (London: MacMillan Press, 1996), 124-150.

<sup>34</sup> Tratner notes that “Virginia hosted weekly meetings of the Women’s Cooperative Guild, and Leonard wrote a series of books in the 1920’s advocating a ‘Cooperative Commonwealth’ as the ‘Future of Industry.’” 94.



the operation of a gift economy acts as a disruptive force—not only upsetting heteropatriarchal social structures and potentially subverting the operation of dominant capitalist economies, but, crucially, articulating an alternative feminine libidinal economy. Feminist critic Helene Cixous characterizes the gift economy as feminine, and as one which offers a resistance to the commodifying impulse of capitalism. It emphasizes fluidity, indeterminacy, a destabilization of hierarchies and rational systems, and a disturbance of property rights. It doesn't try to recover its expenses or to recuperate its losses—in fact giving, excess and overflow are recognized as sources of pleasure and *jouissance* (Simpson 57).

Gift economy did not seek to overthrow capitalism; instead, it recuperates the consumerist impulses of the mass-industrial market and makes them a real, embodied, experience. Rather than being hoodwinked into believing he or she needed to buy a fetishized commodity, the consumer becomes an active and self-informed participant in the expression of his/her desires. The market is transformed from the rigid and sanctified but nevertheless artificial laws of bourgeois consumerism, profit/loss, etc., to an all-inclusive hodgepodge of desires (as Robinson Crusoe, Friday and Elizabeth Dalloway demonstrate later in this chapter), all expressed without fear of retribution, to be fulfilled or rejected at one's own pace. While the illusion of private property requires the repression of the body, gift-giving encourages us to be at home in our own bodies—free to develop our own sense of style, and self-mastery. This is in stark contrast to mastery over others through repression of our desires and oppression of others' desires, which defines capitalist social relations. Tratner further suggests that Woolf's interest in cooperative principles of sharing and inclusion are evident in *Three Guineas*, where she advocates a distribution of wealth, “surplus funds” (98), which he argues, worked against the

desire to accumulate [wealth] and the consequent competitiveness and exclusiveness of capitalism (96). . . . For Woolf the opposite of philanthropy is not spending money on oneself, it is hoarding money, and the devil of hoarding money (98). . . . is precisely that it destroys the possibility of bodily and mental pleasure (98). . . . The system her essay implies is thoroughly consumerist: it would rely on pleasure and desire as its motive forces rather than labor, accumulation, and self-denial. In such a system, unleashing all the marvelously varied forms of desire would not be a radical way of ending oppression and war but rather a basic mechanism by which the economic engine created wealth (102).

Gift-economy, with its roots in the Cooperative Commonwealth and echoing Marx's idea of the collective, effectively turns on its head capitalist social relations by focusing on the individual and its desires.

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<sup>35</sup> See Wicke, 120. Woolf's emphasis on consumption was also part of Leonard Woolf's thinking. Evelyn T. Chan cites his autobiography where she notes that for Leonard, the “‘the psychology of capitalism’ was ‘so firmly established in modern society that to most people the idea that the object of industry should be consumption, not production or profit, seems Utopian and even immoral. I never imagined, therefore, that my argument in favour of socialism controlled by consumers could cut any ice in the Labour movement’” (*Downhill* 88) From Chan, 42.

Woolf's interest in celebrating individual desires—consumption<sup>35</sup> and inclusion—has led various critics to align her with the ideas of economist and fellow member of the Bloomsbury group, John Maynard Keynes. Jennifer Wicke writes,

Woolf and Keynes as modernists have to find a vocabulary for the momentary, the oscillating, the everyday, for a market transfused by a collective magic. One always at the risk of breaking down. Both comprehend that the market can be a battlefield, or a minefield, or a liquid terrain of experience, choice, agency and desire exquisitely sensitive to all the ripples that play across its surface. And for them consuming is at the heart of this rough magic (129).

Both Woolf and Keynes saw the market as a space which radically undermined the hierarchical social boundaries of profit and loss, the rational and irrational; they characterized the market as a place for shared experiences across social and national boundaries. Woolf illustrates this, as I discuss later in this chapter, with Elizabeth Dalloway, who explores Fleet Street amongst the “unemployed” and the street’s “blaring, rattling” sounds (*MD* 138). But as I discuss in the following chapters, it was not just the boundaries of the class structure which were usurped but the also the common-sense boundaries of space and time. Moments of synchronicity between different characters across *spacetime* evince a shared space which altered the basic notions of self and reality—it destabilized the conventions of cause and effect (Wicke 130).<sup>36</sup> The market was envisioned as an alternative paradigm of social relations. The Keynesian market was “magical in a complex, fluid, unpredictable, social, emotional, and sacrally consuming fashion—everything the hierarchized wizardry of classical market magic would repudiate . . . anarchic yet interconnected, playful at its best” (Wicke 129). Woolf’s “market modernism, if we can now call it that, emphasizes fluidity, sexual and social difference, and the active thrusts of consumption” (Wicke 120), which had been and were being actively repressed in English society by the capitalist worship of money and belief in the symbolic value of “Conversion” and “Proportion,”<sup>37</sup> notions invoked in *Mrs. Dalloway* and enforced by the mediators of good and evil, Rev. Whittaker and Sir William Bradshaw. For Woolf and Keynes, consuming was tantamount to exploration, questioning, and self-expression—activities which lead to a different kind of wealth. Wicke argues that

Consuming (a synonym for “saving less”) is stripped of its stigma, is in fact a means of defying what Keynes called “the evangelical economics of the Victorians” and Woolf calls, in her novel, “Conversion and Proportion.” The latter two monstrous erectile

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<sup>36</sup> For the connection between Einstein and Keynes, see Roger E. Blackhouse and Bradley W. Bateman, *Capitalist Revolutionary* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 115.

<sup>37</sup> See *Mrs. Dalloway*, 100. I also discuss these concepts later in this chapter as they relate to Fredric Jameson’s *The Political Unconscious*

principles of force are countered through the text by acts of market consumption—and even the deliberate “wasting” of money, as when a gold coin is tossed into the park pond by Clarissa (128).

Clarissa tossing a cold coin into the Serpentine while Septimus had “flung it away” (*MD* 184), is representative of what Tratner sees as the counterintuitive message in Septimus’ suicide:

Instead of holding on to their treasures, people must learn to throw them away, consume them, burn them up, in order to have the paradoxical result of increasing everyone’s treasure. What in the nineteenth century appeared a form of economic suicide becomes in the twentieth the source of economic health (119).

As I discuss in this and the following chapters, Woolf questions the abstract nature of reality and invites readers to do the same, to “throw it away” in order to begin the journey of self-emancipation. Wicke concludes,

Like consciousness, the market has come to defy description, in that it is no longer equatable with realist or entirely rationalist modes of representation. This puts the modernist economic theorist like Keynes in the position the modernist writer like Woolf also confronts—a position where the imperative is to represent what is acknowledged beforehand to be resistant to representation, at least by traditional (realist, rationalist) means (117).

And Tratner also suggests that

In the twenties, the Bloomsbury group opposed the general effort to return England to the prewar ethic of “abstinence,” the Victorian emphasis on thrift and restraint. . . . Many critics have noted that Woolf’s novel [*Mrs. Dalloway*] criticizes the repressions, particularly the sexual repressions, of prewar England. (103).

If Woolf and Keynes sought to foster a space where repressed reality was acknowledged and unconscious desires of the body were given full expression, then it was Mr. Ramsay’s strain of Rationalism which had provided the arguments for Empire by enforcing loyalty and self-sacrifice, Conversion and Proportion, religious ideas at the core of Woolf’s criticism of the social system. Through Woolf’s portrayal of Miss Kilman, Dr. Bradshaw and Rev. Whittaker in *Mrs. Dalloway*, and Mr. Ramsay in *To The Lighthouse*, as well as Fredric Jameson’s own interest in the mediator-analyst, I will discuss how Woolf lays bare the ideology of private property. Woolf’s critique of the social system attacks the dominant forms of morally “good” behavior in Western civilization, whether the belief in God or the value of money or other forms of capital, to show how these beliefs are motivated by an impulse to control and impoverish others. I will also discuss how the role of the “mediator” develops in Western society, as the purveyor of specialized knowledge or social value, contrives the denial of the body and its desires in exchange for an abstract ideal: religious experience or exchange value. The desire to master the other reflects an unconscious desire to have self-mastery, as I suggest Marx and Woolf argue. Creating a space which encouraged the expression of desire would turn on its head the structure of Western reality from an abstract sense of space and time mediated by an elite few to an all-inclusive space of unmediated social relations.

In *To The Lighthouse*, it is Mr. Ramsay’s son James who voices Woolf critique of the social system:

He had always kept this old symbol of taking a knife and striking his father to the heart. Only now, as he grew older, and sat staring at his father in an impotent rage, it was not him, that old man reading, whom he wanted to kill, but it was the thing that descended on him—without his knowing it perhaps; that fierce sudden black-winged harpy, with its talons and its beak all cold and hard, that struck and struck at you (he could feel the beak on his bare legs, where it had struck when he was a child) and then made off and there he was again, an old man, very sad, reading his book. That he would kill, that he would strike to that heart. Whatever he did—(and he might do anything, he felt, looking at the Lighthouse and the distant shore) whether he was in a business, in a bank, a barrister, a man at the head of some enterprise, that he would fight, that he would track down and stamp out—tyranny, despotism, he called it—making people do what they did not want to do, cutting off their right to speak. How could any of them say, But I won't, when he said, Come to the Lighthouse. Do this. Fetch me that. The black wings spread, and the hard beak tore.<sup>38</sup>

When James was an infant, his father's sadistic "pleasure of disillusioning his son" who had wanted to go to the lighthouse had engendered in him a hatred for his father, "Had there been an axe handy, or a poker, any weapon that would have gashed a hole in his father's breast and killed him, there and then, James would have seized it" (4). But now the older James recognizes his father's behavior as part of a stratified system of oppression. While in the beginning of the passage, much as in his childhood, his thoughts and desires were ignored, separated by brackets, towards the end his voice becomes more prominent until we can no longer distinguish between his and the objective narrator's in the last four sentences. The "omniscient" quality Woolf attributes to James suggests that he is able to relive the past beyond the immediacy of the trauma his father inflicted on him. James' intimacy with his father's voice, as Woolf's style implies, makes possible his direct engagement with the forces of ideology. He can see what ails his father. In *Art & Anger*, Jane Marcus notes that Woolf understood that the easy thing to do was to project anger that had been projected onto her:

"Do not blame yourself; I have felt it too, that 'black snake' lurking," she tells us, and she shows us that we deflect anger heaped on us from above to those below. . . . By analyzing the source of her own anger, and its deflection not directly back at the enemy but "down" onto the "little man" sitting next to her, Virginia Woolf articulates the "scapegoat" theory of prejudice in a few words (133-134).<sup>39</sup>

Likewise for James, while as an infant the black-winged harpy had threatened to pervert his desires so that he would follow blindly in Oedipal fashion in his father's footsteps and derive pleasure from thwarting others' desires, he now understood it was not his father who he must attack but the system that perpetuated such violence. Woolf's attack on the social system follows a similar path: to analyze and understand the nature of repression which structures the forces of oppression.

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<sup>38</sup> *TTL*, 1927, (New York: Harcourt, 1981), 184.

<sup>39</sup> *Art & Anger: Reading Like a Woman*, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1988).

Woolf's criticism of the Victorian social system which she and James grew up in is evident in the car scene of *Mrs. Dalloway*, where she describes the religious belief in Empire and the willingness to perform the act of self-sacrifice it occasions. As characters wonder which royal figure was sitting behind the blinds of the car passing by, "Was it the Prince of Wales's the Queen's, the Prime Minister's? Whose face was it? Nobody knew,"—their doubt is sutured by the "voice of authority; the spirit of religion" (14) sweeps over the clamor of individual perspectives: "strangers looked at each other and thought of the dead; of the flag; of Empire. . . . At once they stood even straighter, and removed their hands, and seemed ready to attend their Sovereign, if need be to the cannon's mouth, as their ancestors had done before them" (18). The car's symbolism elicits a response of self-sacrifice from the crowd which assimilates it into the homologous narrative of the nation:

The motor car with its blinds drawn and an air of inscrutable reserve proceeded toward Piccadilly, still gazed at, still ruffling the faces on both sides of the street with the same dark breath of veneration whether for Queen, Prince, or Prime Minister nobody knew. The face itself had been seen only once by three people for a few seconds. Even the sex was now in dispute. But there could be no doubt that greatness was seated within; greatness was passing, hidden, down Bond Street, removed only by a hand's-breadth from ordinary people who might know, for the first and last time, be within speaking distance of the majesty of England, of the enduring symbol of the state which will be known to curious antiquaries, sifting the ruins of time, when London is a grass-grown path and all those hurrying along the pavement this Wednesday morning are but bones with a few wedding rings mixed up in their dust and the gold stoppings of innumerable decayed teeth. The face of the motor car will be known (16).

The figurehead sitting behind the blinds is not seen; rather, characters' experience is formatted by the logic of history: their perceptions and thoughts are organized by "the thought of Royalty looking at them" (19). Their metaphorical act of self-sacrifice in exchange for a symbolic moment of transcendence provides a sense of continuity from the past to the present, and to the future, which they, as modernist subjects, feel they lack. Woolf's representation of their experience of time—"For thirty seconds all heads were inclined the same way—to the window" (17-18),—implies the reduction of their reality to the linear temporality of historical events, nationalistic "moments" of communion which the appearance of the car makes possible.

In this way, Woolf suggests that the realism of the car scene represents an extension of an older religious tradition of self-sacrifice.<sup>40</sup> The illusion of Empire was maintained through a systematic exploitation of individuals, which kept them at a distance literally and figuratively, lest they get too close to those in power and suddenly the contrived light of the royal spectacle should vanish. It is important to note that by the "subject" or individual characters I mean the notion of the self which emerges from Christianity:

Historically, the Medieval and Scholastic conception of a solitary, monadic soul, created and sustained by the power of God at each moment of its existence, of course, obviously implies ontological separation. For Christian religious faith, however, God's

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<sup>40</sup> I will also discuss the connection between the "realism" of Newtonian linear time and religion, in the second and third chapters.

perpetual conscious intervention guarantees that each soul shall never be absolutely alone or completely forsaken by God. Accordingly, despite the fact that Christianity posits the perfect individuality of the soul, that self is never wholly abandoned simply because God continually and eternally reflects the existence of each self-conscious being. Nevertheless, and conversely, estrangement from God is portrayed as the worst of all possible evils.<sup>41</sup>

The soul's separation from God requires the sacrifice of the body and its desires in exchange for the promise of not being forsaken. In animating the abstract values of religion through ritual and self-sacrifice, the self's daily existence through time is assured, and the soul in the afterlife. While the religious experience represents a "momentary" transcendence from existential self-estrangement, alienation from others, and God, it only serves to affirm the values of loss—the repression of the body's desires—which structure the religious compulsion towards self-sacrifice. In other words, sinning is a prerequisite to salvation. Intimacy with God can only take place by rejecting the body. This further distances the subject from its original loss. Once the cycle sin and salvation has been set in motion, it runs on its own volition. Even though the car is a symbol of modernity, Woolf shows how the unconscious value attributed to the separation from God and promise of an imaginary reunion lingers into the twentieth century. As a shift from religion to capitalism takes place, what had been strictly a religious experience morphed into a secular one with the advent of private property but still with self-sacrifice as its basis.

The ideology of private property, understood as the competition for capital and class status, is rooted in the ascendancy of the priest, as Marx discusses in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. The priest as mediator, of which the philosopher and capitalist are further examples, exists as the source of alienated labor. Alienated labor is defined by Marx as man's estrangement from his own body, from his inherent creative essence. He is estranged from his spontaneous "life-activity"—his "*species life*" (76). Marx states that when man exists as a conscious being, he exists as a means to his life-activity (76). His labor exists as an expression of his creativity—he makes his life the object of his labor—which also exists for others to express their creativity. Like Woolf's economy of gift-giving: "It is life-engendering life" (76). Marx defines estranged labor as the inverse: "Estranged labour reverses this relationship, so that it is just because man is a conscious being that he makes his life-activity, his *essential* being, a mere means to his *existence*" (76). The body becomes a means to survival not a means to spontaneous, free, creative action—"estranged labour makes man's species life a means to his physical existence," states Marx (77). Therefore, individuals equally alienated from their creative essence, compete with others for survival. Unlike free labor where the object represents the objectification of man's creative essence, it is life affirming life, private property is the objectification of man's alienated labor. Someone owns the individual's ability to survive and as such, private property denies life and engenders competition and survival. The mediator thus exists as the "master of labour" (79). He exists as the owner of the means of production for an objective and abstract reality, private property, which only serves to further alienate man and woman, himself and the laborer, from their creative essence and species life. The distorted

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<sup>41</sup> Ben Lazare Mujiskovic, *Loneliness*, (San Diego: Libra Publishers, 1985), 101.

values of private property that emerge from alienated labor, as the illusion of species-life are good and evil, (as discussed by Nietzsche), the morality of capital, intellectual capital, etc, but they are in fact the “*product* of alienated labor . . . and the *means* by which labour alienates itself” (79). The ideology of private property, as the denial of the body, which stems from the rise of the mediator is just a symptom of alienated labor. The power of private property is in essence the power to deny others their desires, desires that the mediator has denied himself in assuming his role. The competition that ensues between the capitalist and the laborer, for example, is rooted in their self-estrangement. They seek to impose on the other their feelings of lack—the loss of their creative essence. This constitutes the nature of the class system. Private property exists then as the consequence of alienated labor and not as the source, asserts Marx (79). We are not alienated from private property; we are alienated from our creative essence. Individuals compete for an illusion of power over the other which represents an unconscious attempt to experience the body but which only serves to further repress the body and the creative spirit of the species.

While there is no evidence that Woolf read Marx,<sup>42</sup> her marriage to a Marxist, various comments on the priests and professors,<sup>43</sup> and proximity to a milieu where the economic question was discussed suggest a probable interest similar to Marx’s in the role of the mediator: priest, doctor, philosopher, capitalist, etc., as it evolves from religion to capitalism. In the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* and *The German Ideology* Marx describes how the experience of capitalistic alienation develops from the experience of religious estrangement set in motion by the priests. As Marx states in *The German Ideology*,

Division of labour only becomes truly such from the moment when a division of material and mental labour appears. (The first form of ideologists, *priests*, is concurrent). From this moment onwards consciousness *can* really flatter itself that it is something other than consciousness of existing practice, that it *really* represents something without representing something real; from now on consciousness is in a position to emancipate itself from the world and to proceed to the formation of “pure” theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc. (51-52).<sup>44</sup>

What had first existed as a division of labour based on “physical strength” and the “sexual act”<sup>45</sup> is transformed into an invisible experience by the priest. In his desire to control the populace, the priest enacts the transvaluation of values, elevating the “good,” abstract religious experience

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<sup>42</sup> The Woolfs possessed various copies of Marx’s translated writings in their library. See *The Library of Leonard and Virginia Woolf: A Short-title Catalog*, Julia King and Laila Miletic-Vejzovic eds. (Washington: Washington State University Press, 2003). Washington State University. Web. 16 Mar. 2014. <http://ntserver1.wsulibs.wsu.edu/masc/onlinebooks/woolflibrary/woolflibraryonline.htm>

<sup>43</sup> Beverly Ann Schlack notes that in “The Mark on the Wall,” Woolf mused about “a very pleasant world. . . . [Marcus’ ellipses] A world without professors or specialists (HH 43)” From, “Fathers in General: The Patriarchy in Virginia Woolf’s Fiction,” *Virginia Woolf: A Feminist Slant*, ed. Jane Marcus (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), (65).

<sup>44</sup> *The German Ideology*, ed. C.J. Arthur (New York: International Publishers, 2010).

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 51-52.

over the sinfulness of bodily desires,<sup>46</sup> viz., the belief in original sin. Unlike Marx's use of the concept of abstraction as a tool of analysis, here abstraction represents the idea of reification as an ideological process whereby wholly arbitrary values are cast into laws we must obey. The priest takes center stage as the intercessor between the laws of God and individuals who are born alienated from themselves and others. The priest acts like the capitalist who extracts labor, he extracts sacrifices—penances from the guilt-ridden, in exchange for a *temporary* absolution from their sinful state. “The tithe to be rendered to the priest is more matter of fact than his blessing,” Marx remarks.<sup>47</sup> While religion preaches the salvation of the soul, capitalism emphasizes the belief in the moral superiority of having money.<sup>48</sup> With the development of capitalism and private property, the invisible power the priest holds becomes a visible reality.<sup>49</sup> Social relations become in effect economic relations of power. The private experience of sin and salvation in religion morphs into the rational regulation of profit and loss in capitalism. Instead of the church being in charge of individual salvation, now the individual has the power to save himself through the acquisition of capital. The dominant forms of private property which emerged were the various forms of specialized knowledge: institutionalized knowledge, the capitalist as owner of the means of production: land, factories, machinery, etc. But like the belief in God, the belief in private property requires a self-sacrifice by individuals vying for power equivalent to the self-sacrifice made in religion. The alienating nature of private property which develops from the forfeiture of one's own powers is evident in the mechanism of the class structure.<sup>50</sup> As Marx argues in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*,

External labour, labour in which man alienates himself, is a labour of self-sacrifice, of mortification. Lastly, the external character of labour for the worker appears in the fact that it is not his own, but someone else's, that it does not belong to him, that in it he belongs, not to himself, but to another. Just as in religion the spontaneous activity of the human imagination, of the human brain and the human heart, operates independently of the individual—that is, operates on him as an alien, divine or diabolical activity—in the same way the worker's activity is not his spontaneous activity. It belongs to another; it is the loss of his self (74).

Marx continues later in the same text:

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<sup>46</sup> Both Marx and Nietzsche discuss the transvaluation of values. See “Nietzsche's Preface,” *The Genealogy of Morals*, trans. and ed. Walter Kaufman (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 17.

<sup>47</sup> Marx, *Capital*: “Part I. Commodities and Money,” *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1978), 325.

<sup>48</sup> See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, for a discussion of the synergy between the Protestant and Catholic religions and the social values of capitalism. See also Karl Marx, “Part I. Commodities and Money,” 326.

<sup>49</sup> *1844*, 78-79.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.



labour, the subjective essence of private property as exclusion of property, and capital, objective labour as exclusion of labour, constitute private property as its developed state of contradiction—hence a dynamic relationship moving inexorably to its resolution (81-82).

Thus individuals in capitalist society are pitted against each other in the blind struggle for an imagined social value, private property, when the reality is that they incessantly seek to impose on the other the experience of self-loss and alienation they both feel. The capitalist,<sup>51</sup> owner of the means of production, *projects* onto the worker his unconscious feeling of self-sacrifice by exploiting the worker for profit. There is a division of labor, “a particular, exclusive sphere of activity . . . is forced upon him [the worker] . . . from which he cannot escape,”<sup>52</sup> Marx writes. The capitalist gains from the other, in the form of capital, what is taken from him. (He essentially gains time. Time is the precious commodity the capitalist owns, but what both the worker and capitalist unconsciously desire is to own their bodies). The worker in turn forces this alienation upon someone else. The burden of loss is passed down through the class system. The end result is the competition between individuals and classes for private property which might seem real, but as Marx argues, is quite arbitrary. In the *Philosophic and Economic Manuscripts of 1844*, he states:

Political economy proceeds from the fact of private property, but it does not explain it to us. It expresses in general, abstract formulae the *material* process through which private property actually passes, and these formulae it then takes for *laws*. It does not *comprehend* these laws—i.e., it does not demonstrate how they arise from the very nature of private property. Political economy does not disclose the source of the division between labour and capital, and between capital and land. When for example, it defines the relationship of wages to profit, it takes the interest of the capitalists to be the ultimate cause; i.e., it takes for granted what is supposed to evolve. Similarly, competition comes in everywhere. It is explained from external circumstances (70).

The inherently arbitrary nature of exchange value, whether as capital, laws, etc., exists in capitalistic society as the belief in an imagined, omniscient power that they have to give meaning to our alienated existence. But the pursuit of the “law” and the illusion of power it bestows on those who wield it is rooted in self-estrangement. In his book, *Power and the Division of Labour*, Dietrich Rueschemeyer argues that

Marx focused his comments on the influence knowledge experts have as “ideologists,” on their influence on the ideas prevalent in their society. He neglected their bargaining power as purveyors of useful, and often in fact urgently needed, knowledge. This is quite understandable if we consider the major pre-modern professions - priesthood, law and medicine. Their knowledge rested largely on belief and traditional construction rather than on pragmatically relevant scientific research, and was embedded in diffuse authority

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>52</sup> *GI*, 53.

relations, maintained jointly by dominant ideas and organized coercion in addition to habit and custom.<sup>53</sup>

The never ending oscillation between sin and salvation, every attempt to master the repressed experience of loss through the acquisition of private property, is integral to religion and state-power<sup>54</sup> ideology. It requires a sacrifice in order to continue existing. Beverly Ann Schlack quotes Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, where her critique of the ideologist/mediator is apparent: "The dominance of the professor" (33) quotes Schlack, is to be seen in his roles of power and influence, even in his financial holdings. She refers to "patriarchs, the professors, . . . [Schlack's ellipses] [who] had money and power, . . . [Schlack's ellipses] the instinct for possession, the rages of acquisition which drives them to desire other people's fields and goods perpetually."<sup>55</sup> While the proponents of political economy see loss, alienation and self-sacrifice as facts of our daily lives, which they get to impose on others, Marx shows how the all-encompassing belief in the ideology of private property becomes the dominant reality when the priest emerges as an influential force.

The social dynamic which characterizes the class system as the predominant model of social relations in capitalist society helps to explain Marx's attack on Hegel's vision of history in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*.<sup>56</sup> Marx critiques Hegel's concept of history because as Marx suggests, it valorizes the experience of loss produced and reproduced in the class system. Marx basis his critique of Hegel's dialectical method on Ludwig Feuerbach's analysis of Hegel's vision of history, which rests on the unacknowledged "fact" of religious estrangement:<sup>57</sup>

Hegel sets out from the estrangement of Substance (in Logic, from the Infinite, the abstractly universal)—from the absolute and fixed abstraction; which means, put popularly, that he sets out from religion and theology.

Secondly, he annuls the infinite, and establishes the actual, sensuous, real, finite, particular (philosophy—annulment of religion and theology).

Thirdly, he again annuls the positive and restores the abstraction, the infinite—restoration of religion and theology.

Feuerbach thus conceives the negation of the negation only as a contradiction of philosophy with itself—as the philosophy which affirms theology (the transcendent, etc.) after having denied it, and which it therefore affirms in opposition to itself (*1844* 108).

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<sup>53</sup> Rueschemeyer, *Power and the Division of Labour*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), 107. This is apparent in the car scene of *Mrs. Dalloway* where the car's appearance causes "rumours" to circulate (14).

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>55</sup> "Fathers in General," 64.

<sup>56</sup> Marx's criticism of Hegel will play an important role in my discussion of Fredric Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* later in this chapter.

<sup>57</sup> 66-81, 106-125.

Hegel's pursuit of knowledge is revealed by Feuerbach as a desire to return back to God. By re-establishing religion and theology, the Hegelian dialectic restores what it had first negated. Marx describes this contradiction as a "position which is not yet sure of itself" (108). Like religious faith, it requires to be constantly affirmed and it does so at the expense of the "sensuous, real, finite," reality of the body, which means it only serves to further alienate itself from concrete reality. If the end goal of Hegel's dialectics is "Absolute Knowledge" (109-110), as Marx asserts, then the process of sacrificing the body can be understood as "*alienated thinking*, and therefore thinking which [continuously] abstracts from nature and from real man: *abstract thinking*" (110). Hegel's attempt to regain the abstract, infinite, mind... "the philosophic mind . . . thinking within its own self-estrangement—i.e., comprehending itself abstractly" (110)—it has saved itself from the world by acquiring knowledge—at the expense of the body, recalls Marx's description of the apparent sovereignty of political economy. Marx describes political economy's failure to acknowledge the origins of alienated labour in religious terms by saying that "Theology in the same way explains the origin of evil by the fall of man: that is, it assumes as a fact, in historical form, what has to be explained" (71). Similarly, Hegel assumes the activity of self-estrangement as the path towards knowledge without investigating its origins. It is the unquestioned fact of original sin, or estrangement from the infinite, which ends up valorizing the abstract, Absolute Knowledge, over the sensuous of the body which leads to the oppression of others evident in the class system. Knowledge is wielded against others. This neglected "fact" exposes Hegel's dialectics as an ever growing maelstrom of symptom formations, viz., the class structure, where the emphasis on the "*abstract, logical, speculative expression for the movement of history*" (108) over and against the "richness of subjective *human sensibility*" (89) represents a desire and inability to reconnect with the real material conditions of existence. Because individuals continually sacrifice their desires in exchange for an arbitrary social value, they feel the loss of their own desires as a pressure always chasing them close behind. The only way to make up for the feeling of loss is by acquiring private property, which produces the illusion of having felt something, some feeling of pleasure that is their own. For a brief moment they forget their alienation, but unfortunately this feeling does not belong to them. It belongs to the larger social apparatus which has indoctrinated their body and thoughts. As Marx states,

*sense, religion, state-power, etc., are spiritual entities; for only mind is the true essence of man, and the true form of mind is thinking mind, the logical, speculative mind. The humanness of nature and of the nature begotten by history—the humanness of man's products—appears in the form that they are products of abstract mind and as such, therefore, phases of mind—thought entities. . . .*

The only labour which Hegel knows and recognizes is *abstractly mental* labour (111-112).

Mr. Ramsay's pursuit of R, how "His own little light would shine, not very brightly, for a year or two, and would then be merged in some bigger light, and that in a bigger still" (*TTL* 35), exemplifies the kind of abstract "historical" labor Marx critiques. Mr. Ramsay as the purveyor of specialized knowledge embodies the role of the priest, Christ figure and intellectual, who both sacrifices himself but also requires sacrifices. Marx's comments in *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* can be applied to Mr. Ramsay: he is "[t]he philosopher [who]

sets up himself (that is, one who is himself an abstract form of estranged man) as the *measuring-rod* of the estranged world” (110). As Marx explains, “religious self-estrangement necessarily appears in the relationship of the layman to the priest, or again to a *mediator*, etc., since we are here dealing with the intellectual world” (*my emphasis*, 75). This is evident when Mrs. Ramsay thinks, “her husband required sacrifices” (*TTL* 16). Divorced from God or the State, which is really the self alienated from its own body, Mr. Ramsay sacrifices himself, his physical desires, and in turn projects this sacrifice onto others in an act of unconscious retribution.

Woolf’s portrays Mr. Ramsay as a sacrificial figure, priest and philosopher who demands the sympathy of his family and those who surround him, for his imagined self-sacrifice. Mr. Ramsay constantly seeks to keep his feelings of lack at bay by escaping into his imagination and seeing himself as a tragic hero. His repeated recitation of Alfred Lord Tennyson’s tragic poem, “The Charge of the Last Brigade,”<sup>58</sup> partly through memory and partly through improvisation, suggests that he is incapable of recognizing the infantile vision of himself on a heroic journey of self-sacrifice in pursuit of the letter R, or refuses to. Mr. Ramsay’s pursuit of R—Absolute Knowledge—is his attempt to find the transcendental home of religion. It represents his “self-objectification” (*1844* 110) from a lost world. In recalling Feuerbach’s analysis of Hegel, Marx notes that the latter proved that “philosophy is nothing else but religion rendered into thoughts . . . and that it has therefore likewise to be condemned as another form and manner of existence of the estrangement of the essence of man.”<sup>59</sup> Mr. Ramsay’s philosophy follows Hegel’s footsteps: it is a philosophy which denies the body in favor of self-abstraction. Mixing up the lines of the poem to suit his fantasy, Mr. Ramsay’s strong desire to play the hero is clear: “*Stormed at with shot and shell. . . . ‘Boldly we rode and well’*” (17). When his self-delusion is exposed—“Together they [Lily and Mr. Bankes] had seen a thing they had not been meant to see. They had encroached upon a privacy” (18)—, and he feels his “real” lack, he lashes out by projecting his unconscious feelings of loss:

His eyes, glazed with emotion, defiant with tragic intensity, met theirs for a second, and trembled on the verge of recognition; but then, raising his hand, halfway to his face as if to avert, to brush off, in an agony of peevish shame, their normal gaze, as if he begged them to withhold for a moment what he knew to be inevitable, as if he impressed upon them his own child-like *resentment* of interruption, yet even in the moment of discovery was not to be routed utterly, but was determined to hold fast to something of this delicious emotion, this impure rhapsody of which he was ashamed, but in which he reveled—he turned abruptly, slammed his private door on them (*my emphasis* 25).

Mr. Ramsay’s feeling of “resentment” recalls Nietzsche’s description of *ressentiment* in *The Genealogy of Morals*; it is a

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<sup>58</sup> Tennyson’s poem depicts a historical event in which miscommunication had led to decimation of the Brigade. The men of the Brigade, notwithstanding the odds against them, pushed forward against the more heavily armored Russian side. “Charge of the Light Brigade.” *Wikipedia: The Online Encyclopedia*. Wikimedia Foundation Inc. 22 July 2004. Web. 27 October, 2013.

<sup>59</sup> *1844*, 107-108.

*desire to deaden pain by means of affects*. This cause is usually sought, quite wrongly in my view, in defensive retaliation, a mere reactive measure, a “reflex movement” set off by sudden injury or peril, such as a beheaded frog still makes to shake off a corrosive acid. But the difference is fundamental: in the one case, the desire is to prevent any further emotion of any kind, a tormenting, secret pain that is becoming unendurable, and to drive it out of consciousness at least for the moment: for that one requires an affect, as savage an affect as possible, and, in order to excite that, any pretext at all. “Someone or other must be to blame for my feeling ill”—this kind of reasoning is common to all the sick, and is indeed held the more firmly the more the real cause of their feeling ill, the physiological cause, remains hidden (127).

Behind the facade of his venerable intellect, Woolf shows Mr. Ramsay as emotionally stunted, disconnected from his feelings and desires and in his child-like self-delusion as a tragic hero, resenting Lily and Mr. Bankes “normal gaze” for interrupting his fantasy—they had walked “straight into Mr. Ramsay who boomed tragically at them, ‘Some one had blundered!’” (25). Lily and Mr. Bankes make him aware of his self-delusion. Mr. Ramsay’s self-appointed role as tragic hero is a remnant of an older religious tradition. Insofar as he “sacrifices” himself for the good of the community, he asks for “sympathy” in return. Mr. Ramsay’s dictum is, “If I have sacrificed myself, then so must you.” Like the capitalist and worker, whose self-sacrifice is the driving force of the class system, others must pay for Mr. Ramsay’s imagined self-sacrifice:

all the time he was feeling, Think of me, think of me. . . . His immense self-pity, his demand for sympathy poured itself in pools at her feet [Lily], and all she did, miserable *sinner* that she was, was to draw her skirts a little closer round her ankles, lest she should get wet (*my emphasis* 152).

And on the next page, the narrator states, “he had shown her his bleeding hands, his lacerated heart, and asked her (Lily) to pity them. . . . he seemed to her a figure of infinite pathos” (153-154). Because Mr. Ramsay sees himself as a savior, he stands above what he sees as a lost world. But the more he dissociates himself from his emotions, the greater is the intensity of his *ressentiment*—the more he needs others to fill his lack. His heroic attempt to reach R is portrayed by Woolf as “Teaching and preaching,” (45)—“To pursue truth with such astonishing lack of consideration for other people’s feelings, to rend the thin veils of civilization so wantonly, so brutally, was to her (Lily) so horrible an outrage of human decency” (32). And later, Cam recalls the “blindness and tyranny of his which had poisoned her childhood and raised bitter storms, so that even now she woke in the night trembling with rage and remembered some command of his; some insolence; ‘Do this,’ ‘Do that,’ his dominance: his ‘Submit to me.’” (170). His selfishness is time and again described by the narrator and characters as Mr. Ramsay’s egotism,<sup>60</sup> his need for sympathy:

But his son hated him. . . for his exactingness and egotism. . . . There he stood, demanding sympathy. . . .

He wanted sympathy. He was a failure, he said. . . . It was sympathy he wanted. . . .

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<sup>60</sup> Cam describes him as “egotistical. Worst of all, he is a tyrant” (190).

He was a failure, he repeated. . . .and James, as he stood stiff between her knees, felt her rise in a rosy-flowered fruit tree laid with leaves and dancing boughs into which the beak of brass, the arid scimitar of his father, the egotistical man, plunged and smote, demanding sympathy (36-38).

Mr. Ramsay's status as hero-philosopher-priest requires a fresh sacrifice; it depends on the cruel oppression of others. Mr. Ramsay is "petty, selfish, vain, egotistical; he is spoilt; he is a tyrant; he wears Mrs. Ramsay to death" (24) and frustrates his youngest son's desire to visit the lighthouse. Mr. Ramsay's sense of self depends on dashing others' desires because he is alienated from his own desires. He derives pleasure from seeing others suffer. This is how he is able to feel. As Nietzsche writes in his discussion of the priest,

The idea at issue here is the *valuation* the ascetic priest places on our life: he juxtaposes it (along with what pertains to it: "nature," "world," the whole sphere of becoming and transitoriness) with quite a different mode of existence which it opposes and excludes, *unless* it turn against itself, *deny itself*: in that case, the case of the ascetic life, life counts as a bridge to that other mode of existence. The ascetic treats life as a wrong road on which one must finally walk back to the point where it begins, or as a mistake that is put right by deeds—that we *ought* to put right; for he *demand*s that one go along with him; where he compels acceptance of his evaluation of *his* existence (117).

And from this

derives the form of a kind of *pleasure*—the pleasure of being allowed to vent his power freely upon one who is powerless, the voluptuous pleasure "*de faire le mal pour le plaisir de le faire*,"<sup>61</sup> the enjoyment of violation. This enjoyment will be the greater the lower the creditor stands in the social order, and can easily appear to him as a most delicious morsel, indeed as a foretaste of higher rank. In "punishing" the debtor, the creditor participates in a *right of the masters*: at last he, too, may experience for once the exalted sensation of being allowed to despise and mistreat someone as "beneath him"—or at least, if the actual power and administration of punishment has already passed to the "authorities," to see him despised and mistreated. The compensation, then, consists in a warrant for and title to cruelty (65).

These are all qualities that we can attribute to Mr. Ramsay, who as I stated earlier, derives "pleasure [from] disillusioning his son" (4) who wanted to go to the Lighthouse. He imposes himself on Lily, who is described by Mrs. Ramsay as having "little Chinese eyes" (17), and forces his children to do as he says. Cam's and James's silent pact shows they recognize the sadistic quality in their father:

Their heads were bent down, their heads were pressed down by some remorseless gale. Speak to him they could not. They must come; they must follow. They must walk behind him carrying brown parcels. But they vowed, in silence, as they walked, to stand by each other and carry out the great compact—to resist tyranny to the death (163).

Woolf's critique of the social system which produces the likes of Mr. Ramsay is evident. Beverly Schlack notes that "Woolf showed very little mercy for the other educated tyrants of

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<sup>61</sup> The translation given is, "Of doing evil for the pleasure of doing it."

society; her fictional professors fare as badly as do the clergy. They belong to the same clamoring class of ‘fathers in general,’ the ‘bishops and the deans, the doctors and the professors, the patriarchs and the pedagogues all.’”<sup>62</sup> Woolf writes in one of her letters: “I detest pale scholars with their questioning about life, and the message of the classics” (Schlack 65), and in another instance “equates the academic ceremony (‘the sartorial splendours of the educated man’) with the ‘rites of savages’” (Schlack 64). Nietzsche’s own remarks on the scholar are relevant: “Observe the ages in the history of people when the scholar steps into the foreground: they are ages of exhaustion, often of evening and decline; overflowing energy, certainty of life and of the *future*, are things of the past” (154). Mr. Ramsay’s need for constant reassurance, “sacrifices,” (16) is how he derives his pleasure but also how he keeps his own emotions in check and ultimately what stunts his emotional development. Woolf reveals his philosophical pursuits as grounded in a denial of his emotional life. As Lily suggests “He must have had his doubts about that table, she supposed; whether the table was a real table; whether it was worth the time he gave to it; whether he was able after all to find it. He had doubts, she felt, or he would have asked less of people” (155). Since Mrs. Ramsay had died, “he was like a lion seeking whom he could devour” (156). Along with criticizing Mr. Ramsay, Woolf also reveals the nature of his lack in the second description of the scene where Mr. Ramsay feels exposed:

He shivered; he quivered. All his vanity, all his satisfaction in his own splendour, riding fell as a thunderbolt, fierce as a hawk at the head of his men through the valley of death, had been shattered, destroyed. Stormed at by shot and shell, boldly we rode and well, flashed through the valley of death, volleyed and thundered, straight into Lily Briscoe and William Bankes. He quivered; he shivered—(30).

Whereas in the first depiction of this scene, Woolf has Lily and Mr. Bankes running “straight into Mr. Ramsay” (25), here she switches the point of view to Mr. Ramsay walking into Lily and Mr. Bankes. This has the effect of revealing the full extent of Mr. Ramsay’s vanity. His need to be acknowledged as a great man is exposed. Like a petulant child who has lost his toy, he runs up to Mrs. Ramsay: “Not for the world would she [Mrs. Ramsay] have spoken to him, realising from familiar signs, his eyes averted . . . as if he wrapped himself about and needed privacy into which to regain his equilibrium. . . . domesticity triumphed; custom crooned its soothing rhythm. . . . He was safe, he was restored to his privacy” (30-33).

What becomes apparent is that it is not knowledge which moves Mr. Ramsay but a desire to live, to be at home in his body. On the surface, he seems to be preoccupied with recognition, “And his fame lasts how long?” he asks (35). And Mrs. Ramsay on another occasion imagines him thinking about “his own failure. How long would he be read—he would think at once” and someone assuring him, saying, “Oh, but your work will last” (107). Mr. Ramsay thinks:

who shall blame the leader of the doomed expedition, if, having adventured to the uttermost, and used his strength wholly to the last ounce and fallen asleep not much caring if he wakes or not, he now perceives by some pricking in his toes that he lives, and does not on the whole object to live, but requires sympathy and whisky, and some one to

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<sup>62</sup> “*Fathers in General*,” 64.

tell the story of his suffering to at once? Who shall blame him? Who will not secretly rejoice when the hero puts his armour off (36).

Mr. Ramsay's tragic pursuit of R is the pursuit of an abstraction, an illusion of some sense of self and power where there is none. Similarly for Marx and Nietzsche, the glorification of the abstract over the "sinfulness" of the body rests on the promise of a better world, which in fact is a fantastical illusion. As it continues to grow as an oppressive force over ourselves, "This fixation of social activity, this consolidation of what we ourselves produce into an objective power above us, growing out of our control, thwarting our expectations,"<sup>63</sup> as Marx claims, the more intense the vacuum of physical desires becomes. The repression of the body in favor of the accumulation of intellectual capital only further alienates Mr. Ramsay from himself and others. There is no self. What could be considered a self lies still undifferentiated, hidden behind an endless series of frustrations, unconscious attempts to have the agency we call status, professional rank, historical moments, heroic moments, etc., and which can be seen as Mr. Ramsay's desire for recognition—"He must be assured that he too lived in the heart of life; was needed; not here only, but all over the world" (37). Woolf reveals that what Mr. Ramsay really wants is to be brought back to life: "It was sympathy he wanted, to be assured of his genius, first of all, and then to be taken within the circle of life, warmed and soothed, to have his senses restored to him, his barrenness made fertile, and all the rooms of the house made full of life" (37). Behind Mr. Ramsay's mask of civilization<sup>64</sup> lies the unconscious desire of self-annihilation, the desire to break free from the artificial boundaries of the socialized self and to feel in the full capacity of his senses which we can see as "He stood stock-still, by the urn, with geranium flowing over it" (35). The urn presents Woolf's recurring paradox that in death there is life—like Septimus flinging it all away—but Mr. Ramsay, the philosopher, who is standing right next to it musing about death, the letter Z, Shakespeare, and his own light, cannot see it. Any semblance of communion with the self or with others only occurs in Mr. Ramsay's society through the self-sacrifice which the social system demands. Mr. Ramsay's egotistic struggle to reach R rises from a sense of loss whose origin has been long forgotten but whose effects are still felt. Mr. Ramsay feels it as the desire to be praised as a paragon of knowledge while paradoxically also desiring to be at home in his body. So when Mr. Ramsay mentions his upcoming talk on the Empirical philosophers, "Locke, Hume, Berkeley, and the causes of the French Revolution," it is followed by Mr. Ramsay's acknowledgement that it

all had to be deprecated and concealed under the phrase "talking nonsense," because, in effect, he had not done the thing he might have done. It was a disguise; it was the refuge of a man afraid to own his feelings, who could not say, This is what I like—this is what I am; and rather pitiable and distasteful to William Bankes, who wondered why such concealments should be necessary; why he always needed praise; why so brave a man in

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<sup>63</sup> *GI*, 53.

<sup>64</sup> As Peter Walsh hears the ambulance pass by that will collect Septimus' dead body, he thinks, "It is one of the triumphs of civilization, as the light bell of the ambulance sounded. . . the efficiency, the organization, the communal spirit of London." 151.



thought should be so timid in life; how strangely he was venerable and laughable at one and the same time (45).

Woolf's interesting validation of Mr. Ramsay's perspective by merging his thoughts with those of Mr. Bankes breaks down the wall of privacy the former had erected and ironically provides us with an objective point of view that Mr. Ramsay as philosopher searches for but cannot reach. Woolf's slight of hand suggests that the real causes of history—the French Revolution—are in fact the effects, symptoms, of a loss which is displaced, a “*desire to deaden pain by means of affects*,” in the desire to organize experience in a “meaningful” way. History, as a form of abstract labor which has the semblance of permanence, depends on the effective repression of individual desires and oppression of others. It does not pass unnoticed then that in Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay's moment of intimacy, when we last see Mrs. Ramsay alive, Mr. Ramsay needs to hear her declare her love for him and as the scene ends, she is declared victorious over him (124). Mrs. Ramsay is a victim of Mr. Ramsay but also perpetuates the cycle of trauma enacted upon on her, which we later find Lily trying not to give into as she attempts to finish her painting.

Woolf's dissection of Mr. Ramsay reveals how the patriarchal institution is driven by an impotence which manifests itself as an oppressive, impoverishing of human expression. Gillespie notes that

Among the politically active people with whom Woolf was surrounded for much of her life, however, she often heard not confessions of the desires for power but, rather, professions of humanitarian motives. Woolf remained suspicious both of politicians' motives and of the efficacy of their methods. “It seems to me more and more clear,” she says in a diary entry in 1919, “that the only honest people are the artists, and that these social reformers and philanthropists get so out of hand and harbour so many discreditable desires under the disguise of loving their kind, that in the end there's more to find fault with in them than in us.” (WD, 17) (133).<sup>65</sup>

It is only in a skewed, sadistic fashion that Mr. Ramsay is able to enjoy the pleasures of his body. As Freud says, the “unconscious—that is to say, the ‘repressed’—offers no resistance whatever to the efforts of the treatment. Indeed, it itself has no other endeavor than to break through the pressure weighing down on it and force its way either to consciousness or to a discharge through some real action.”<sup>66</sup> The Oedipal quality of the Hegelian dialectic—to suppress desire and control others but at the same time be controlled by an overarching power—characterizes Mr. Ramsay's behavior as mediator between this world and the letter R, the capitalist as owner of the means of production, and the priest and his salvation. Woolf's criticism of Mr. Ramsay suggests that the compulsion of history, or other modes of abstraction, or instances of a universal plot of

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<sup>65</sup> “Political Aesthetics: Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson.”

<sup>66</sup> “Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989), 602.

redemption,<sup>67</sup> i.e., religion and capitalism, are symptoms of a deeply-rooted spiritual teleology of mastery. Ultimately, what develops into an unconscious act of self-sacrifice made to satisfy the invisible forces of religion, capitalism, the State, etc., results in a hatred of life. It is expressed in the repression of those seen as indulging in their fleshly desires.

If Woolf portrays Mr. Ramsay as part of an older religious tradition of self-sacrifice and oppression, in her treatment of Miss Kilman, she shows how Miss Kilman is caught between the abstract values of religion and material pleasures of capitalism which threaten to undermine her ability to contain her desires. She looks down upon Clarissa Dalloway whose capitalistic sensuality make real the desires Miss Kilman tries to religiously repress:<sup>68</sup>

Turning her large gooseberry-coloured eyes upon Clarissa, observing her small pink face, her delicate body, her air of freshness and fashion, Miss Kilman felt, Fool! Simpleton! You who have known neither sorrow nor pleasure; who have trifled you life away! And there rose in her an overmastering desire to overcome her; to unmask her. If she could have felled her it would have eased her. But it was not the body; it was the soul and its mockery that she wished to subdue; make feel her mastery. If only she could make her weep; could ruin her; humiliate her, bring her to her knees crying, You are right! But this was God's will, not Miss Kilman's. It was to be a religious victory. So she glared; so she glowered (125).

Miss Kilman projects the mastery of her desires which is required in order to get closer to God onto Clarissa. She affirms her own religious self-mastery in her imagined mastery over Clarissa. She hates Clarissa because she has what she lacks, "her delicate body, her air of freshness and fashion," but hides this hatred under the guise of a religious victory. Miss Kilman cannot acknowledge Clarissa's sensuality because in doing so she would be confronted by her own lack of a body. Instead, Miss Kilman's lack of a relationship with her body can only be assuaged by the mediating power of religion. It gives her the feeling of self-mastery and superiority over Clarissa she otherwise does not have:

The Lord had shown her the way. So now, whenever the hot and painful feelings boiled within her, this hatred of Mrs. Dalloway, this grudge against the world, she thought of God. She thought of Mr. Whittaker. Rage was succeeded by calm. A sweet savour filled her veins, her lips parted, and, standing formidable upon the landing in her mackintosh, she looked with steady and sinister serenity at Mrs. Dalloway, who came out with her daughter (124-25).

While the mediating power of capitalism occurs through the explicit exploitation or oppression of others which takes place in the class system, as in Marx's words, "through the annulment of

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<sup>67</sup> For a contrasting take on the value of "history," see Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1981), 20, and Georg Lukacs, "The Ideology of Modernism," *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, trans. John and Necke Mander (London: Merlin Press, 1962), 17-46.

<sup>68</sup> Emily Jensen provides a compelling reading of Clarissa's hatred of Miss Kilman. See "Clarissa Dalloway's Respectable Suicide," *Virginia Woolf: A Feminist Slant*, ed. Jane Marcus (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 162-179.

private property,”<sup>69</sup> Miss Kilman tries to suppress her explicit hatred of Mrs. Dalloway and what can be perceived as a hatred for her opulent class status by harkening back to the mediating power of Rev. Whittaker and religion. Religion forbids violence and individual expression, instead requiring the absolute suppression of desire through self-sacrifice. Miss Kilman’s irrational hatred for Mrs. Dalloway, which is based on her own self-hatred, (the only path to her God is to reject her desires), exists in contrast to Clarissa for whom “love and religion” are “detestable,” making Kilman “domineering, hypocritical, eavesdropping, jealous, infinitely cruel and unscrupulous, dressed in a mackintosh coat” (126). While Miss Kilman sees herself as one of religion’s sentinels and believes she can see the emptiness of Clarissa Dalloway’s soul, Clarissa pleads for the “privacy of the soul” (126-27). Clarissa protests against a system that seeks to impose its rules and laws on the individual in the name of love—“Had she ever tried to convert any one herself? Did she not wish everybody merely to be themselves?” she asks (126). Here, Woolf shows the deep-rooted dynamic of repression and oppression which structures religion. While “Big Ben . . . with his majesty laying down the law, so solemn, so just” (128) upholds the social edifice of patriarchy, the other clock, St. Margaret’s, represents the repressed unconscious which threatens to overwhelm Doris Kilman’s illusion of self-control and her comfort in the power of religion to bring order to her life. As St. Margaret’s rings, the tables turn on Miss Kilman, who is exposed:

the late clock sounded, coming in on the wake of Big Ben, with its lap full of trifles. Beaten up, broken up by the assault of carriages, the brutality of vans, the eager advance of myriads of angular men, of flaunting women, the domes and spires of offices and hospitals, the last relics of this lap full of odds and ends seemed to break, like the spray of an exhausted wave, upon the body of Miss Kilman standing still in the street for a moment to mutter “It is the flesh” (128).

The un-neutered sensuality of the city full of “angular men, of flaunting women” reaches an orgasmic crescendo, ending in an ejaculation upon Miss Kilman’s body. The repressed reality of religion and the class system, the unconscious desire to experience the desires of the body, is played out in Miss Kilman’s simultaneous desire to master Clarissa but also to be like her:

It was the flesh that she must control. Clarissa Dalloway had insulted her. That she expected. But she had not triumphed; she had not mastered the flesh. Ugly, clumsy, Clarissa Dalloway had laughed at her for being that; and had revived the fleshly desires, for she minded looking as she did beside Clarissa. Nor could she talk as she did. But why did she wish to resemble her? Why? She despised Mrs. Dalloway from the bottom of her heart (128).

Miss Kilman’s socialist-religious sense of self as superior to Clarissa is contingent on a refusal of her desires, but the emergence of private property, viz., the individuality of others, acts to confront her with a mirror of herself which she cannot help but look at and to see in it the reflection of her own individuality. Like an angel fallen from the grace of God, she is now painfully aware of her ugly body and the sensuality of the city. Clarissa constantly reminds her of it:

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<sup>69</sup> 1844, 93.

the infliction of her unlovable body which people could not bear to see. Do her hair as she might, her forehead remained like an egg, bald, white. No clothes suited her. She might buy anything. And for a woman, of course, that meant never meeting the opposite sex. Never, would she come first with any one. Sometimes lately it had seemed to her that, except for Elizabeth, her food was all that she lived for; her comforts; her dinner, her tea; her hot water-bottle at night (129).

Unable to experience herself sexually, Miss Kilman is forced to channel her desires towards the abstract values of religion:

But one must fight; vanquish; have faith in God. Mr. Whittaker said she was there for a purpose. But no one knew the agony! He said, pointing to the crucifix, that God knew. But why should she have to suffer when other women, like Clarissa Dalloway, escaped? Knowledge comes through suffering, said Mr. Whittaker (129).

Miss Kilman's social exclusion is the counterpart of her institutionalized feeling of lack: the idea that she can only know God through self-denial requires that she, "there for a purpose," extract from her body all forms of desire as a form of penance, to master herself in the pursuit of knowing and loving God. This self-negation is then projected upon Clarissa Dalloway as a hatred of her sensuality through Miss Kilman's belief in her religious superiority.

Miss Kilman's incessant feelings of self-hatred and self-mastery compel her to hate anybody she sees as sensual at the same time that the emergence of commodity culture allows her desires to leak out through displaced attachments to *things* and *people*. We can see this in her search for a petticoat at the department store:

Up they went. Elizabeth guided her this way and that; guided her in her abstraction as if she had been a great child, an unwieldy battleship. There were the petticoats, brown, decorous, striped, frivolous, solid, flimsy; and she chose, in her abstraction, portentously, and the girl serving thought her mad (129-130).

Instead of the priest mediating the religious experience, commodity fetishism encourages individuals to give into their cravings. In this sense, we can see the evolution from the privacy of the soul which required the priest as intermediary to God, to the dominant position of commodity fetishism—physical objects which momentarily satisfy repressed desires. The individual is now free to choose his/her abstraction. This is evident in the value that Miss Kilman, who sees herself as a self-made woman, places on the private property of specialized knowledge (like Mr. Ramsay): "She had lent her books. Law, medicine, politics, all professions are open to women of your generation," she says to Elizabeth (130). Miss Kilman's belief in the different scholarly professions can be seen as acts of displacement, unsuccessful attempts to experience her body in capitalist society similar to acquiring fetishized commodities. They are both grounded on estranged labor. Doris Kilman imagines herself as full of volition, but has no other choice but to sublimate her feelings of undesirability, in her books, which afforded her the sense of self in society she was incapable of experiencing otherwise. While capitalism encourages the expression of individual desires, the childish nature of Miss Kilman's "abstraction" reveals the immature and stunted psychology of the fetishized commodity. Miss Kilman's infatuation with Elizabeth is built around her fantasy with respect to the innocence of childhood so prevalent in religious institutions, "Ah but she must not go! Miss Kilman could not let her go! this youth, that was so beautiful, this girl whom she genuinely loved" (131). It implies a desire to reconnect

with the undistorted desires of her own childhood—“as if she had been a great child.” The religious suppression of undifferentiated desires only intensifies Miss Kilman’s lust, which is no match for the seductive capacity of capitalism. Woolf represents this in Miss Kilman’s

fingering the last two inches of a chocolate eclair. . . .

Miss Kilman opened her mouth, slightly projected her chin, and swallowed down the last inches of the chocolate eclair, then wiped her fingers, and washed the tea around in her cup (131-32).

The overt sensuality of these lines are un-coincidentally followed by the visceral pain she feels in wanting to possess Elizabeth:

The agony was so terrific. If she could grasp her, if she could clasp her, if she could make her hers absolutely and forever and then die; that was all she wanted. But to sit here, unable to think of anything to say; to see Elizabeth turning against her; to be felt repulsive even by her—it was too much; she could not stand it. The thick fingers curled inwards (132).

While religion made it easier to neglect her desires and hide the awareness of her “ugly” body, capitalism made those desires more palpable. The visceral pain Miss Kilman feels is caused by her unconscious desires breaking through to consciousness. She was more apt to being reminded of her limitations when she was rejected or imagined being rejected. Religion was a safe haven for her because she could at least enjoy the pleasure of religious abstractions, rise above the baseness of her physical existence and the pressure of her unconscious desires. Commodity fetishism transformed the religious experience into a mass-produced and privately possessed “real” experience, which for Miss Kilman meant that she could enjoy what she denied herself but also meant that it multiplied her opportunities to sin—to desire:

“I never go to parties,” said Miss Killman, just to keep Elizabeth from going. “People don’t ask me to parties”—and she knew as she said it that it was this *egotism* that was her undoing. Mr. Whittaker had warned her; but she could not help it. She had suffered so horribly. “Why should they ask me?” she said. “I’m plain, I’m unhappy.” She knew it was idiotic. But it was all those people passing—people with parcels who despised her, who made her say it. However, she was Doris Kilman. She had her degree. She was a woman who had made her way in the world. Her knowledge of modern history was more than respectable (*my emphasis* 132).

The “parcels” represent the acts of consumption that Miss Kilman denies herself. She cannot experience her desires because she cannot access them—both because of religion and because they lie deeply repressed—and the only way she has agency is by attempting to deny others their ability to experience pleasure. Tratner states that

Woolf hammers home the opposition between shopping and repression . . . when Doris Kilman tries to buy a petticoat in the Army and Navy store. . . . Woolf is showing that Miss Kilman makes a large and very common mistake in her analysis of the social problems she recognizes, and that mistaken analysis leads Kilman to a solution that only compounds those problems. She is very much an image of a certain kind of socialist whom Virginia and Leonard opposed, ones who denigrated consumption as the source of economic problems rather than the solution. . . . Everyone should become producers, workers, and no one should any longer be much of a consumer. There was a moralistic

flavor about such a view, in which rejecting private property turned into a form of asceticism, verging on Christian mortification of the flesh (104).

In keeping with the emerging capitalistic ego<sup>70</sup> which develops from the transformation of religion into capitalism, every selfish indulgence in the realm of commodities by Miss Kilman required another act of repentance which only served to further repress her desires and intensify her lust. Whereas in the car scene we saw how the spirit of religion swept over individual experiences, here we see how Miss Kilman desires to “own” Elizabeth by trying to keep her from leaving. Elizabeth feels the immense pressure of Miss Kilman’s determination to possess her and breaks free from her grasp. After Elizabeth leaves, Woolf depicts Miss Kilman as a drunk who

lost her way, and was hemmed in by trunks specially prepared for taking to India; next among the accouchement sets, and baby linen; through all the *commodities* of the world, perishable and permanent, hams, drugs, flowers, stationery, variously smelling, now sweet, now sour she lurched; saw herself thus lurching with her hat askew, very red in the face, full length in a looking-glass; and at last came out into the street (*my emphasis* 133).

In effect, the forces of consumerism have allowed Miss Kilman to get drunk with desire and the mirror shows her loss of self-control. While in religion, the religious experience was mediated by the priest, in capitalism, the commodity spectacle allowed for desire to become an everyday experience; it infused daily life with temptation. Reginald Abbott suggests that

Miss Kilman enters the spectacle of the Army and Navy Stores as a potential witness to this [commodity] spectacle and a potential consumer of commodities, but she leaves it as a stunned, disoriented, and defeated victim of consumerism. Like the “news” of commodity spectacle, admission to the “fairy palaces” of consumerism is free. Participation in commodity culture, however, demands payment, if just in monthly installments, and the desire and ability to accept/modify/reconstitute the constantly changing styles and appearance of the spectacle. Miss Kilman, however, cannot find clothes that suit her because of her small income and her inability to fit into the ever-changing appearances of commodity spectacle (205).

While Abbott does not see Miss Kilman as having the acumen to be part of commodity culture, actually the world of commodities moves too fast for her. I see Woolf instead portraying Miss Kilman as moved by the lure of private property and the violence it engenders.

Miss Kilman’s need to feel religious superiority to Mrs. Dalloway and her attempt to convert Elizabeth into a devotee of self-denial, Miss Kilman’s “egotism,” imitate the mastering impulses of the class system in capitalism. On the one hand she denies the pleasures of her own body but on the other cannot control her urge to experience them by trying to possess Elizabeth. Since Miss Kilman cannot fully partake in commodity culture because she is caught between the values of religion and capitalism, she does not desire to possess Elizabeth per se, but to possess her “abstraction”: the idea of Elizabeth as a beautiful and innocent girl—in other words, her own repressed idea of herself as beautiful and innocent. “Elizabeth represents quite directly what

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<sup>70</sup> Woolf seems to suggest, as Marx does, that the selfish, emotionally stunted impulses of the ego develop with the emergence of private property and the feelings of ownership it entailed. See *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, 113.

Doris tries to destroy in herself” (110), Tratner suggests, but at the same time what she so badly desires to indulge in, I argue. By frustrating Elizabeth, Miss Kilman would relive the distorted pleasure of her own self-sacrifice in pursuit of knowing God in the same way that capitalism also requires a self-sacrifice by the capitalist and the worker. Miss Kilman derives pleasure from mastering her desires since it is God’s will. She would relive this same pleasure by preventing Elizabeth from leaving, i.e., by owning her labor. Elizabeth represents the body that Miss Kilman has learned to hate and master—a feeling which she projects on Elizabeth and Mrs. Dalloway in an attempt to “make feel her mastery”—to make them feel her lack. By impeding Elizabeth’s desire to leave, she would be able to enjoy, albeit in a skewed fashion, the pleasures of her own body that she has been denied and has denied herself, but in doing so, she would also force the same self-denial and desire to control others on the young girl. This kind of psychological violence—“She liked people who were ill” (136)—the need to derive pleasure from inflicting the pain that has been inflicted on her on others, shows the sadistic qualities of the social system at work at their most intense. Miss Kilman’s “egotistical” desires lead her inside Westminster Abbey to pay for her sins. As she walks in “to aspire above the vanities, the desires, the commodities, to rid herself both of hatred and love” (133-134), it becomes apparent that capitalism opens the door for the egotistic expression of undifferentiated and subsequently misinformed sadistic desires that exist in religion. They find their full expression in capitalism and have no possibility of being extinguished because of their contradictory nature: “(it was so rough to approach her God—so tough her desires)” (134). Miss Kilman must purge her desire to thwart the young girl through her own suffering, but religion is grounded on sinful acts. It requires them. Sinning, or the unending act of displacement, complements the indulgence in the fetishized commodities. While Tratner argues that “Miss Kilman is the epitome of this Christian form of anticapitalism” (104), Woolf’s portrayal of her consumerist impulses shows her as an evolutionary link between the values of self-sacrifice in religion to the behavior of ownership in imperialist capitalism.

Miss Kilman’s attempt to master Clarissa Dalloway’s soul and to stunt Elizabeth’s desires can be understood as part of the class conflicts which give way to an imperialist agenda of conversion. As Christine Froula writes,

Clarissa’s intuition that she hates not Miss Kilman but a “spectre” comprised of “a great deal” else provokes us to inquire into that abstraction of domination and tyranny and to grasp their class antagonism as a microcosmic cross section of the nationalist conflicts in which Europe’s future is indeed at stake.<sup>71</sup>

Woolf’s dissatisfaction with the Labour Party stemmed from an understanding that socialism, like capitalism, was just another side of the coin of oppression in which both systems represented themselves as the light at the end of the tunnel of social injustice, what Marx called the “dirty trick on the part of the so-called universal spirit.”<sup>72</sup> Woolf, Tratner argues, saw capitalism and the socialist Miss Kilman as motivated by a mentality of “scarcity rather than abundance” (105),

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<sup>71</sup> Froula, *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 103.

<sup>72</sup> *GI*, 55.

“labor, accumulation, and self-denial” (102), that inevitably would lead to “imperialism and war” (111). Tratner portrays Peter in a similar fashion:

In Peter’s life, justice pervades and destroys pleasure, and it is then no wonder that his desires keep erupting in odd moments. Woolf’s presentation of Peter reveals the process that turns idealistic men into imperialists: his very idealism will not allow him to enjoy consumption and satisfy his desires at home, at dinner, so his desires seek “outlets” elsewhere, in expeditions after dark women overseas (112).

Peter, like Miss Kilman, is the product of a social-economic system which is rooted in a religious repression of the body. Peter, who “had been a Socialist” (50), follows a pattern of behavior similar to Doris Kilman’s since “. . . he too had made it, the great renunciation), trampled under the same temptations. . . . [of] the flesh” (51), which inevitably plays out in an infatuation with the young woman he follows on the street. He experiences his body as irrational impulses which are then repudiated in favor of “moments of pride in England, in butlers; chow dogs; girls in their security” (55). Tratner suggests that “Woolf even hints that what Peter is lusting is not sexual at all, but rather the spirit of shopping, the spirit of consumption: as he follows the woman, he is drawn as much to the shops she passes as to her” (112). He quotes Woolf:

Her gloves, her shoulders combin[ed] with the fringes and the laces and the feather boas in the windows to make the spirit of finery and whimsy which dwindled out of the shops on to the pavement, as the light of a lamp goes wavering at night over the hedges in the darkness. (p. 80) (112).

It is his inability to experience and understand the nature of his desires which prevents him from seeing the young woman as she is: “But she’s extraordinarily attractive, he thought . . . (susceptible as he was,) to shed veil after veil, until she became the very woman he had always had in mind; young, but stately; merry, but discreet; black, but enchanting” (52). His self-misrecognition—“Nothing exists outside us except a state of mind” (57)—is what causes him to fantasize about the young woman and which inevitably leads to his veiled imperialist aggression. He creates an elaborate fantasy to satisfy unfulfilled desires. Similarly, Doris Kilman, whose family came from Germany, “bodies forth [John Maynard] Keynes’s warning that the economic sanctions imposed by the Peace [Treaty of Versailles] could only provoke another war” (Froula 104), as they inevitably did with the rise of Hitler and his idea of the master race. Unable to control herself, Doris Kilman tries to experience her desires by forcing upon Elizabeth the same self-denial which religion forced upon her, which was forced economically on Germany after the war, and which the imperialist forced upon the African. This is the only way she is able to satisfy her repressed desires. Her identity in commodity culture is not of a simple buyer but of a dominant male ideologue in patriarchal society, (which might explain why Woolf gave her the surname “Kilman”). As Tratner suggests,

Kilman seeks to convert her passion and Elizabeth’s from sexual to religious form, and so she becomes, like Dr. Bradshaw, one of the people that the narrator [and Mrs. Dalloway] condemns in the tirade against “conversion.” Conversion would not seem to have much to do with economics, yet when Woolf discusses conversion, she presents it as a part of what goes on in India, as part of imperialism. Conversion is a method of justifying taking wealth from others: those others are “converted” to poverty (110).



As socialists, Peter and Miss Kilman seek to impoverish others because they themselves have been impoverished. Woolf seems to suggest that they are not aware of how distorted their desires are. They are the products of a system of sacrifice and oppression. The long quarrel between the classes stemming from the division of labor ultimately expresses itself in national and global conflicts. The emphasis on violently maintaining class distinctions at home and abroad is further evident in Woolf's characterization of Dr. William Bradshaw, who champions the ideals of Conversion and Proportion.

Woolf connects "Sir William [who] was a master of his own actions, which the patient was not," (101) with a domestic and imperialistic doctrine of oppression. Seemingly in control of his own impulses, he acts as an enforcer of social norms: "Worshipping proportion," he "not only prospered himself but made England prosper, secluded her lunatics, forbade childbirth, penalised despair, made it impossible for the unfit to propagate their views until they, too, shared his sense of proportion" (99). Sir William Bradshaw's social function is as intermediary between good and evil in English society; he epitomizes the role of the mediator that Rev. Whittaker plays in dexterously persuading Doris Kilman to sacrifice her desires in the pursuit of knowing God, which in this case is making sure the lower classes were content with their lot. As Tratner observes,

Proportion is identified directly as the answer to complaints of economic inequality: Bradshaw says that all should be satisfied with what they have because the world is a bountiful place, and when his patients "protested" that "to us [they protested], life has given no such bounty. He acquiesced. They lacked a sense of proportion." Bradshaw is advocating that those with less money should see themselves as proportionally deserving less: proportion is hierarchy, particularly economic hierarchy. If people persist in demanding more than their proportionate share, Bradshaw "had to support police [and the good of society], which, he remarked very quietly, would take care, down in Surrey, that these unsocial impulses, bred more than anything by the lack of good blood, were held in control . . . [Tratner's ellipsis] he shut people up. . . [Tratner's ellipsis] (his victims)." Proportion is a system of restraint on unsocial impulses among the poor. Bradshaw's therapy seeks to bottle up the desire of the masses, to reduce demand, and so economically and psychologically contributes to imperialism and war (111).

Revered by his "victims," the sadistic "artist" lives his life out in the open, protected by the long shadow of Empire. If Proportion was the subtle "art" of manipulation, then Conversion was the sinister "lust . . . to override opposition":<sup>73</sup>

Proportion has a sister, less smiling, more formidable, a Goddess even now engaged—in the heat of Africa and sands of India, the mud and swamp of Africa, the purlieus of London, wherever in short the climate or the devil tempts men to fall from the true belief which is her own. . . . At Hyde Park Corner on a tub she stands preaching; shrouds herself in white and walks penitentially disguised as brotherly love through factories and parliaments; offers help, but desires power; smites out of her way roughly the dissident, or dissatisfied; bestows her blessing on those who, looking upward, catch submissively

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<sup>73</sup> *MD*, 102.

from her eyes the light of their own. This lady too (Rezia Warren Smith divined it) had her dwelling in Sir William's heart, though concealed, as she mostly is, under some plausible disguise; some venerable name; love, duty, self sacrifice (*MD* 100).

The ideals of Conversion and Proportion reveal how the system's stratified layers of power, violence, and oppression trickle down to the least able to defend themselves. While it may seem obvious that such a system is inherently violent, it is so engrained in the social life of everyday London in *Mrs. Dalloway* that it passes by, unquestioned as the movement of the clock hands that mark the passage of time: "Shredding and slicing, dividing and subdividing, the clocks of Harley Street nibbled at the June day, counseled submission, upheld authority, and pointed out in chorus the supreme advantages of a sense of proportion" (102). It is this "habit"—the advantages of the class system—which Hugh Whitbread does not bother to examine: "He did not go deeply" (102). Woolf characterizes Hugh's reluctance or inability to question the foundations of civilization as his being "*subconsciously* . . . grateful to Rigby and Lowndes for giving one time ratified by Greenwich" (*my emphasis* 102). Woolf questions the structure of an ideological system—private property—whose internal mechanism of violence works undisturbed, oiled and buffed every day, since it affords people like Hugh the luxury to brush "surfaces; the dead languages, the living, life in Constantinople, Paris, Rome; riding, shooting, tennis . . . He had known Prime Ministers" (102-103). Such opulence remains the privileges of a class system—"conversion, fastidious Goddess, [that] loves blood better than brick, and feasts most subtly on the human will" (100)—which is based on the exploitation of others. The denial of the body and its desires would seem quaint and outdated if it were not for the seductive capacity of private property and the spoils that imperialism has left behind in its wake. The lasting influence of the patriarch in enacting the sacred rites of Conversion and effectuating Proportion when and where need be remained an important and valued component of Western society into the late twentieth century and has continued to be in the twenty-first. This is Woolf's critique of the mediator and the values of Proportion and Conversion it attempts to instill; they repress desire under the false pretense of "doing" the social good. Schlack notes how in *Mrs. Dalloway*, "Values like proportion and moderation are espoused by the oppressive, villainous doctors. . . . That fatal coupling suggests the love of power, use of authority, and belief in superiority that Woolf found common to her tyrannical doctors—of medicine or philosophy" (67).

The religious and capitalist rejection of the body has been the dominant model of social relations in Western society. The desire to find some lost transcendental home has fueled the compulsion to master others. As with Marx's critique of Hegel, this same impulse towards an abstract ideal structures Fredric Jameson's Hegelian model of history. There are two main reasons why I discuss Jameson's notion of history in this chapter: 1) the importance he places on the mediator in recuperating desire, subsuming individual desires into a larger narrative, is structured like Mr. Ramsay's pursuit of knowledge, which in fact, harkens back to the emergence of the priest and the idea of self-sacrifice in capitalism; 2) the Newtonian model of change which structures his vision of history contrasts with Woolf's own interest in Einstein and the capacity that individuals have to recover their repressed desires. The problem with Jameson's method, as with Hegel, is a problem of origins. Jameson begins with the assumption of the alienated capitalist subject. His reading of Freud and Marx attempts to support his claim that the modern subject is irrevocably alienated and the role of the mediator is to offer a temporary respite from

self-alienation. As such, Jameson's reading of Marx is limited to the concepts of use and exchange value. Jameson's failure to acknowledge the transvaluation of values between body and mind as the origin of alienation, or to discuss the primordial relationship between labor and value, instead focusing on the relationship between use and exchange value, the few rule the many, reveals how individual desires are manipulated into an ideological investment. Even in his definition of utopian possibility so important for the emergence of the Marxist proletariat, he overlooks the ability of the individual to demystify his/her relationship with the alienating forces of capitalism. Jameson addresses this point towards the end of *The Political Unconscious* where argues that the individual cannot "cure" (283) him/herself:

the cure in a sense is a myth, as is the equivalent mirage within a Marxian ideological analysis: namely, the vision of a moment in which the individual subject would be somehow fully conscious of his or her determination by class and would be able to square the circle of ideological conditioning by sheer lucidity and the taking of thought. But in the Marxian system, only a collective unity—whether that of a particular class, the proletariat, or of its organ of consciousness, the revolutionary party—can achieve this transparency; the individual subject is always positioned within the social totality (283).

Jameson attempts to defend his method, and the role that the mediator plays in his method, against the "authority of Nietzsche [who] has identified such operations with historicism, and in particular with the dialectic and its valorization of absence and the negative" (21). He argues that instead of being reductive, his hermeneutical method sees the historical moment as part of a larger process of recovering the repressed. But as we read the introduction to *The Political Unconscious*, phrases like "fallen social reality," and keeping "faith," begin to reveal striking similarities between Jameson's mediator-analyst and Nietzsche's priest. The individual's desires are sacrificed for the larger "good." In a similar vein, his reading of Freud's concepts of Eros and Thanatos seeks to assimilate individuals into a narrative of emancipation. But such a narrative again relies on a mediator-analyst. Jameson's reading of Eros and Thanatos overlooks Freud's implication that the supposedly benevolent forces of Eros might be rotten in Western society. Freud's discussion of the sadistic instinct—the Death instinct turned outwards—as possibly arising out of a social-economic environment, connects it to the development of the priest and capitalist, as was discussed by Marx and Nietzsche. In other words, the emergence of the sadistic instinct would seem to correspond with the emergence of private property. In this way, Freud's concepts of Eros and Thanatos correspond to Woolf's concepts of Proportion and Conversion, respectively. Eros as sublimation of desire behaves like Woolf's Proportion, as Tratner defines it, and Conversion is the tyranny which characterizes Mr. Ramsay's and Miss Kilman's religiosity.

Jameson's adherence to a Newtonian model of change is at the crux of understanding why he advocates the role of the mediator-analyst in capitalism while Woolf's interest in Einstein's idea of *spacetime* helps us to see why she believes that individuals can access and free themselves from the causes of capitalistic alienation in order to connect intimately with others. As I will argue in this and the third chapter, for Woolf, creative labor represents the way out of ideology. Creative labor, structured by Einstein's idea of *spacetime*, allows characters to deconstruct the illusion ideology, to go deeply and investigate the *subconscious*, as opposed to Jameson's political *unconscious*, which I argue, further distances us from the causes of trauma. I

will discuss a version of this process in my reading of Marx's and Woolf's reading of *Robinson Crusoe*.

The violence which characters like Dr. Bradshaw, Doris Kilman, and Mr. Ramsay partake in is, as I have suggested, their unconscious attempt to experience the body. Like Woolf, Jameson's goal in *The Political Unconscious* is to provide a method to recover the repressed reality of desire in Western society. But Jameson offers a slight but significant variation as he argues that desire "remains locked into the category of the individual subject, even if the form taken by the individual in it is no longer the ego or self, but rather the individual body" (68). This helps him to relocate desire away from what he perceives as the limited confines of the alienated capitalist individual, to the larger forces of history. For this reason, Jameson sees the repression of desire as being part of a larger historical process of which the class system represents a necessary evil in the road towards emancipation. As he says in the introduction to *The Political Unconscious*:

These matters can recover their original urgency for us only if they are told within the unity of a single great collective story; only if, in however disguised and symbolic a form, they are seen as sharing a single fundamental theme—for Marxism, the collective struggle to wrest a realm of Freedom from a realm of Necessity; only if they are grasped as vital episodes in a single vast unfinished plot: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles—freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild master and journeyman—in a word, oppressor and oppressed—stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large or in the common ruin of the contending classes." It is in detecting the traces of that uninterrupted narrative, in restoring to the surface of the text the repressed and buried reality of this fundamental history, that the doctrine of a political unconscious finds its function and necessity (20).

For Jameson, history is the representation in symbolic form, narrative, of a hermeneutic process whereby the repressed is acknowledged in the act of being repressed. The history of class struggle is the coming-to-be of repressed reality, i.e., the recuperation of the repressed. In order for repressed desire to be acknowledged, it must first overcome that which represses it. In doing so, it sets itself up as the political horizon which also must be eventually assimilated into the larger process of history. In the act of breaking the law, the repressed enacts the law. As Jameson later states,

desire needed repression in order for us to come to consciousness of it as such: but then in that case desire must always be transgressive, must always have a repressive norm or law through which to burst and against which to define itself. Yet it is a commonplace that transgressions, presupposing laws or norms or taboos against which they function, thereby end up precisely reconfirming such laws (68).

For Jameson, desire, which he seems to define as the desire for power, finds its origins in capitalist alienation, and as such, the quarrels of the class system represent the political process of emancipation. In other words, for Jameson, desire is timeless—"desire is always outside of time," (68)—and history, as art, is the unearthing of this repressed reality in symbolic form. Instead of acknowledging the individual acts of violence perpetuated by the class system (much

like Freud neglected individual family relations in favor of a grand theory), Jameson transforms these acts into narrative interpretations, art, “the objective event itself” (26) which exists as a *symptom* that can be analyzed just like dreams, to uncover the past which lies repressed beneath. The mediator’s job is to bring into time this timeless reality—to make it visible. As Jameson says,

Mediations are thus a device of the analyst, whereby the fragmentation and autonomization, the compartmentalization and specialization of the various regions of social life (the separation, in other words, of the ideological from the political, the religious from the economical, the gap between daily life and the practice of the academic disciplines) is at least locally overcome, on the occasion of a particular analysis (40).

The mediator’s status as analyst, with his keen vision and foresight, is to guide us in the process of recovering as much as possible the hidden content of narrative to make it part of the emancipating plot of history. The symbolic moment of history gestures at a larger historical process of recovering the repressed of which the mediator acts as the torchbearer, illuminating the way forward by looking backwards—a hermeneutical analysis in the spirit of the Frankfurt school. Jameson’s conflation of Hegel-Marx-Freud with “expressive causality” (28) (borrowed from Althusser: the *cause* is never visible but in its purported *effects*) is an attempt to show how with each successive interpretation, every instance of class struggle, it is possible to tease out the “underlying reality” (39) of desire which has been repressed. Jameson’s ultimate goal is to unearth a “master code or allegorical key” (33) of interpretative analysis which would acknowledge the whole of the “political unconscious” in narrative and art. This master code becomes a master narrative in its own right; and this point is reached when we become aware that any individual mode of production projects and implies a whole sequence of such modes of production—from primitive communism to capitalism and communism proper—which constitute the narrative of some properly Marxian “philosophy of history.” Yet, this is a paradoxical discovery: for the very work of the Althusserian school, which has so effectively discredited Marxian versions of a properly teleological history, is also that which has done the most, in our time, to restore the problematic of the mode of production as the central organizing category of Marxism (33).

Jameson raises an important question regarding the *telos* of his method, mainly whether the master narrative he envisions actually acknowledges the repressed voices of history or whether it is just an elaborate fantasy which teleologically projects the idea of freedom much like the various instances of the class struggle. Jameson’s interpretation of Freud and Marx helps to answer this question.

Jameson sees Freud as introducing a hermeneutical process which follows Marx, amongst others, in recuperating desire. As he states, Freud’s ideology of desire in its most fully realized forms is less an interpretative mode than a whole world-view, a genuine metaphysic, at its most resonant and attractive in its most extreme and grandiose versions, such as that, rich with death and the archaic, of Freud’s own late metapsychology, with its vision of the immortal struggle between Eros and Thanatos (66-67).

Jameson reads Freud's concepts of Eros and Thanatos as Freud's development of his early theories beyond the simple "wish-fulfillment [which] remains locked in a problematic of the individual subject" (66), towards desire as an encompassing historical process (62-64) akin to Marx's own historical materialism. Jameson states that

The conditions of possibility of psychoanalysis become visible, one would imagine, only when you begin to appreciate the extent of psychic fragmentation since the beginnings of capitalism, with its systematic quantification and rationalization of experience, its instrumental reorganization of the subject just as much as of the outside world (62).

For Jameson, it is at this time in history that the alienated subject of capitalism becomes aware of its individual desires. And its only recourse is to use the same capitalistic tools of rationalization "to restore at least a symbolic experience of libidinal gratification to a world drained of it" (63). Alienated from the natural rhythms of the body, desire becomes the operative term for the subject. As Jameson states, "We can think abstractly about the world only to the degree to which the world itself has already become abstract" (66). Jameson re-appropriates Freud's concept of "wish-fulfillment" from the individual experience of fantasy formation—the wish takes the place of a real experience of desire—to wish-fulfillment as hermeneutic. Meaning, or desire, is experienced symbolically. Desire, as abstraction, thus becomes the driving force of a much larger historical process, i.e., class dynamics. Freud's concepts of Eros, repression, and Thanatos, temporary mastery of the repressed, are equated by Jameson with "repression and revolt" (67), respectively. Jameson re-appropriates the Death instinct to mean a "revolt" against the forces of repression—the "death" of the established social structure. This plays out in temporary, symbolic moments of freedom as Thanatos eventually becomes assimilated by Eros into law, which must eventually be overthrown. The temporality of Thanatos is always being assimilated into the larger narrative of history—Eros as history (53, 67). Instead of individual acts of mastery Freud assigned to Thanatos, Jameson's rereading of Freud's concepts of wish-fulfillment and Thanatos allows him to posit a historical process which slowly teases out the repressed reality of society. It provides a safe haven against the failings of individual attempts at desire by making it part of a larger symbolic movement: the "master narrative [which] is the story of desire itself, as it struggles against a repressive reality, convulsively breaking through the grids that were designed to hold it in place or, on the contrary, succumbing to repression and leaving the dreary wasteland of *aphanisis* behind it" (67). The timeless reality of desire, which we seem incapable of making, or unequipped to, make our own—eventually becomes part history. Freud's discussion of Eros and Thanatos helps to shed light on Jameson's own understanding of the distinction:

what appears in a minority of human individuals as an untiring impulsion towards further perfection can easily be understood as a result of the instinctual repression upon which is based all that is most precious in human civilization. The repressed instinct never ceases to strive for complete satisfaction, which would consist in the repetition of a primary experience of satisfaction. No substitutive or reactive formations and no sublimations will suffice to remove the repressed instinct's persisting tension; and it is the difference in amount between the pleasure of satisfaction which is *demanded* and that which is actually *achieved* that provides the driving factor which will permit of no halting at any position attained, but, in the poet's words, "ungebandigt immer vorwardts

dringt.”<sup>74</sup> The backward path that leads to complete satisfaction is as a rule obstructed by the resistances which maintain the repressions. So there is no alternative but to advance in the direction in which growth is still free—though with no prospect of bringing the process to a conclusion or of being able to reach the goal. The processes involved in the formation of a neurotic phobia, which is nothing else than an attempt at flight from the satisfaction of an instinct, present us with a model of the manner of origin of this supposititious “instinct towards perfection”—an instinct which cannot possibly be attributed to every human being. The dynamic conditions for its development are, indeed, universally present; but it is only in rare cases that the economic situation appears to favour the production of the phenomenon.

I will add only a word to suggest that the efforts of Eros to combine organic substances into ever larger unities probably provide a substitute for this “instinct towards perfection” whose existence we cannot admit. The phenomena that are attributed to it seem capable of explanation by these efforts of Eros taken in conjunction with the results of repression.<sup>75</sup>

In this passage, Freud interestingly situates the development of Thanatos, the Death instinct, in a historical process akin to Marx’s discussion of the origins of alienated labor. To recall Marx’s discussion, the division of labour begins when the priest enacts a transvaluation of values, elevating the abstract over the body. For Freud, the Death instinct is the attempt to experience the repressed unconscious by binding it momentarily in some fantasy only to repeat it again and again in an attempt to master it. Freud describes in this passage how the Death instinct is projected outwards in a sadistic attempt to master others. The repressed is projected outward from a desire of self-mastery to the oppression of others, similar to Doris Kilman’s projection of her own self-hatred upon Clarissa Dalloway. Freud’s nod to the economic, (the capitalist morality rooted in the priest’s transvaluation of values described by both Marx and Nietzsche) reveals, I suggest, how the sadistic instinct becomes the dominant model of social relations in Western society. The priest becomes the purveyor of a symbolic experience. This alters Jameson’s appropriation of Eros and Thanatos and the function of the mediator-analyst. Instead of an act of revolt against repressive forces, as Jameson defines Thanatos, Freud’s sadistic individual seeks to control the masses under the appearance of benevolence. The same can be said about Jameson’s mediator. Instead of liberating the repressed, the mediator-analyst offers an illusion of freedom. The symbolic experience indefinitely postpones the experience of desire. It instead validates the values of sacrifice and alienation in capitalism under the guise of achieving some idea of power. Jameson’s mediator does not recuperate desire; it further represses it. History, as an emancipatory process, is revealed to be a simple wish-fulfillment by the mediator, (like Mr. Ramsay fantastical visions of himself as a tragic hero), to experience the repressed while still maintaining the conditions of repression. The mediator assimilates the individual’s tragedy into the larger narrative of the nation he imagines. The similarities between the Death

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<sup>74</sup> [“Press ever forward unsubdued.”] Mephistopheles in *Faust*, Part I [Scene 4].

<sup>75</sup> *BPP*, 616.

drive's *tragic* and imaginary attempt to master the repressed and Eros *comedic* but "visible" solution to the same problem raises the question as to whether there is a typological difference between Eros and Thanatos or whether Freud had yet to acknowledge that *all* acts of repression are sadistic by nature. In other words, is it possible that Eros is Thanatos? The parallel that Freud makes to describe the nature of the sadistic instinct as behaving in a fashion similar to Eros, insofar as it also seeks to "combine organic substances into ever larger unities," collapses through the conspicuously violent nature of religion and capitalism. The inception of the division of labour enacted by the priest and the emergence of private property alienate individuals from all the values Freud assigns to Eros. All the qualities associated with Eros—love, creativity, sexuality, and the procreation of the species, cooperation, etc.—are missing from Miss Kilman's religious sense of love. We recall Clarissa Dalloway exclamation: "Love and religion! . . . How detestable, how detestable they are!" (126). The sadistic quality of Eros can be seen in Woolf's description of Conversion, which hides behind the mask of "love, duty, self-sacrifice" (100). This also recalls Schlack's description of Woolf's perception of the mediators of knowledge as "tyrannical doctors—of medicine or philosophy." It would seem that for Woolf, Eros is better characterized by the sadistic impulses of the Death drive to master the repressed. In Western reality, the sadistic instinct of the Death drive masquerades as Eros. Eros and Thanatos are part of the same process of reification. Woolf seems to imply as much with her distinction between Proportion and Conversion which I suggest correspond to Eros and Thanatos. In religion and capitalism, Eros is sadistic. In other words, Jameson's dialectic between Eros and Thanatos, between temporary moments and history, are indicative of the vicious circle inscribed in the capitalistic mode of production which forever reproduces a series of symptoms, effects of a power struggle that *infinitely* postpones the problem of alienation through allegorical displacements between the classes which only reproduce the same power dynamic they seek to overcome. Jameson's method follows a similar trajectory: our symbolic interpretations produce and reproduce themselves and act as a buffer to the reality and origin of alienation. Our interpretations infinitely postpone the possibility of a "real" embodied experience. Like Mr. Ramsay's idea of history, the fantasy formation that Jameson prescribes has been defined by Marx as

"pure spirit," and make(s) religious illusion the driving force of history. The Hegelian philosophy of history is the last consequence, reduced to its "finest expression", of all this German historiography, for which it is not a question of real, nor even of political, interests, but of pure thoughts, which consequently must appear to Saint Bruno as a series of "thoughts" that devour one another and are finally swallowed up in "self-consciousness."

(So-called *objective* history just consists in treating historical conditions independent of activity. Reactionary character.)<sup>76</sup>

Marx's criticism of Hegel acutely characterizes the reactive character of his dialectical method as a purely egotistical experience where the emphasis on the "abstract, logical, speculative

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<sup>76</sup> *GI*, 60. Also see Friedrich Nietzsche. "First Essay 'Good and Evil,'" "Good and Bad," 127.



expression for the movement of history”<sup>77</sup> over the sensuousness of the body represents a desire and inability to reconnect with undifferentiated desires, like a dog running in circles attempting to catch its tail.

While Jameson would like us to believe that our interpretations are made in the spirit of revolution, they have the intrinsic quality of day-dreams—fantasies produced by the Freudian process of Secondary Revision.<sup>78</sup> As Freud discusses in “Secondary Revision,” our “waking (preconscious) thinking” arranges our “perceptual material” into a simple narrative, in the same way that the process of Secondary revision censors the content of dreams so that they conform to the continuity of a logically ordered narrative (503). Freud cites Havelock Ellis’ description of the Secondary process as “Sleeping consciousness we may even imagine as saying to itself in effect: ‘Here comes our master, Waking Consciousness, who attaches such mighty importance to reason and logic and so forth. Quick! gather things up, put them in order—any order will do—before he enters to take possession’” (505). The same rational mechanism of censorship which occurs in Freud’s “fantasy” formation also takes place in the narrative of emancipation Jameson’s analyst envisions. The importance that Jameson’s places on the mediator-analyst as the one who seemingly adjusts our interpretations, so as to conform to the parameters of the allegorical key, suggests that Jameson’s mediator suffers from the same limitations he places on the individual subject. In the nature of the wish-fulfillment, which is to be analyzed and unpacked in order to tease out the repressed unconscious, Jameson sees the structure of a political hermeneutic. Yet the consolidation of power in the mediator-analyst raises questions about the goal and motivation of Jameson’s method. Jameson’s use of Freud ends up characterizing his historiography as just another fantasy in which the masses have been catered to in order to further maintain their repression, i.e., the sadistic impulse turned outward. Freud’s remarks regarding narrative formation in “Secondary Revision” as “ready-made phantasies” (502) relying on the censoring agency of “reason and logic” to make the unconscious less threatening (505), coupled with the mediator’s sadistic impulse, suggest that Jameson’s historical method only reveals a chimera of communal life. As Jameson states,

The idea is, in other words, that if interpretation in terms of expressive causality or of allegorical master narratives remains a constant temptation, this is because such master narratives have inscribed themselves in the texts as well as in our thinking about them; such allegorical signifieds are a persistent dimension of literary and cultural texts precisely because they reflect a fundamental dimension of our collective thinking and our collective fantasies about reality (34).

Such collective fantasies remain seductive because they play on the alienation between the subjective and objective realms established by the priests. Since political economy takes as its starting point the apparent reality of alienation, it fails to acknowledge the fundamental fact of oppression which structures it. Eros as fantasy and Thanatos as sadistic instinct work in tandem to maintain the structures of oppression. If the interpretations we make are limited by *how* we

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<sup>77</sup> 1844, 108.

<sup>78</sup> See, “Secondary Revision,” *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 493-511.

see them coded through the mediator's key, then the question is: *what* are we seeing? Jameson's idea that we will one day be able to systematically uncover the repressed is problematic since it means that the way we interpret life is always already encoded in a symbolic system of repression, viz., Freud. Like Nietzsche's priest, who through the sickness which he has visited upon his followers, promises a "phantasmagoria of anticipated future bliss" (48), Jameson's analyst requires a similar kind of subjugation in order to produce the illusion that while "Totality is not available for representation. . . . the 'whole' is [nevertheless] kept *faith* with and 'represented' in its very absence" (*my emphasis* 55). The symbolic solutions Nietzsche's priest and Jameson's analyst provide recall Freud's "ready-made phantasies." Yet, Freud also recognized the limitations of reason in dream formation: "An adept in sleight of hand can trick us by relying upon this intellectual habit of ours. In our efforts at making an intelligible pattern of the sense-impressions that are offered to us, we often fall into the strangest errors or even falsify the truth about the material before us" (503). Instead of slowly peeling back the appearance of reality to uncover the causes that lay beneath, the analyst's code acts like a software program which is continuously modified and refined in order to support the production of elaborate fantasies to further neuter the unconscious.

Jameson's strategies of containment suggest a sadistic quality in the analyst reminiscent of Nietzsche's description of the priest in *The Genealogy of Morals*. Nietzsche describes the priest in the following way:

we must count the ascetic priest as the predestined savior, shepherd, and advocate of the sick herd: only thus can we understand his tremendous historical mission. *Dominion over the suffering* of his kingdom, that is where his instinct directs him, he possesses his distinctive art, his mastery, his kind of happiness. He must be sick himself, he must be profoundly related to the sick—how else would they understand each other?—but he must also be strong, master of himself even more than of others, with his will to power intact, so as to be both trusted and feared by the sick, so as to be their support, resistance, prop, compulsion, taskmaster, tyrant, and god. He has to defend his herd—against whom? Against the healthy, of course, and also against envy of the healthy; he must be the natural opponent *and despiser* of all rude, stormy, unbridled, hard, violent beast-of-prey health and might. The priest is the first form of the more *delicate* animal that despises more readily than it hates . . . He brings salves and balm with him, no doubt; but before he can act as a physician he first has to wound; when he then stills the pain of the wound *he at the same time infects the wound*—for that is what he knows to do best of all, this sorcerer and animal-tamer, in whose presence everything healthy necessarily grows sick, and everything sick tame.<sup>79</sup>

The sickness of the analyst lies in his sadistic projection of his own self-repression. The idea of power that he feels he has over others is a result of the desire to master his own desires. Nietzsche's description of the priest and Woolf's own portrait of Mr. Ramsay, Miss Kilman, Rev. Whittaker, and Sir William Bradshaw strikingly resemble one another. Like Nietzsche's priest, Dr. Bradshaw is sick himself, "Worshipping proportion (99), he "was also a master of his own

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<sup>79</sup> Nietzsche, "First Essay 'Good and Evil,'" "Good and Bad," 125-126.

actions, which the patient was not,” (101) and Rev. Whittaker preached that “knowledge comes through suffering and the flesh.” Miss Kilman would like nothing better than to “make [Clarissa Dalloway] feel her mastery,” while she also must sacrifice herself. Like Nietzsche’s priest who has “dominion over the suffering of his kingdom,” Dr. Bradshaw also stands prominently over his “victims” (102). The momentary respite offered by the imaginary value of the symbolic, i.e. the fulfillment of the ideological, is insufficient when the unconscious overwhelms the temporary satisfaction of self-repression. In turn, the desire to master the repressed is turned outward into the Death instinct’s *sadistic* desire to master others. Miss Kilman’s imperialistic impulse to master Clarissa Dalloway, Bradshaw’s desire to purge bad breeding, the judge who stands opposite Clarissa Dalloway on Bond street—“Sir John laid down the law for years and liked a well-dressed woman” (17)—illustrate this self-mastery turned outward, the desire to contain the unruly either through manipulation or force, to bring everyone in line with their misshapen ideals.

The implications of Freud’s distinctions when understood in light of Jameson’s *Political Unconscious* are significant insofar as they help us to see the sadistic nature of Jameson’s famous statement, “History is what hurts, it is what refuses desire and sets inexorable limits to individual as well as collective praxis...” (102). Jameson’s method, with the mediator at its helm, transforms the healthy into the alienated and sick. And this alienation can never be overcome. It can only be narrativized, but this act is not one of agency but of seduction by “master narratives,” whose sinister implications cannot be questioned. As Jameson states, “History can be apprehended only through its effects, and never directly as a force” (102). In this sense, the sole purpose of making history is to push farther away into darkness the cause of repression through acts of oppression. As such, Jameson’s method can be best understood as an inherently defensive mechanism in which the mediator organizes and is organized by a stratified system of oppression. All we can hope for is to gain some illusion of power over others so that we will not have to encounter our own thwarted desires. The unprocessed emotions of the unconscious are dumped on another person so that they have to come to terms with them as if they were their own. The whole process of the class system is the projection of the unconscious on to another as a form of mastery.

The illusion of connecting with our desires advertised by the symbolic only functions to validate the power structure which produces this illusion. In effect, our reality mirrors the construction of dreams; our interpretations are similarly formed by the ideals of the dominant class. They are arranged by the logic of capitalism much as the individual perspectives in the car scene of *Mrs. Dalloway* are determined by the forces of religion and Empire. Like Miss Kilman who unconsciously attempts to experience her body by sacrificing herself to feel the sweet pleasure of connecting with her God, or the capitalist who also tries to experience his desires by sacrificing himself to gain the imaginary value of capital, our temporary solutions to the problem of alienation behave like a *wish fulfillment*, since they are part of the concessionary process of reification in capitalist society—regardless of our intentions. As Jameson states, “ideology is not something which informs or invests symbolic production; rather the aesthetic act is itself ideological, and the production of aesthetic or narrative form is to be seen as an ideological act in its own right, with the function of inventing imaginary or formal ‘solutions’ to unresolvable social contradictions” (79)—contradictions which stem from the “separation of use value from

exchange value” (26) in capitalist society. Jameson suggests that because we are alienated from our desires, *use value*, our interpretations of life, art, narrative, are defined by the prevalent forces of *exchange value*. Every interpretation or work of art, Jameson implies, is condemned to be an *imaginary* solution to the problem of alienation and a symptom of this same problem; every interpretation represents an unconscious attempt to experience repressed desires and simultaneously a further repression of those desires. As he states, “the objective event itself, the very nature of cultural change . . . cannot ultimately be grasped ‘from the inside’ or phenomenologically, but . . . must be reconstructed as symptoms whose cause is of another order of phenomenon from its effects” (26). In the capitalistic mode of production, the reification of consciousness is the only “positive” outcome of our lives. This constitutes the “absolute [political] horizon” (17) of all interpretation at the core of Jameson’s interest in the ideological. Every historical “moment” is outwardly presented as the repression of unexplored desires in favor of a communal experience, but is in fact a fresh attempt by the mediator to master *his* own unconscious, which threatens to erupt into consciousness. Either through the subtleness of Proportion, advertisements, commodities, etc., or the more surreptitious forces of Conversion, mass surveillance, police violence, etc., we are encouraged to remain in a stupor in capitalist society. Jameson seems to admit as much but without the implication of oppression implicit in his method or in the sadistic role the mediator plays.

It is in Jameson’s reading of Marx that we can see how he neglects the individual’s relationship to labor and use value in favor of the more easily manipulated rift between use and exchange value, alienation and salvation. Free labor, defined by Marx as “free, conscious activity,”<sup>80</sup> is not characterized by the selfishness evident in the class system, which is grounded on the emergence of private property. As I discussed earlier, free labor is the expression of our individual creative essence, our desires. The objects we create exist simultaneously for others to express their desires, to find their inherent creativity. Production and consumption are part of the same process. The last portion of the quote from *Capital* Jameson cites, “Beyond it (the rational regulation of nature) begins that development of human energy which is an *end in itself, the true realm of freedom*, which, however, can blossom forth only with this realm of necessity as its basis,”<sup>81</sup> he reformulates as the following, (which I alluded to earlier): “for Marxism, the collective struggle [is] to wrest a realm of Freedom from a realm of Necessity” (19). What Marx sees as a stepping stone towards freedom, Necessity, Jameson sees as part of the basic dualism between capitalistic alienation and salvation, Freedom/Necessity. Whereas Marx sees the rational regulation of Nature as an evolutionary step in the historical development towards freedom as an end in itself, Jameson reads Marx to claim that we are isolated, rational beings incessantly competing for resources. Jameson’s Hegelian-Marxist-Freudian interpretive model of social change wherein he argues for the “priority of the political interpretation of literary texts. . . . as the absolute horizon of all reading and interpretation” (17) does not end in some effective liberation from the constraints of ideology but is instead caught up in the endless struggle for

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<sup>80</sup> 1844, 76.

<sup>81</sup> “*Capital*,” 441.

power which structures the class system, which is to say, only thinking of individuals as irrevocably alienated and continuously in competition with each other for private property. Hence the role of the analyst-mediator is to be our guide across the deep chasm of self-alienation by offering a moment of respite. Marx's point, I think, is to highlight the next step after the rational development of the means of production. As he states in *The German Ideology*, the liberation of each single individual will be accomplished in the measure in which history becomes transformed into world history. From the above it is clear that the real intellectual wealth of the individual depends entirely on the wealth of his real connections. Only then will the separate individuals be liberated from the various national and local barriers, be brought into practical connection with the material and intellectual production of the whole world and be put in a position to acquire the capacity to enjoy this all-sided production of the whole earth (the creations of man). All-round dependence, this natural form of the world-historical co-operation of individuals, will be transformed by this communist revolution into the control and conscious mastery of these powers, which, born of the action of men on one another, have till now overawed and governed men as powers completely alien to them (55).

The development of the means of production, of technology, ironically brings individuals closer and closer together. At the same time that technology develops to control nature, the example of the "world market" (GI 55) that Marx uses helps to articulate his emancipatory vision. Today, market transactions take place practically instantaneously. At the same time, the power of the internet allows individuals to connect who otherwise would not be able to do so. Information and knowledge that otherwise might take longer to access is readily accessible. Thus while Jameson situates the mediator as the intervening force between repressed reality and its symbolic representation, Marx posits the individual's ability to have "control and conscious mastery" of his powers (GI 55). Marx's focus on the individual and the disregard for national and local barriers recalls Woolf's own remarks in her 1940 Lecture to the Workers' Educational Association cited earlier: "Literature is no one's private ground; literature is common ground. It is not cut up into nations." Woolf and Marx both see this common ground of shared experiences as contingent on doing away with the concentration of power embodied in private property and the forces of mediation. This requires a process of deconstruction of capitalistic values, which the access to knowledge makes possible. In doing so, the illusion of a communal experience the mediator creates no longer holds its seductive charm. The enjoyment of the emotional, physical, and intellectual reality of individuals makes possible the experience of a real, conscious, global experience. Pleasure is no longer an imaginary space mediated by private interests but exists as an unmediated space like Keynes' and Woolf's idea of the market, to be explored. It is a real, physical place of self-discovery. While Woolf believes strongly in the individual's ability to understand the "subconscious" forces of oppression, as she herself did, Jameson claims that we cannot as individuals demystify our relationship with objective powers or begin to understand our desires.

Marx's and Woolf's interest in foregrounding characters and readers ability to deconstruct the forces of capitalism in order to explore their desires is evident in their comments on Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, and Woolf's depiction of Elizabeth in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Marx's reading demystifies the popular idea of Crusoe as the quintessential capitalistic man by revealing

Crusoe's agency, his depth of feeling and creativity, creating objects whose utility is not mediated by commodity production: "Everything produced by him was exclusively the result of his own personal labour, and therefore simply an object of use for himself," states Marx (*Capital* 326). Marx's reading underscores Defoe's focus on a psychological realism which shows Crusoe questioning and dismantling the abstract bourgeois categories of capital and religion which determined his identity and relations with others and which, Marx claims, we have forgotten are the products of our own creation. Only by stepping outside of what Marx describes as "the European middle ages shrouded in darkness" (*Capital* 325) is Crusoe able to plainly see the arbitrary nature of his religious values:

When I had consider'd this a little, it follow'd necessarily, that I was certainly in the wrong in it, that these people were not murtherers in the sense that I had before condemned them, in my thoughts; any more than those Christians were murtherers, who often put to death the prisoners taken in battle.<sup>82</sup>

Once outside of the ideological apparatus which suspends critical thought, Crusoe is able to come to a "full-stop" and carefully analyze the social-economic "design" which had determined his behavior (136). Crusoe "decipher[s] the hieroglyphic . . . get[s] behind the secret of [his] own social products," (322) as Marx says (in the same chapter of *Capital* where he discusses Crusoe), of the attempt to get behind the arbitrary nature of exchange value with respect to our more elemental creative nature. Thus, Friday, who stands outside of Crusoe's social reality both literally and figuratively, is able to see through the manipulative nature of Crusoe's religion when he questions him about the existence of the Devil:

By this time I had recovered myself a little, and I said, *God will at last punish him severely; he is reserv'd for the judgment, and is to be cast into the bottomless-pit, to dwell with everlasting fire.* This did not satisfy Friday, but he returns upon me, repeating my words, RESERVE, AT LAST, *me no understand; but why not kill the Devil now, not kill great ago?* You may as well ask me, *said I, why God does not kill you and I, when we do wicked things here that offend him? We are preserv'd to repent and be pardon'd:* He muses a while at this; *well, well,* says he, mighty affectionately, *that well; so you, I, Devil, all wicked, all preserve, repent, God pardon all.* Here I was run down again by him to the last degree, and it was testimony to me, how the meer notions of Nature, though they will guide reasonable creatures to the knowledge of a God, and of a worship or homage due to the supreme being, of God as the consequence of our nature; yet nothing but divine Revelation can form the knowledge of *Jesus Christ*, and of a redemption purchas'd for us, of a mediator of the new covenant, and of an intercessor, at the foot-stool of God's throne (172-173).

Friday clearly sees what ails Crusoe and makes obvious the connection Defoe implies between religion and capitalism and the function of the mediator as a medium of exchange from a fallen state of alienation to salvation. By relating to Friday, Crusoe is able to distinguish between the values that have been instilled in him and which he blindly reproduces, and his common humanity with the "cannibal." Consequently, the social relations that exist between both

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<sup>82</sup> Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 2001. ed. John Richetti (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 135-136.

characters are grounded in a relationship with objects or ideas that they have created. They exist as part of a dialogical process. Their social relationship is not determined by class ideals; it embodies Woolf's and Marx's interest in co-operative principles. As Defoe's Crusoe explains,

I always apply'd myself to reading the Scripture, to let him know, as well as I could, the meaning of what I read; and he again, by his serious enquiries and questioning, made me, *as I said before*, a much better scholar in the Scripture knowledge, than I should ever have been by my own private meer reading (174).

Crusoe and Friday's relationship highlights how co-operation takes precedence over the misguided salvation of the soul in religion, and the competition for private property in capitalism. This recalibration of Eros is further illustrated by the sadistic nature of God in Crusoe's nightmare:

In this second sleep I had this terrible dream.

I thought that I was sitting on the ground, on the out-side of my wall, where I sat when the storm blew after the earthquake, and that I saw a man descend from a great black cloud, in a bright flame of fire, and light upon the ground: He was all over as bright as a flame, so that I could but just bear to look towards him; his countenance was most inexpressibly dreadful, impossible for words to describe; when he stepp'd upon the ground with his feet, I thought the earth trembled, just as it had done before in the earthquake, and all the air look'd, to my apprehension, as if it had been fill'd with flashes of fire.

He was no sooner landed upon the earth, but he mov'd forward towards me, with a long spear or weapon in his hand, to kill me; and when he came to a rising ground, at some distance, he spoke to me, or I heard a voice so terrible that it is impossible to express the terror of it; all that I can say I understood was this, *Seeing all these things have not brought thee to repentance, now thou shalt die*: At which words, I thought he lifted up the spear that was in his hand to kill me (70-71).

The distorted morality introduced by the priests is evident in the sadistic nature of a supposedly benevolent God. Freud is compelled to ask, "But how can the sadistic instinct, whose aim it is to injure the object, be derived from Eros, the preserver of life?"<sup>83</sup> Marx's further comments on the section where he discusses Crusoe provide an answer:

The religious world is but the reflex of the real world. And for a society based upon the production of commodities, in which the producers in general enter into social relations with one another by treating their products as commodities and values, whereby they reduce their individual private labor to the standard of homogeneous labor—for such a society, Christianity with its *cultus* of abstract man, more especially in its bourgeois developments, Protestantism, Deism, &c., is the most fitting form of religion. . . . They can arise and exist only when the development of the productive power of labour has not yet risen beyond a low stage. . . . The religious reflex of the real world can, in any case, only then vanish, when the practical relations of every-day life offer to man none but

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<sup>83</sup> BPP, 621.

perfectly intelligible and reasonable relations with regard to his fellowmen and to Nature (*Capital* 326-327).

In other words, it is only when the power of religion and capitalism have been demystified that the productive power and point of view of a cannibal and outsider like Friday can be acknowledged as inherently valuable. Instead of mediated relations with others, it is only in “production by freely associated men” (*Capital* 327) that the nature of social relations can be transformed into “real” relations of free people. Individual desires are no longer repressed but become the driving force of social-economic relations. As Crusoe’s days on the island increase, the lure of going home begins to wane:

I do not remember that I had in all that time one thought that so much as tended either to looking upwards toward God, or inwards towards a reflection upon my ways: But a certain stupidity of soul, without desire of good, or conscience of evil, had entirely overwhelm’d me. . . . I was merely thoughtless of a God, or a Providence, [and] acted like a meer brute from the principles of nature and by the dictates of common sense only (71).

A similar impulse to escape the confines of her society is apparent in Mrs. Dalloway’s daughter, Elizabeth, who after having left Miss Kilman goes on a little adventure:

for she so much preferred being left alone to do what she liked in the country(134). . . .

And did Elizabeth give one thought to poor Miss Killman who loved her without jealousy, to whom she had been a fawn in the open, a moon in a glade? She was delighted to be free (135) . . . a pirate (135) . . . exploring (137) . . . For no Dalloways came down the Strand daily; she was a pioneer, a stray, venturing, trusting (137).

Elizabeth’s adventure diminishes the value of the ceremonial and abstract.<sup>84</sup> By escaping Miss Kilman, Elizabeth feels a commonality between people, a shared embodied experience reminiscent of the one Crusoe experiences on the island and Woolf finds in Chaucer, which is not available through the ideological:

She liked the geniality, sisterhood, motherhood, brotherhood of this uproar. It seemed to her good. The noise was tremendous; and suddenly there were trumpets (the unemployed) blaring, rattling about in the uproar; military music; as if people were marching; yet had they been dying—had some woman breathed her last and whoever was watching opened the window of the room where she had just brought off that act of supreme dignity, looked down Fleet Street, that uproar, that military music would have come triumphing up to him, consolatory, indifferent (138).

This scene recalls Woolf’s move from the clearly marked social boundaries of her childhood in Kensington to the blurred boundaries she experienced in Bloomsbury. As Leonard Woolf comments, “cooperation denotes a liking for crowds and corporate bodies, a neighborly feeling” (Tratner 117). The roar of the city frustrates the habit of making the “trivial and transitory appear the true and enduring,”<sup>85</sup> as Woolf says in “Modern Fiction.” The city space

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<sup>84</sup> See Rachel Bowlby, *Virginia Woolf, Feminist Destinations* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 80-98.

<sup>85</sup> Woolf, “Modern Fiction,” *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. M.H. Abrams and Stephen Greenblatt, eds. 7th ed. (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000). 2149.



provides Elizabeth with the opportunity to free herself from the confines of Miss Kilman's religiosity and her parent's bourgeois identity. She is free to be in her body. Elizabeth "liked the feeling of people working. . . . The feet of those people busy about their activities, hands putting stone to stone, minds eternally occupied not with trivial chatterings (comparing women to poplars—which was rather exciting, of course, but very silly), but with the thoughts of ships, of business, of law, of administration" (136-137). Her exposure to the Strand allows her to explore and take in her surroundings at her own pace. Reality manifests itself as Elizabeth feels,

when one was alone—buildings without architects' names, crowds of people coming back from the city having more power than single clergymen in Kensington, than any of the books Miss Kilman had lent her, to stimulate what lay slumbrous, clumsy, and shy on her mind's sandy floor to break the surface, as a child suddenly stretches its arms; it was just that, perhaps, a sigh, a stretch of the arms, an impulse, a revelation, which has its effects for ever, and then down again it went to the sandy floor. She must go home. She must dress for dinner. But what was the time?—where was a clock? (137).

Woolf's emphasis on finding oneself by losing oneself, as I discussed earlier, is evident in this passage. Woolf suggests that this deeper and more substantial reality is not bound by the confines of socialized, abstract time. It can only be experienced by throwing it all away. Crusoe and Elizabeth speak to Woolf's and Marx's idea of freedom and the crucial role that the development of the five senses has in developing a different understanding of reality, of space and time, beyond the symbolical and abstract.

Woolf's own anti-capitalist reading of Crusoe reveals the importance that stepping outside of the confines of society played in her own idea of freedom and the importance the aesthetic has for her in creating a space where readers can also demystify their relationship with the forces of capitalism. Woolf places Defoe's work in the same tradition of writers such as Chaucer, whom she sees as eschewing morality in favor of representing the unmediated immediacy of social relations. In "*The Pastons and Chaucer*," Woolf says,

It is safe to say that not a single law has been framed or one stone set upon another because of anything that Chaucer said or wrote; and yet, as we read him, we are absorbing morality at every pore. For among writers there are two kinds: there are the priests who take you by the hand and lead you straight up to the mystery; there are the laymen who imbed their doctrines in flesh and blood and make a complete model of the world without excluding the bad or laying stress upon the good. Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley are among the priests; they give us text after text to be hung upon the wall, saying after saying to be laid upon the heart like an amulet against disaster—

Farewell, farewell, the heart that lives alone  
He prayeth best that loveth best  
All things both great and small

—such lines of exhortation and command spring to memory instantly. But Chaucer lets us go our ways doing the ordinary things with the ordinary people. His morality lies in the way men and women behave to each other. We see them eating, drinking, laughing, and making love, and come to feel without a word being said what their standards are and

so are steeped through and through with their morality. There can be no more *forcible preaching* than this where all actions and passions are represented, and instead of being solemnly exhorted *we are left to stray and stare and make out a meaning for ourselves* (*my emphasis*).<sup>86</sup>

For Woolf this means that one way to read Defoe is as writer whose middle class sentimentality affirms his readers' desire for adventure, for the *Bildungsroman*, the Prodigal Son,<sup>87</sup> or as the obvious allegory of the capitalist individual as Ian Watt reads him in *The Rise of the Novel*.<sup>88</sup> The other way to read the novel is to notice, as Woolf suggests in her essay "Robinson Crusoe," how through his labor Crusoe is able to deconstruct the abstract concepts of religion and capitalist morality.<sup>89</sup> Defoe follows in Chaucer's footsteps by doing away with any of the "raptures about Nature" (47) Woolf assigns to the "priests," in order to focus on "a sense of reality" (47), which acknowledges Crusoe's capacity to re-appropriate labor from the production of capital to the expression of desire hidden behind the commodity. As she states,

he comes in the end to make common actions dignified and common objects beautiful. To dig, to bake, to plant, to build — how serious these simple occupations are; hatchets, scissors, logs, axes — how beautiful these simple objects become. Unimpeded by comment, the story marches on with magnificent downright simplicity. Yet how could comment have made it more impressive? It is true that he [Defoe] takes the opposite way from the psychologist's—he describes the effect of emotion on the body, not on the mind (47).

Woolf's reading of Crusoe moves away from the popular allegorical reading. It emphasizes Crusoe's relationship with nature, with his body and his art form. It is through creative labor that begins with the body, in contrast to Mr. Ramsay's abstract philosophical labor or Jameson's symbolic representations of desire, that Crusoe can reengage with his senses, to make "objects beautiful." This recalls my earlier discussion of Woolf's interest in pleasurable labor, and Marx's vision of history as the development of the five senses. As Woolf says,

Defoe, by reiterating that nothing but a plain earthenware pot stands in the foreground, persuades us to see remote islands and the solitudes of the human soul. By believing fixedly in the solidity of the pot and its earthiness, he has subdued every other element to his design; he has roped the whole universe into harmony. And is there any reason, we ask as we shut the book, why the perspective that a plain earthenware pot exacts should not satisfy us as completely, once we grasp it, as man himself in all his sublimity standing against a background of broken mountains and tumbling oceans with stars flaming in the sky? (48-49).

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<sup>86</sup> "The Pastons and Chaucer," *The Common Reader*, 1925, (New York: Harcourt, 1984), 17-18.

<sup>87</sup> See Notes 8 and 11 in *Robinson Crusoe*, 248.

<sup>88</sup> Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, 1957 (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2001), 60-92.

<sup>89</sup> Virginia Woolf, "Robinson Crusoe," *The Second Common Reader*, 1932 (New York: Harcourt, 1960), 42-49.

This shift in perspective from the immediate to the cosmological compels us to see beyond the narrow scope of the ideological. Woolf sees Crusoe as distancing himself from the abstract notions of time found in religion and capitalism and their fulcrum of loss and transcendence in order to find himself in his solitude. Not bound by social conventions of value and so reminiscent of Woolf's own experience as owner of The Hogarth Press, Crusoe is free to work at his own pace and dredge up whatever inspiration will help him perfect his art of making pots. The sublime image of Crusoe working and struggling to make a clay pot, creating a fire, gathering and creating tools to satisfy his needs, like Keynes's and Woolf's idea of the market, represents the freedom we inherently have to make sense of our lives at our own pace. Again, echoing Woolf's comments to The Worker's Educational Association and her comments on Chaucer, literature is "no one's private ground; literature is common ground . . . Let us trespass freely and fearlessly and find our own way for ourselves." Woolf's novels can be understood similarly. The various questions Woolf strews throughout her novels create a dialogical relation between Woolf and the reader: "Why could he [Septimus] see through bodies, see into the future, when dogs will become men?" (MD 68). Such questions make us equal participants in the process of making meaning, as I discuss in the third chapter. Woolf's questions are not about the "meaning of life," but deeply engage the question of reality. They challenge the dominant reality of alienation in capitalist society. Like Crusoe who questions the "design" which structures his reality, Woolf compels us to think about *what* we perceive as real. Like Crusoe, who is able to "make out a meaning" for himself, we are also compelled to question and rethink the nature of our reality by engaging with our own psychological and epistemological assumptions. This markedly different vision of social relations introduced by the aesthetic unhinges our conventional attitudes towards art and reality. It is well described by Roland Barthes:

when poetic language radically questions Nature by virtue of its very structure, without any resort to the content of the discourse and without falling back on some ideology, there is no mode of writing left, there are only styles, thanks to which man turns his back on society and confronts the world of objects without going through any of the forms of History or of social life.<sup>90</sup>

Novels like *Robinson Crusoe*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and *To The Lighthouse* foster a space of consumption and exploration, sensual experimentation, from which we could develop our own style, much like Crusoe perfects his art of making pots or Elizabeth is able to navigate her surroundings. By stepping outside of the dominant social-economic reality, Crusoe, and Elizabeth in *Mrs. Dalloway*, are able to free themselves from the systems of oppression.

In this way, Woolf and Marx's readings of *Robinson Crusoe* provide commentary for Barthes's remarks in *Writing Degree Zero* regarding the third person. There he states, as I mention in the next chapter, that "the narrator reduces the exploded reality to a slim and pure logos, without density, without volume, without spread, and whose sole function is to unite as rapidly as possible a cause and an end," (30-31) at the same time that "it becomes the receptacle of existence in all its density and no longer its meaning alone" (32). Barthes' idea that a certain density and immediacy of human relations lies hidden behind the mask of the third person

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<sup>90</sup> *Writing Degree Zero*, trans. Jonathan Cape, 1953, (New York: Noonday Press, 1988), 52.

follows Marx's description of the dual nature of the commodity as use and exchange value, where exchange value hides the value of labor. The real creative relations between individuals are forgotten, they are projected onto the commodity; they then become extracted without end by the impersonal forces of capitalism. By re-appropriating time as part of Robinson's process of creating value, it affirms his relationship with *his* means of production. Crusoe learns how to make his own tools. These are tools which he has created with his own labor power, with his own ingenuity. The satisfaction he derives from his creations are his and not mediated by the ruling class. In giving expression to his creative impulses, Crusoe is able to recognize others as also creative. The process of going back home to his desires allows him to deconstruct his own fantasies about religion, which then enables him to have a real relationship with Friday based on a real relationship with his environment instead of his seeing Friday as a slave. We can see a similar impulse in Elizabeth as she ventures to the Strand. Elizabeth does not lose herself after her little adventure, but "calmly and competently" (139) boards the bus. Both Elizabeth and Crusoe gain an agency that is not possible in reified society. Similarly, our ability to see the unmediated "sense of reality" between characters like Friday, Crusoe, and Elizabeth, and between ourselves and our environment, requires the deconstruction of time from an abstract social value, to the recognition of it as an expression of our creative desires in the here and now of our physical existence.

Jameson, on the other hand, clings to an abstract sense of space and time. He envisions capitalism as a series of historical events which arise from the rational struggle between competing forces and of which the mediator holds ultimate control. Jameson claims that "there is nothing that is not social and historical—indeed, that everything is 'in the last analysis' political" (20). As I have discussed, Jameson characterizes the political as the common, abstract space of class struggle. Any attempt to deny this basic reality would be an attempt to escape it, he claims. As he argues in *The Political Unconscious*,

To imagine that, unsheltered from the omnipresence of history and the implacable influence of the social, there already exists a realm of freedom . . . is only to strengthen the grip of Necessity over all such blind zones in which the individual subject seeks refuge, in pursuit of a purely individual, a merely psychological, project of salvation (20).

Jameson sees Newton's causality as the model of change which effectively sutures the rift between the private and the public, subjective and objective reality, by assimilating individual "existential" experience into the larger narrative of history. He claims Newton's "mechanical causality" best describes how change takes place in capitalism. As he argues,

mechanical causality, exemplified in the billiard-ball model of cause and effect, has long been a familiar exhibit in the history of ideas . . . associated with the Galilean and Newtonian world-view, and is assumed to have been outmoded by the indeterminacy principle of modern physics. . . . [it] retains a purely local validity in cultural analysis where it can be shown that billiard-ball causality remains one of the (nonsynchronous) laws of our particular *fallen* social reality. It does little good, in other words, to banish "extrinsic" categories from our thinking, when the latter continue to have hold on the objective realities about which we plan to think (*my emphasis* 25).

In this way, Jameson argues that the production of texts, textual interpretation, i.e., our attempts to find meaning, stems from the desire to overcome our alienation from the larger whole:

the conceptual gap between the public and the private, between the social and the psychological, or the political and the poetic, between history or society and the “individual,” which—the tendential law of social life under capitalism—maims our existence as individual subjects and paralyzes our thinking about time and change just as surely as it alienates us from our speech itself (20).

For Jameson, the *infinite* nature of our private experience necessarily requires a mediator. The idea that the mediator stands above the random billiard balls being knocked about, i.e., the various readings of a text, and is able to essentially extract from them a symbolic meaning recalls Robinson Crusoe’s own admission that “yet I was but a doctor, all ill enough qualify’d for a casuist, or a solver of difficulties,” when he tries to explain the existence of the Devil to Friday, suggesting that we can only know the effects of our circumstances—the causes remain hidden and unavailable to us in our fallen state (172). Jameson’s allusion to Newton portrays individuals as unable to understand the cause of the apple falling on their head, for this knowledge is only privy to those select few who know: “Mechanical causality is thus less a concept which might be evaluated on its own terms, than one of the various laws and subsystems of our peculiarly reified social and cultural life” (26).

For Woolf, Einstein’s *spacetime* represents a shift in human relations since it makes possible an unmediated relation between the past and present, self and others, not based on Newton’s causality. Distinguishing between Newton’s space and time and Einstein’s *spacetime* reveals the importance that the latter has for Woolf’s emphasis on the individual’s capacity to uncover the causes of trauma in order to make creative, unmediated connections with others in *To The Lighthouse*. Sharon Stockton argues in her essay “Public Space and Private Time: Perspective in *To The Lighthouse* and in Einstein’s Special Theory” that

This modernist disjunction between common space, shared time, and the individual subject was not necessarily the source of an epistemological crisis. More precisely, if the disjunction between collective and reasonable space/time and private identity was the cause of trauma, it was also the source of a specifically modernist reconstruction of sovereign individuality. The moderns replaced what they lost with new belief systems grounded in their own historical situation. This metamorphosis speaks to a Western re-adaptation to colonialism, among other things, a shift that philosopher Ortega y Gasset made explicit in the context—unsurprisingly—of his own discussion of Einstein’s Special Theory....

The “desire to master”—although not in and of itself rejected—would no longer be fulfilled through “geometry” or through shareable abstraction . . . but through attention to individual perspective.<sup>91</sup>

The “reality” shift which validates our individual experiences and capacity to create shared spaces of intimacy require a different way of perceiving reality. Stockton further argues that it is overshooting the mark to assume that since the modernist “internal” narrative is not monumental, linear, and determinist, it is spatially and not temporally structured. [Jean] Craige builds on her premise of the “insignificance” of the individual subject in an

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<sup>91</sup> Sharon Stockton, “Public Space and Private Time: Perspective in *To The Lighthouse* and in Einstein’s Special Theory,” *Essays in Arts and Sciences* Vol. 37 (October 1998), 96.

Einsteinian world by arguing that first, “the awareness of the relativity of perception collapses our knowledge of history,” rendering the past “unrecoverable,” and that second, because history is thus no longer available to the subject, modernist narrative is “flattened” to “immediacy” and the dominant form of narrative is necessarily “spatial” (19, 53). . . . Theorists as divergent as Frederic Jameson . . . have made similar cases for a twentieth century flattening of history and rejection of temporality in favor of the “field model” of spatial network. These arguments overlook the extent to which modernist writers—although indeed losing an objective sense of a shared past—depend more than any other single group of thinkers on the importance of individual memory and the necessity of weaving that memory into one’s temporally developing self. Stephen Kern’s argues precisely that modernism can be identified as a distinct “school,” for lack of a better word, through its obsession with time—time explicitly defined as non-monumental and non-public, existing in opposition to bureaucratic schedules and (the newly established) notion of “standard time” (Stockton 103-104).

Stockton’s point is important since it highlights the basic difference between the stakes of a Newtonian and Einsteinian model of social relations. What Jameson sees as the flattening of history into a “field model” where we are essentially two-dimensional characters alienated from each other, is in fact a four-dimensional reality of *spacetime* that does away with the need for an mediated, “objective,” historical “moment.” I would like to claim, in contrast to Stockton, that instead of relying on memory and focusing on “one’s temporally developing self,” as Stockton suggests, Einstein showed how the past is no longer a matter of memory but can be re-experienced “now”—time is spatialized. Recalling Jameson’s definition of the unconscious helps to characterize his investment in Newton in contrast to Woolf’s interest in Einstein. As I mentioned in this chapter, Jameson admits that the

momentary unification [achieved by mediation] would remain purely symbolic, a mere methodological fiction, were it not understood that social life is in its fundamental reality one and indivisible, a seamless whole, a single inconceivable and transindividual process, in which there is no need to invent ways of linking language events and social upheavals or economic contradictions because on that level they were never separate from one another. The realm of separation, of fragmentation, of the explosion of codes and the multiplicity of disciplines is merely the reality of the appearance: it exists, as Hegel would put it, not so much *in itself* as rather *for us*, as the basic logic and fundamental law of our daily life and existential experience in late capitalism (40).

Jameson argues for the process of mediation because, as he contends, the individual does not have the capacity to grasp the vastness of the unconscious. The individual alone cannot comprehend it. Unlike Jameson’s adherence to Newton, Woolf sees in Einstein’s notion of *spacetime* a different way of experiencing reality. What Einstein inadvertently accomplished was to make the whole of the repressed desires available to the individual. At its core, the problem of capitalist alienation is an epistemological problem. Whereas Jameson implies that the existential subject is paralyzed by the weight of his subjective experience, the infinite nature of his spatial and temporal experience requiring mediation, Einstein subjugated space and time to light. As Ronald Schleifer suggests, “Einstein’s great conceptual achievement was to remove

infinity from space and time by recognizing in the finite speed of light a limit of velocity” (175).<sup>92</sup> And as Dennis Bohnenkamp states,

What Einstein’s theory does in a sense is to project the non-temporal, not-spatial reality of interiority out into the world, much as a modern novelist like Joyce does in *Ulysses* and Finnegans *Wake*, both of which, not unlike Einstein’s theory or that of any scientist, try to encompass the whole of reality (24).<sup>93</sup>

Woolf presents characters whose minds and bodies are no longer limited to the narrow purview of mediation but can encompass the whole range of experienced reality. Space and time were now the domain of character. In the next chapter, on *Mrs. Dalloway*, I discuss how Woolf presents characters who can access the repressed reality of their bodies which Jameson’s contends is inaccessible. By changing how we perceive space and time Woolf effectively challenges the idea of alienation that has been used to understand the modernist character in literature while also challenging our own assumptions about how we interpret texts. Instead of absence and loss, Woolf encourages creativity and intimacy.

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<sup>92</sup> *Modernism and Time*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000).

<sup>93</sup> “Post-Einsteinian Physics and Literature: Toward a New Poetics,” *Mosaic* 22.3 (1989).

## Chapter 2

### *Spacetime in Mrs. Dalloway*

“Have I the power of conveying the true reality?”<sup>94</sup> Virginia Woolf asks as she ponders her reasons for writing *The Hours*, the novel which would become *Mrs. Dalloway*. Woolf, like other modernist writers, turned away from the realist novel’s use of the narrative past tense in order to offer a more accurate representation of reality. Maurice Blanchot discusses the third person past tense in the novel as marking the beginning of what he calls the “intrusion of the character . . . the individual is affirmed in his subjective richness, his inner freedom, his psychology” (381).<sup>95</sup> Yet while the realist novel represents a move further away from the closed circle of the epic tradition and to the immediacy of the city and its greater degree of realism, it has not yet freed itself entirely from the lure of a determined reality.<sup>96</sup> Barthes claims in *Writing Degree Zero* that, “the ‘he’ is a progressive conquest over the profound darkness of the existential ‘I’” (37).<sup>97</sup> Barthes also describes the function of the third person past tense in the realist novel as

maintaining a hierarchy in the realm of facts. . . . it calls for a sequence of events, that is, for an intelligible Narrative. This is why it is the ideal instrument for the construction of the world; it is the unreal time of cosmogonies, myths, History and Novels. It presupposes a world which is constructed, elaborated, self-sufficient, reduced to significant lines and not one which has been sent sprawling before us, for us to take or leave. Behind the preterite there always lurks a demiurge, a God or a reciter. . . . whose sole function is to unite as rapidly as possible a cause and an end.<sup>98</sup>

The third person reigns over the existential experience of characters, it provides ready-made solutions to an increasingly alienated existence. As I will discuss later in the chapter, Ian Watt correlates the emergence of the early novel’s degree of realism with Newton’s mechanical causality. Watt argues that a novel like *Robinson Crusoe* exemplifies this new representation of experience in which time is divided and plotted out to the most minute instance. Yet, even as Crusoe is presented in all his immediate richness, the allegorical narrative, which I mentioned in the previous chapter, still influences the way we read Crusoe. If the realist novel can be understood by its correspondence to a Newtonian model of change in which the “imperial ‘objectivity’” (Stockton 97) of the third person past tense represents a move toward representing the inner life of characters, “little egos,” as Blanchot calls them, the third person, “a God or a reciter,” is nevertheless always there in the end to rescue the realist character from its isolation.

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<sup>94</sup>*The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, vol. 2. ed. Anne Oliver Bell (New York: Hogarth Press, 1978), 248.

<sup>95</sup> *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. Susan Hanson (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1993), 381.

<sup>96</sup> See Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, trans. Anna Bostock (Cambridge: MIT P, 1999), 80, 88, 66

<sup>97</sup> *Writing Degree Zero*, trans. Jonathan Cape, 1953 (New York: Noonday Press, 1988).

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 30-31.



We can see Woolf's interest in the power of the telescope and Einstein, which Stockton discusses, as an attempt to undermine the importance of the "objective sense of a shared past" (104). Woolf instead prioritizes the individual's experience not just of time but of reality. She greatly diminishes the importance of the third person. Eric Auerbach remarks in *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* that Virginia Woolf was one of the modernist writers for whom, "the writer as narrator of objective facts has almost completely vanished; almost everything stated appears by way of reflection in the consciousness of the dramatic personae" (534).<sup>99</sup> And as Auerbach later states, "In Virginia Woolf's case the exterior events have actually lost their hegemony, they serve to release and interpret inner events, whereas before her time (and still today in many instances) inner movements preponderantly function to prepare and motivate significant exterior happenings" (538). This turn to characters' experience of reality can be seen in *Mrs. Dalloway*, as the unsure narrator in the first moments of the airplane scene asks, "But what letters? A C was it? and E, then an L?" (20). The shift from the car to the airplane scenes—characters try to decipher the airplane's advertisement—represents not just a shift to the individual character but also a shift from Newton to Einstein, from the historical and omniscient perspective to the individual's experience of reality. Stockton argues that "Virginia Woolf's *To The Lighthouse* stages a world metamorphosis that articulates the shift toward perspective, and in doing so her text parallels the shift from Newton to Einstein" (104). Although my dissertation focuses mainly on *Mrs. Dalloway*, in this chapter, and *To The Lighthouse*, in the next chapter, Woolf's interest in Einstein is also evident in her later novels.<sup>100</sup> As the working title of *Mrs. Dalloway* indicates, the concept of time plays an important role in how Woolf depicts characters' experience of reality. Einstein's idea of *spacetime* allowed Woolf to present characters whose experience was not limited to the confines of Newtonian causality; characters could relive the past and experience the future. Distinguishing between Newton's concepts of space and time and Einstein's *spacetime* will help to frame my reading of *Mrs. Dalloway*.

Newton's notion of time, which has been described as "pass[ing] without regard to whether anything happens in the world,"<sup>101</sup> and his view of space best understood as the backdrop to our daily lives, was partly derived from his understanding of Euclidian geometry.<sup>102</sup> Euclid's parallel postulate stipulated that,

Parallel straight lines are those which, "being in the same plane and being produced indefinitely in both directions, do not meet one another in either direction." The difficulty

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<sup>99</sup> *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953).

<sup>100</sup> See Michael Whitworth, *Einstein's Wake*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 170-197.

<sup>101</sup> Robert Rynasiewicz, "Newton's Views on Space, Time, and Motion," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2012 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), Web. 19 August 2014. URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2012/entries/newton-stm/>>.

<sup>102</sup> See John D. Norton, *Euclidian Geometry: The First Great Science*, University of Pittsburgh. 1 Jan 2013. Web. 19 Aug 2014.

with this definition is that it suggests one may physically demonstrate it, yet it demands the physically impossible task of drawing lines to infinity. Thus it exposes the conflicting ontological claims made for geometry in the nineteenth century. On the one hand the nativists claimed the basis for a “true knowledge of the natural world” was innate, while empiricists claimed that it derived from the senses. These were not merely academic arguments, but ideological ones. The nativist position is an essentially conservative one: it was the task of the educated elite to pass down the “immutable truths” from generation to generation. The empiricist argument about geometry, like many empiricist arguments in the nineteenth century, was tinged with radicalism: anyone could discover these truths using the evidence of their senses (Whitworth 199).

Euclid’s parallel postulate ascribed an infinite quality to both space and time. The notion of the infinite also plays an important role in Newton’s own conceptions of absolute space and absolute time. For Newton, space and time represented “real entities with their own manner of existence as necessitated by God’s existence (more specifically, his omnipresence and eternity).”<sup>103</sup> In other words, the infinite nature of space and time was a validation of God’s existence. It is easy to see how the “nativist position” and the idea that time goes on infinitely in a background of space we cannot grasp would lend itself to the need of a mediator: “Euclidian geometry ascribes the quality of infinity to space just as romanticism ascribes it to man,” says Michael Whitworth (218). The modern subject needed to find a way out of its paradoxical situation. It was free in its “subjective richness” but simultaneously imprisoned by its infinite nature. It found the solution in rationality. While “Euclid underpinned logic, civilization, and the very idea that science could reach a single, absolute truth” (Whitworth 200), Newton saw God as a masterful creator, “The Supreme God is a Being, eternal, infinite, [and] absolutely perfect,”<sup>104</sup> who organized the universe like a clock which he set in motion.<sup>105</sup> During the age of Enlightenment, religion and science intertwined as philosophers and scientists like Newton believed that by discovering the laws of the physical world—mapping and categorizing space—they could understand God.<sup>106</sup> Science had taken up the mantle from religion to find God. The Enlightenment’s Deistic rationalization of God provides the impetus for Mr. Ramsay’s Newtonian model of change; the Newtonian road towards knowledge of the natural world was characterized by an aristocratic perspective. Only a select few could comprehend the secrets of the universe. Enlightenment thinkers sought to move beyond religious superstition, but the religious overtones of Newton’s science are evident in Fredric Jameson’s “imperative to totalize”

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<sup>103</sup> See Rynasiewicz.

<sup>104</sup> “Religious Views of Isaac Newton,” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. 22 July 2004. Web. 10 Aug. 2014. See also, “Isaac Newton.” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, Wikimedia Foundation. 22 July 2004. Web. 19 Aug 2014.

<sup>105</sup> “Sir Isaac Newton,” Gettysburg University. 19 Aug 2014. [http://www3.gettysburg.edu/~tshannon/hist106web/site6/sir\\_isaac\\_newton.htm](http://www3.gettysburg.edu/~tshannon/hist106web/site6/sir_isaac_newton.htm) See also, “Clockwork Universe.” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. 22 July 2004. Web. 19 Aug. 2014.

<sup>106</sup> “Deism.” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. 22 July 2004. Web. 10 July 2014.

(53) and Mr. Ramsay's belief that his light would merge with "some bigger light, and that in a bigger still" (*TTL* 35). Louise Westling argues that Mr. Ramsay exemplifies the "The triumphs of Enlightenment rationalism and mechanistic science developed from this secular faith in man's ability to conquer all the world and achieve something like divinity."<sup>107</sup> As such, Newton's *aether*, the medium through which he believed light and gravity propagated and influenced the physical interaction between planets,<sup>108</sup> helps to explain Mr. Ramsay's abstract philosophical labor. Through the process of secularization, the laws of science took on a social dimension as the rules of life, habit, class, convention, and other forms of mechanical causality which brought individuals together in a shared space of "common physical sensation"<sup>109</sup>—much like Barthes' description of the third person in the realist novel. Individuals were assimilated into the larger narrative of history. Stockton argues that the adherence to the aether "mirrors the imperialist paradigm in that it, [the aether], is composed of "physical lines of force" which ensure not only "connection between bodies" but also "transmission"—transmission of "light," of "enlightenment," of force, of wealth" (99). The aether acted as a mediating force between subjective and objective experience; it provided a way in which individuals could overcome their alienation from each other, *space*, and the absolute laws of society, *time*. Mr. Ramsay and Dr. Bradshaw became the mediators of the symbolical, allegorical narrative of patriarchy which conferred meaning on life. In discussing Mr. Ramsay's abstract labor, Westling states that "The qualities required for this exacting work are identified with heroic virtues gleaned from Homeric epic and applied to the conquest of nature—qualities implicitly associated with the neat categories and linear, causal reasoning of traditional philosophy" (860). The religious impulse to extract from life a symbolic meaning which fits into a linear narrative is "predicated on human superiority to all other life and our right to control the natural world, of which we are assumed not really to be a part" (Westling 861). This denial of the body and individual experience in favor of abstract notions of space and time was subverted by Einstein's use of Non-Euclidian geometry. Stockton states that in rejecting the Euclidian principles, the non-Euclidian geometry of Einstein's relativity challenged the notion of common space and time: "For scientists, the Special Theory rejected two deeply held beliefs: that the absolute Newtonian space of the universe was given substance by the connective presence of the *ether*; that the royal road to objective truth about such absolute space was established through the mapping of common physical sensation" (98). Einstein's theories effectively disavow the role of the mediator and its domain of the infinite.

Einstein's Special and General theories of Relativity unhinged space and time from their separate Newtonian dimensions and combined them into a single space-time continuum. Space

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<sup>107</sup> "Virginia Woolf and the Flesh of the World," *New Literary History*, Vol. 30, No.4, Case Studies (Autumn, 1999), 861.

<sup>108</sup> "Aether," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, The Wikimedia Foundation. 22 July 2004. Web. 19 July 2014.

<sup>109</sup> Stockton, 98.

and time were no longer abstract separate entities requiring a mediator but became intertwined into *spacetime*.<sup>110</sup> As Dennis Bohnenkamp states,

The most disorienting point in the relativistic view of the universe may be the discovery that time and space are neither absolute nor separable, but are locked indivisibly together in a continuum generally designated as space/time. These traditionally stable, fixed entities become relative, subjective. The ways in which we perceive them are inextricably linked into our frame of reference. Time does not flow smoothly from past to present to future; it exists in a block interpenetrated by space or perhaps in a pool or sea—not as a river, the way it is often depicted. The sequentiality and seriality that we experience in it are illusory. . . . Central to the paradigm of relativity is the notion that reality, instead of lying in the objective world, lies in the act of measuring or perceiving it, in the phenomenological transaction between subject and object.<sup>111</sup>

Einstein's Special Theory characterized time as a dimension of space, *spacetime*, dependent on space travelers relative speed to others, their frame of reference. Space travelers traveling at different speeds relative to each other have a different experience of the "present now." What one space traveler experiences as a present event, for another this same event could still lie in the future or in the past. This is vastly different from the momentary moments of communion, symbolic spaces mediated by abstract notions of time to which individuals have to conform. Whitworth cites *The Waves* where Louis asks the others to listen "to the world moving through abysses of infinite space. It roars; the lighted strip of history is past and our Kings and Queens; we are gone; our civilization; the Nile; and all life."<sup>112</sup> Whitworth comments that "The idea of simultaneity disrupts sequentiality, revealing it to be a fragile psychological construct, 'a trick of the mind' which puts 'Kings on their thrones, one following another'" (184). Linear time was unmasked as a projection of the mind. Einstein claimed that, "The distinction between the past, present, and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion."<sup>113</sup> And as Einstein's teacher Hermann Minkowski stated in his remarks to the Assembly of German Natural Scientists and Physicians in 1908, "space by itself, and time by itself, are doomed to fade away into mere

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<sup>110</sup> In the Special Theory, space and time are no longer separate and infinite; they are tied together in a finite process, which is ruled by the speed of light. A space traveler moving at speeds close to the speed of light produces the seemingly unreal effect of time dilation and length contraction. For an outside observer, on earth for example, who is measuring a space traveler's speed and location in time, presupposing the space traveler is moving in the direction of a light beam which has been emitted from earth, the space traveler's speed will have slowed down, her/his time will move slower relative to the observer, and the space traveler's physical space will have contracted because the speed of light is the constant to which space and time have to conform.

<sup>111</sup> "Post-Einsteinian Physics and Literature: Toward a New Poetics," *Mosaic* 22.3 (1989), 21-22.

<sup>112</sup> *The Waves*, 1931 (New York: Harcourt, 1959), 225.

<sup>113</sup> From, "Present," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. 22 July 2004. Web. 21 Aug 2014.

shadows, and only a kind of union of the two will preserve an independent reality [1, p. 75].<sup>114</sup> Space and time were shown to be part of physical reality, *spacetime*, which was now the provenance of the individual. Minkowski showed how the four-dimensional reality of *spacetime* makes the linear “present” an arbitrary and abstract convention in the Special Theory:

He realized that Einstein’s ideas could best be understood in a non-Euclidean—curved—conception of space. . . .

This complicates the notion of simultaneity—it destabilizes the belief in a shared universal present. It multiplies the single presence of “now” into a vast number of “nows”. There can be as many “nows” as there are spectators! Einstein’s theory of relativity and Minkowski’s research brought space and time together in a single, four-dimensional arrangement called spacetime. In this arrangement it is not only possible to travel forwards, backwards and sideways in space, but also forwards and backwards in time.<sup>115</sup>

In *The Fabric of Reality*, David Deutsch describes this new reality:

Spacetime is sometimes referred to as the “block universe,” because within it the whole of physical reality - past, present, and future - is laid out once and for all, frozen in a single four-dimensional block (111).<sup>116</sup>

Einstein's theories dramatically expanded the experience of time from the narrow idea of the “present” to the vast expanse of the cosmos. What we experience in time is a function of where we are in space: an event that occurs in the past for one observer can occur in the future for another. This discrepancy is not perceived in our everyday reality (The effects of Special Relativity are experienced over the vast distances of space) because we share a common and mostly immediate sense of space and move at relatively uniform speeds with respect to each other, but we do see the effects of Special Relativity when we peer into space and see the light of stars that once existed. In theory, we have moved away fast enough for the past to be for us a “present” experience as the light is only now reaching us. From our perspective, someone who is farther away than us from a star would see its light in the future relative to us for whom the event exists in the present. Someone closer to the star would see the event in the present, which for us would still lie in the future. In other words, time is relative to our location in space. For all, the experience of the “present” would be equally valid. This recalls the sixteen year old Einstein’s thought experiment. He asked “if he were to pursue a beam of light [moving away from earth] at the velocity of light, what would he see?” (a question that had already been asked by popular science writer Camille Flammarion).<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Hermann Minkowski, “Space and Time,” in Hendrik A. Lorentz, Albert Einstein, Hermann Minkowski, and Hermann Weyl, *The Principle of Relativity: A Collection of Original Memoirs on the Special and General Theory of Relativity* (Dover, New York, 1952), 75-91. Web. 19 Aug. 2014. <http://www.spacetimesociety.org/minkowski.html>

<sup>115</sup> Annemarie Estor, *Jeanette Winterson’s Enchanted Science* (Veenedal: Universal Press. 2004), 110-111.

<sup>116</sup> From Estor.

<sup>117</sup> Whitworth, 175.

if we were to look at the earth from a suitably distant planet, we would in theory be able to see the battle of Waterloo happening “now,” in our present moment. An observer moving away from the earth faster than the speed of light would be moving deeper into the earth’s past, and would see events reversed, with the battle of Austerlitz occurring before Waterloo. . . . light “makes the past an eternal present”; it enables “a transformation of the past into the present” (Whitworth 174-175).

Einstein’s thought experiment provides a clear picture of how Special Relativity makes Woolf’s internal clocks possible. Time no longer ran as a vanishing “present” but was “spatialized”; it could be “seen.” Woolf’s understanding that time becomes a form of space is evident in *The Years*:

The train rushed her on... [Briggs’ ellipsis] How could she sleep? How could she prevent herself from thinking? ... [Briggs’ ellipsis] *Now* where are we? she said to herself. Where is the train at this moment? *Now*, she murmured, shutting her eyes, we are passing the white house on the hill; *now* we are going through the tunnel; *now* we are crossing the bridge over the river... [Woolf’s ellipsis] A blank intervened; her thoughts became spaced; they became muddled. Past and present became jumbled together.<sup>118</sup>

Many of Woolf’s characters can be said to encompass a large sense of *spacetime*—they exist simultaneously in the past, present, and future. This is a different idea of character than one which is limited to the vanishing “present” where the past is just a memory and the future is yet to come.

At the same time that emerging technologies of mass production stemming from the second industrial revolution increased feelings of alienation in capitalist society, i.e., the division of labor, the scientific breakthroughs of the early twentieth century along with the invention of the telephone, radio, and the telegraph earlier in the nineteenth century, signaled a move away from the isolated and alienated individual to the immediacy of human contact across vast reaches of space. Einstein’s theories and the increasing power of the telescope continued this evolution away from the infatuation with God and the infinite which structured Newtonian notions of time and space. The Enlightenment’s desire to subjugate nature and map out space had resulted in the conditions Marx had theorized, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, wherein technological developments would lead, ironically, to the “real connections” (*GI* 55) between individuals. Woolf, following Marx, sees technology’s emancipatory potential. The individual now had the tools to access reality without the need of mediation. For Woolf, the new science made it possible to conceive of characters whose sense of the “now” could encompass the whole of reality. In *Virginia Woolf and the Discourse of Science* Holly Henry states that Woolf “understood the telescope as a device that allows for a simultaneous co-existence of the past and present, and experimented in “The Searchlight” with contemporary cosmological theories on light as it traverses the universe” (55).<sup>119</sup> For Woolf,

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<sup>118</sup> From Julia Briggs, *Reading Virginia Woolf* (Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 135-136.

<sup>119</sup> Holly Henry, *Virginia Woolf and the Discourse of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

the telescope is a time machine of sorts, in that looking out into space always marks a looking back in cosmological time. Thus, [in “The Searchlight”] Mrs. Ivimey, who narrates her tale while miming the act of peering through an imaginary telescope, looks back in time to glimpse a crucial moment which marks the beginning of her life (Henry 54-55).

Woolf’s experiments with the telescope’s powers can be seen in the “Time Passes” section of *To The Lighthouse* where Mrs. McNab peers at the past as if into a telescope:

She could see her now, [Mrs. Ramsay] stopping over her flowers; and faint and flickering, like a yellow beam or the circle at the end of a telescope, a lady in a grey cloak, stooping over her flowers, went wandering over the bedroom wall, up the dressing-table, across the wash-stand, as Mrs. McNab hobbled and ambled, dusting, straightening (136).

And later, “Once more, as she felt the tea warm in her, the telescope fitted itself to Mrs. McNab’s eyes, and in a ring of light she saw the old gentleman, lean as a rake, wagging his head, as she came up with the washing, talking to himself, she supposed, on the lawn” (140). Woolf’s positioning of the lowly servant Mrs. McNab as if peering through a telescope looking back at the past undermines the reality of capitalist social relations. Woolf’s portrayal of Mrs. McNab’s use of the telescope can be seen as Woolf’s argument that all individuals have the tools available which can help them to see beyond the narrow point of view of class struggle. The telescope affords Mrs. McNab with a vision of reality that trumps the notion of infinity which structures Western reality. As Henry argues, “Woolf’s telescopic depiction of the [past] invited readers to focus on the ephemerality of humans in relation to the long ages of the cosmological past while at the same time pointing up the inanity of global conflict” (56). While Mrs. McNab is still part of the class system, she is far removed from its power struggles. Her “outsider” status alters the nature of her labor, which gives her the power to bring order to the chaos caused by the war. The telescope speaks to the idea that a social outsider like Mrs. McNab is able to reconnect to the past, through her labor, to overcome the meaningless “chaos and tumult of night,” (*TTL* 135) which characterize the “Time Passes” section, because she sees reality differently. She is connected to the sensual rhythms of her body instead of to the abstractions of social life. If the telescope “dwarf[ed] human history to the twinkling of an eye (*The Mysterious Universe* 3-4),”<sup>120</sup> as the physicist James Jeans had observed, then its subjugation of space and time to light contained an emancipating quality for Woolf. The telescope acts as a device that allows characters to relive the past instead of relying on memory and history.

While the telescope is a valuable tool for Woolf, the reality it depicts needs to be understood by the body. By working together, Mrs. McNab, Mrs. Bast and the others are able to connect to the past to resurrect the house, and make it beautiful again. In doing so, they provide the template for work and an environment of inclusion which breathes life into the Ramsay family in *To The Lighthouse*. Through the pleasure of their labor, they create a space in which others are free to explore their desires. While this might seem to suggest that Mrs. McNab’s labor does not belong to her, Woolf presents her labor, not as sacrifice for others, but as an

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 37.

example of Marx's free labor. Mrs. McNab, by connecting to the natural rhythms of her body is portrayed as being able to see the past as if through a telescope. Woolf suggests that her labor, like the power of the telescope, introduces a different way of experiencing the body. Mrs. McNab is able to access a more fundamental reality and in turn creates a space for others to do the same. The new technology acts as a metaphor for the power that individuals have to liberate themselves from the forces of oppression. Woolf, like Marx, saw the democratizing qualities of technology. Einstein's science and the power of the telescope allowed Woolf to do away with class distinctions. Mrs. McNab peering through a telescope aligns Woolf with the "empiricist argument about geometry . . . anyone could discover these truths using the evidence of their senses" (Whitworth 199). Anybody could access the nature of reality.

The curvature of *spacetime* posited by the General Theory is an extension of the Special Theory. In the Special Theory, light travels in a relatively straight line over long distances. The General Theory describes the effects of gravity on *spacetime*: light "bends" or is wrapped around objects with a large amount of mass. Whitworth cites W.K. Clifford, who "notes that in some non-Euclidian spaces, after traveling a prodigious distance, you would return to the spot from which you started" (219). The General Theory allowed Woolf to show how events continue to "exist" and can be re-experienced long after they first occurred. It helps to explain how characters can re-experience past events which are not part of their lives. As Henry comments,

The possibility of the simultaneity of past and present was posited in part a result of Einstein's model of the universe. Einstein had posited a finite, but unbounded model of the universe, which might be conceived of as the surface of a ball or planet. Light traveling along the surface of space, so to speak, must return to its starting point, and thus astronomical events of the past might be observed in the present. [James] Jeans explained, "As a consequence of space bending back on itself, a projectile of a ray of light . . . [Henry's ellipsis] cannot go on for ever without repeating its own tracks" (*The Universe Around Us* 69). It was argued that because of the curvature of space, light would eventually travel around the entire universe and as a result astronomers should be able to see the beginning of the universe (55).

As Whitworth writes,

The image of simultaneity found in Flammarion's image of the battle of Waterloo, taking place "now", is particularly appropriate to Septimus's condition: the ghosts of the war keep returning to haunt him. . . . the images of war have not travelled out to the nearest star, but have curved back on themselves and returned to post-war London. To frame Septimus's hallucinations thus is not to say that they are intended by Woolf to be anything other than psychological phenomena, but it allows us to understand the form of the novel in terms that distance it from Woolf's own episodes of insanity (187).

Whitworth suggests that Septimus is not hallucinating but is actually re-experiencing the past. He cites Woolf's description of Henry James' *What Maisie Knew* as an example of Woolf's interest in the "stellification of the dead" (178):

Maisie . . . [Whitworth's ellipsis] can only affect us indirectly, each feeling of hers being deflected and reaching us after glancing off the mind of some other person. Therefore she rouses in us no simple and direct emotion. We always have time to watch it coming and to calculate its pathway, now to the right, now to the left . . . [Whitworth's



ellipsis] we hang suspended over this aloof little world and watch with intellectual curiosity for the event (188).

Whitworth goes on:

The vocabulary recalls descriptions of both special and general relativity. Maisie is a ray of light traveling through space, “deflected” by the gravitational field of the sun; this deflection is the object of a calculation. The distance of Maisie from the reader could equally well be the distance of the author from the text. Light has several qualities which make it an appropriate metaphor for the text. . . . Though it travels very quickly, it does not reach the observer immediately; because of the vast distances referred to in popular astronomy books, one is left with the impression that it moves rather slowly. The text, in other words, does not make an immediate impact (188).

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf attributes a positive, regenerating, quality to the effects of General Relativity. This can be seen in the airplane scene, which I discuss later, and the scene with the old beggar woman. For Woolf, the theory of General Relativity meant that moments of intimacy continue to exist which might alter our sense of reality. It is only a matter of letting go of the Newtonian conventions of space and time (either by choice, in *Mrs. Dalloway*, or through creative labor, in *To The Lighthouse*), which divorce us from our mind and bodies, in order to connect with what the narrator describes in the scene with the old beggar woman, in Mrs. Dalloway, as a “fertilising . . . damp stain” (81). Einstein’s model of the universe suggested for Woolf the possibility of connecting emotionally with a “fertilising” past similar to how Mrs. McNab is able to resurrect the house to its previous state. The past could be seen as the source of *personal* trauma but it also contained the possibility of *communal* renewal and rebirth. This idea can be connected to Marx’s discussion of estranged labor and the role that the development of the senses has in recovering our creative essence. It plays an important part in the kind of labor I think Woolf asks of her readers in both *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To The Lighthouse*. Einstein’s theories effectively changed the nature of social relations, recalling Woolf’s famous statement that “on or about December 1910 human character changed.”<sup>121</sup> Like Keynes’s and Woolf’s idea of the market, Einstein’s Theories created a shared space of intimacy, fluid boundaries between the self and other, past, present, future, and between the human and non-human world which destabilized a linear view of time and common-sense space. For the reader, non-Euclidian geometry makes possible Woolf’s semantic “folds” or “puckers” in *spacetime*.<sup>122</sup> I will discuss how in *Mrs. Dalloway* Woolf uses various metaphors to bring characters together who we otherwise might not see as connecting.

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<sup>121</sup> “Mr Bennett and Mrs. Brown,” Virginia Woolf: A Woman’s Essays. ed. Rachel Bowlby. (New York: Penguin, 1992), 70.

<sup>122</sup> See Whitworth’s discussion of *The Waste Land*, 211.

Various attempts<sup>123</sup> have been made to provide a chronology of events in *Mrs. Dalloway*. None seem to take into consideration the influence that Einstein had on Woolf to explain how her characters are able “to defy rational limits of time and space.”<sup>124</sup> The attempts to provide a linear representation of what happens in the novel often rely on the regular intervals of Big Ben marking the hours, while alluding to the flashbacks and time shifts which have become associated with Woolf’s style. Woolf’s interest in Einstein suggests that a different model, and way of reading, is required to understand the nature of events on this June day than the ones which have been used to organize the passing of time in *Mrs. Dalloway*. The following attempts to provide an outline of Woolf’s experiments with time.<sup>125</sup>

Sometime in the morning in the middle of June, 1923 (3). Various critics<sup>126</sup> have assigned 10:00 a.m. as the starting time for the novel but the fact that “Big Ben strikes” (4) the hour after the novel begins as Clarissa crosses Victoria St, and that what hour Big Ben strikes is not mentioned, complicates what time it actually is. As such, the question of time can only be answered by putting ourselves in Clarissa’s shoes as she walks through the London streets (the same can be said about other characters in the novel). The first sentence begins with a married woman walking along Victoria St.—“Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself” (3)—only to seamlessly shift into Clarissa Dalloway’s point of view in the next sentence:

For Lucy had her work cut out for her. The doors would be taken off their hinges; Rumpelmayer’s men were coming. And then, thought Clarissa Dalloway, what a morning—fresh as if issued to children on a beach (3).

The shift from the married woman, Mrs. Dalloway to Clarissa Dalloway reflects a significant formal turn in the novel also reflected in philosophy by Descartes and Locke, to the “immediate facts of consciousness.”<sup>127</sup> The shift to a higher degree of realism is discussed by Ian Watt in *The Rise of the Novel* in terms of the emphasis that novelists paid to “particular individuals in the contemporary social environment” (19) (Watt cites Crusoe as such an example),<sup>128</sup> as opposed to the assimilation of character to the larger movements of plot found in the “a-historical” (23)

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<sup>123</sup> See David Dowling, *Mapping Streams of Consciousness*, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991) See also, Andelys Wood, “Walking the Web in the Lost London of Mrs. Dalloway,” *Mosaic*, Vol. 36. 2 (2003). “A *Mrs. Dalloway* Walk in London,” Virginia Woolf Society of Great Britain, Web. 25 July 2013. [http://www.virginiawoolfsociety.co.uk/vw\\_res.walk.htm](http://www.virginiawoolfsociety.co.uk/vw_res.walk.htm)

<sup>124</sup> Paricia Matson, “The Terror and the Ecstasy: The Textual Politics of Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*,” *Ambiguous Discourse: Feminist Narratology & British Women Writers*, ed. Kathy Mezei, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 172.

<sup>125</sup> Because of Einstein, a more accurate representation of events would probably require a three dimensional video model to take into account the speeding up and slowing down of time in relation to other characters and the city space, as well as the shifts in perspective and connections across vast distances which occur between characters in the novel.

<sup>126</sup> See note, 123.

<sup>127</sup> Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 15.

<sup>128</sup> See pg., 60. Crusoe provides a detailed daily account of his journey.

traditions of romance and tragedy (13-14). As Watt states, “The parallel between the tradition of realist thought and the formal innovations of the early novelists is obvious: both philosophers and novelists paid greater attention to the particular individual than had been common before” (18). This focus on the daily lives of individual characters is closely connected to the importance that new ideas of time played in defining experience. Watt mentions that

Newton and Locke presented a new analysis of the temporal process; it became a slower and more mechanical sense of duration which was minutely enough discriminated to measure the falling objects or the succession of thoughts in the mind. . . .

we have a sense of personal identity subsisting through duration and yet changed by the flow of experience (24).

This historical approach reflects an innovation from the a-historical traditions, but Woolf represents a break from history and memory and Watt’s claim that “The novel’s plot is also distinguished from most previous fiction by its use of past experience as the cause of present action: a causal connection operating through time” (22). In contrast, Woolf felt history was imposed on characters in the form of habit and tradition—the laws of men.<sup>129</sup> Characters’ choices and their concept of the past and future were indelibly determined by the larger social and political structures. The future was just a repetition of the past. As such, Watt’s reading of *Robinson Crusoe* as the representative of the modern capitalist individual (60-92) can be contrasted with Woolf’s own reading in which she argues that Crusoe is invested in the immediate sensuousness of his body. This raises a larger question regarding the function of the “novel” in general. Watt argues that the

division of labour has done much to make the novel possible: partly because the more specialized the social and economic structure, the greater the number of significant differences of character, attitude and experience in contemporary life which the novelist can portray, and which are of interest to his readers; partly because, by increasing the amount of leisure, economic specialization provides the kind of mass audience with which the novel is associated; and partly because this specialization creates particular needs in that audience which the novel satisfies. Such, at least, was the general view of T. H. Green: “In the progressive division of labour, while we become more useful citizens, we seem to lose our completeness as men [and women] . . . [Watt’s ellipsis] the perfect organization of modern society removes the excitement of adventure and the occasion for such independent effort. There is less of human interest to touch us within our calling. . . .” [Watt’s ellipsis] “The alleviation” of this situation, Green concluded, “is to be found in the newspaper and the novel” (71).

For Watt, the novel catered to the reader’s increasing alienation from the natural world. The division of labour with its religious origins (74), the emergence of the printing press (71), and Newtonian mechanics all contribute to the creation of capitalistic self-alienation. Watt thus sees Crusoe as a “hero [in whose] efforts . . . the reader can share vicariously” (71). While Watt sees the novel as augmenting the religious and economic conditions of self-alienation, Woolf sees the novel as following a tradition of writers who encouraged embodiment. Woolf’s reading

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<sup>129</sup> See “The Mark on the Wall” and “Modern Fiction.”

of Crusoe re-appropriates the representation of character in a way similarly to my discussion of Mrs. McNab. By stepping outside the confines of his social class, Crusoe, through his labor, is able to deconstruct the abstract notions of religion and capitalism in order to connect intimately with Friday. Crusoe, and Elizabeth in *To The Lighthouse*, are free to explore a different sense of reality because they set foot outside of their common, reified social space. Robinson Crusoe is not beholden to the traditions of the past. Crusoe offers a model of self-emancipation instead of capitulation. For Woolf, *Robinson Crusoe* encouraged the development of the senses. Similarly, *Mrs. Dalloway*, mapped out according to the time on the clock as has been the custom, can be read as affirming reified reality—characters lives are organized according to larger historical forces. But Woolf explores the idea that behind the conventional way of looking at the novel exists another more intimate reality between characters which requires other ways of reading and understanding the nature of space and time. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, I argue that Woolf seeks to disrupt the conventional reality of alienated labor; the novel requires that we use other senses. If Newton’s causality was seen as the science of visible mechanical forces, which nevertheless was deeply spiritual at its core, Einstein’s theories could be “negatively” characterized as escaping from the world through ideas of “disembodiment” (Whitworth 186)—ideas which are nevertheless used by Woolf to re-conceive what it means to be in the body. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf attempts to free characters from history and the repetition of the past in order to represent them and their environment more “realistically.” The shift to Mrs. Dalloway to Clarissa Dalloway represents a development of character from Newton’s ideas of space and time to Einstein’s *spacetime*.

One way to trace this idea is by thinking of Woolf’s protagonist as encompassing at one and the same time the past, present, and future, Clarissa, Clarissa Dalloway, and Mrs. Dalloway, as well as the old lady she sees “in the room opposite” (186). Woolf uses Einstein’s idea of relativity to suggest that her characters can experience different moments in their lives simultaneously. Clarissa Dalloway encompasses a large expanse of *spacetime*. Steve Ellis suggests that in *Mrs. Dalloway* Woolf “affirms continuity through the synchronic ‘chiming in unison’ of different times rather than the ‘striking’ of the present moment alone.”<sup>130</sup> And as Julia Briggs has remarked,

The idea that time is experienced differently by different individuals, and that each of us has a series of different internal clocks measuring different times plays upon Einstein’s *Special Theory of Relativity* (1905) which established that time was not absolute but flowed at different rates for different observers moving at different speeds relative to one another. . . . Woolf links her multiple internal clocks with the multiple selves that inhabit us (134).<sup>131</sup>

The novel challenges the strictures of causality by shifting freely between the past and future. By paying attention to the shifts in personal time which correspond with a shift between Mrs. Dalloway to Clarissa Dalloway, for example, and which are often marked by a distinct change in tone, we can take into account the seeming discrepancies in space and time which characterize

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<sup>130</sup> *Virginia Woolf and the Victorians* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 68.

<sup>131</sup> *Reading Virginia Woolf*.

Clarissa Dalloway's walk from her house in Westminster and her walk through Old and New Bond Streets where she goes to do her shopping. This explains why the beginning of the novel cannot be understood as beginning at 10:00 a.m. since it represents two separate instances in which Mrs. Dalloway bought flowers sometime in June—"going up Bond Street to a shop where they kept flowers for her when she gave a party" (11). After returning from buying flowers at Mulberry's, the narrator describes her as

collecting the whole of her at one point (as she looked into the glass), seeing the delicate pink face of the woman who was that very night to give a party; of Clarissa Dalloway; of herself. . . .

That was her self—pointed; dart-like; definite. That was her self when some effort, some call on her to be her self, drew the parts together, she alone knew how different, how incompatible and composed so for the world only into one centre, one diamond, one woman who sat in her drawing-room and made a meeting-point . . . never showing a sign of all the other sides of her—faults, jealousies, vanities, suspicions . . . (37).

This scene illustrates the warring factions that make up Clarissa Dalloway. She is simultaneously Mrs. Dalloway (the official time on the clock thus corresponds with her), the married woman who has lost any sense of self and is preoccupied with death, "She was not old yet. She had just broken into her fifty-second year" (36), and Clarissa who Miss Kilman hates: "But Miss Kilman did not hate Mrs. Dalloway. Turning her large gooseberry-coloured eyes upon Clarissa, observing her small pink face, her delicate body... (125).

For large portions of the novel, Woolf depicts how Clarissa Dalloway attempts to free herself from the constrictions of marriage and patriarchy, which have alienated her from her body and reduced her life to a vanishing "present" afraid of the future. As the novel states, Clarissa Dalloway "felt very young; at the same time unspeakably aged. She sliced like a knife through everything; at the same time was outside, looking on" (8). "Looking on" recalls the power of the telescope to look back at the past while also existing in the present and helps to explain how Clarissa attempts to relive the past in order to free herself from the "specialization" of the "present." This is evident at the end of the novel when, as Clarissa hears about Septimus's death, she looks out the window and sees herself as an old woman who looks back at her:

Many a time had she gone, at Bourton when they were all talking, to look at the sky; or seen it between people's shoulders at dinner; seen it in London when she could not sleep. She walked to the window.

It held, foolish as the idea was, something of her own in it, this country sky, this sky above Westminster. She parted the curtains; she looked. Oh, but how surprising!—in the room opposite the old lady stared straight at her! She was going to bed. And the sky. It will be a solemn sky, she had thought, it will be a dusky sky, turning away its cheek in beauty. But there it was—ashen pale, raced over quickly by tapering vast clouds. It was new to her. The wind must have risen. She was going to bed, in the room opposite. It was fascinating to watch her, moving about, that old lady, crossing the room, coming to the window. Could she see her? It was fascinating, with people still laughing and shouting in the drawing room, to watch that old woman, quite quietly, going to bed. She pulled the blind now. The clock began striking. The young man had killed himself; but she did not pity him; with the clock striking the hour, one, two, three, she did not pity him with all

this going on. There! the old lady had put out her light! the whole house was dark now with this going on, she repeated, and the words came to her, Fear no more the heat of the sun. She must go back to them. But what an extraordinary night! She felt somehow very like him—the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away. The clock was striking. The leaden circles dissolved in the air (185-186).

This scene is significant for the way in which Woolf synchronizes the past, present, and future. Clarissa, the old woman, seems to be peering through a telescope and looking back at her past, at the scene of a party she threw, at the same time she sees herself in the future as an old woman. Clarissa's perception of herself as an old woman can be understood in light of Woolf's statement that "if Einstein is true we shall be able to foretell our own lives."<sup>132</sup> Whitworth states that

Questions about posterity naturally raise the question of whether we can know the future. To imagine one's history as a ray traveling to a destination presents the possibility that one might overtake the ray and contemplate the destination. Though physically such a process is impossible, according to Einstein, the ubiquitous metaphor of travel makes it all too easy to imagine (182).

Woolf plays with this idea to suggest that Clarissa, who feels she can see "something of her own in it," can simultaneously experience the past, present, and future. The moment she puts out her light in the future she recalls Septimus' death in the "present": "The young man had killed himself; but she did not pity him; with the clock striking the hour, one, two, three." Her future death synchronizes with his past death, which is based on the fact that the clock also stops temporarily at the stroke of the third hour for Lucrezia after hearing of Septimus' death,

It seemed to her as she drank the sweet stuff that she was opening long windows, stepping out into some garden. But where? The clock was striking—one, two, three: how sensible the sound was; compared with all this thumping and whispering; like Septimus himself. She was falling asleep. But the clock went on striking, four, five, six . . . (150).

Woolf uses the third stroke (like her allusion to Shakespeare) as a semantic wrinkle<sup>133</sup> to bring all three characters together in a common space. Lucrezia, Clarissa, and Septimus represent non-Euclidian lines of light which connect across the *spacetime* of the novel as Big Ben strikes the third hour. Of this conflation of past-present-future Whitworth comments, "One may also compare the convergence of the various characters to the convergence of light from diverse sources, each beginning at a different point in space and time, but arriving at the same here-now, London in the middle of June" (187). Alongside this is placed the more visceral experience of death: "He had thrown himself from a window. Up had flashed the ground; through him, blundering, bruising, went the rusty spikes." Septimus and Clarissa are also brought together by a disregard for time implied in Shakespeare's line: "*Fear no more the heat of the sun*, She must go back to them. But what an extraordinary night! She felt somehow very like him—the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away" (*my emphasis* 186). This allusion to the song in Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* is echoed when Septimus, shortly

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<sup>132</sup> From Gillian Beer, *Virginia Woolf: The Common Ground* (Ann Arbor: The U of Michigan P, 1996), See also, Whitworth, 182.

<sup>133</sup> See Whitworth's discussion of *The Waste Land*, 222-229.

before plunging to his death, also recalls Shakespeare's lines, "Fear no more, says the heart in the body; fear no more" (139). Past, present, and future are brought together in the space of the "now" where the linear boundaries of time are dissolved. Septimus' suicide allows Clarissa Dalloway to reconnect with "Clarissa," the unmarried part of herself she is trying to recapture. This can be gleaned from the fact that she had read Shakespeare's lines as she stands in front of Hatchards' book shop (9) before she becomes Mrs. Dalloway. This also implies that Septimus, in the future, makes a connection with Clarissa in the past. "Clarissa," who exists in the past relative to Septimus, and Septimus, who exists in the past relative to Clarissa after she hears of his death, are able to connect across space and time. Septimus' and Clarissa's moment of intimacy is shared by Lucrezia's feeling after learning of Septimus' death that she was "opening long windows, stepping out into some garden"—long windows reminiscent of French windows: it transports us to the beginning of the novel where we are ushered back into Clarissa Dalloway's past:

What a lark! What a plunge! For so it had always seemed to her, when, with a little squeak of the hinges which she could hear *now*, she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air. How fresh, how calm, stiller than this of course, the air was in the early morning; like the flap of a wave; the kiss of a wave; chill and sharp and yet (*for a girl of eighteen as she then was*) solemn, feeling as she did, standing at the open window, that something was about to happen; looking at the flowers (*my emphasis*) (3).

The experience of plunging through the window that all three characters have, suggests breaking free from the narrow perspective of civilized space and time which keeps characters isolated from each other. Hence, the connection that Clarissa has with Septimus at the end of the novel is validated in this passage by the premonition at the beginning of the novel that the eighteen year old Clarissa has. Past, present, and future co-exist "now." Woolf connects all three characters together over the vast expanse of *spacetime*, beyond even the confines of the novel from Clarissa's youth to her future death, to transform what is perceived as a tragic experience into an empathic and redemptive one. As Septimus stands in front of the "large Bloomsbury lodging-house window," and thinks of "the tiresome, the troublesome, and rather melodramatic business of opening the window and throwing himself out," he feels "It was their idea of tragedy, not his or Rezia's (for she was with him). Holmes and Bradshaw like that sort of thing" (149). All three characters, as the allusion to Shakespeare implies, sacrifice the abstract social conventions of time—tragedy, which provides the illusion of communion but which maintains boundaries between the self and other—for life and intimacy. After Clarissa learns of Septimus' death she thinks, "Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate; people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded, one was alone. There was an embrace in death" (184). Overcoming the fear of death means breaking past the limitations of abstract time which demand the sacrifice of the body. The connection between Shakespeare and overcoming the fear of death is evident on other occasions: Rezia looks through Septimus' drawer and finds it full of "writings about war; about Shakespeare; about great discoveries; how there is no death" (140) and Septimus later cries out: "Burn them! he cried. Now for his writings; how the dead sing behind rhododendron bushes; odes to Time; conversations with Shakespeare" (147). Clarissa had "lost herself in the process of

living” (185), and it is only after hearing about Septimus’ death that she can go back to a time when she felt free to declare, “If it were now to die, ‘twere now to be most happy” (184). Just as Septimus helps Clarissa to recall her own feelings of freedom—“She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away. . . . He made her feel the beauty; made her feel the fun” (186)—Clarissa also shares her experience of the past at Bourton, free from the demands of society, with Septimus and Lucrezia. This moment of communion, of a shared space between the three characters, dislodges the self from the conventional boundaries of time and allows Clarissa Dalloway to overcome her fear of death. As Whitworth suggests, “non-Euclidian space could prove intellectually, imaginatively, and even emotionally satisfying. It provides a protection against infinite space” (219). The fourth dimension of *spacetime* changes the popular view that Septimus and Mrs. Dalloway (as well as Clarissa) never meet by effectively dissolving the boundaries we associate with causality and change. The connection between Clarissa in the past and Septimus in the future and as well as Clarissa’s own ability to see her own future, recalls Einstein’s idea that the whole of reality has already happened. It is a matter of “throwing” it all away in order to *see* it.

Big Ben strikes the hour 10:00 a.m.: Clarissa Dalloway is over fifty years old. She crosses Victoria St.; walks through the park; meets Hugh Whitbread and reaches the park gates; and walks through Bond St. to Mulberry’s (4-14). The opening scene of the novel shows how Clarissa Dalloway, who exists in the liminal space between the past and the future, struggles to stem the tide of patriarchy (which she ultimately succumbs to). After Scrope Purvis sees her and thinks of her as having “a touch of the bird about her, of the jay, blue-green, light, vivacious, though she was over fifty, and grown very white since her illness” (4), we shift to Clarissa’s point of view,

For having lived in Westminster—how many years now? over twenty,—one feels even in the midst of the traffic, or waking at night, Clarissa was positive, a particular hush, or solemnity; an indescribable pause; a suspense (but that might be her heart, affected, they said, by influenza) before Big Ben strikes. There! Out it boomed. First warning, musical; then the hour, irrevocable. The leaden circles dissolved in the air (4).

Scrope Purvis, whose name might play on the idea of “scope,” sees Clarissa as a specimen to be categorized. Woolf’s criticism of his categorization of her is validated by the “irrevocable” time on the clock and its insignificance, “The leaden circles dissolved in the air.” This is contrasted to Clarissa’s more expansive experience of time as an “indescribable pause, a suspense,” which recalls the earlier suspension of time and blurring of boundaries at the third stroke of the hour. The contrast between Scrope Purvis’ narrow perception of Clarissa and her expansive view of reality can be seen as she crosses Victoria Street:

For heaven only knows why one loves it so, how one sees it so, making it up, building it round one, tumbling it, creating it every moment afresh; but the veriest frumps, the most dejected of miseries sitting on doorsteps (drink their downfall) do the same; can’t be dealt with, she felt positive, by Acts of Parliament for that very reason: they love life. In the swing, tramp, and trudge; in the bellow and the uproar; the carriages, motor cars, omnibuses, vans, sandwich men shuffling and swinging; brass bands; barrel organs; in the triumph and the jingle and the strange high singing of some aeroplane overhead was what she loved; life; London, this moment of June (4).



Clarissa's expansive and inclusive connection to her surrounding is accentuated by the "singing" "aeroplane overhead," which is juxtaposed to the "musical" quality of Big Ben and gestures at emerging technologies which measure time and space on a different scale. The connection of the airplane with Einstein's theories and their disruption of causality, as I will argue, implies that Clarissa sees the future in this scene before it has happened. Clarissa's vision is in stark contrast to the narrowness of Mrs. Dalloway's. The latter does not notice the presence of the airplane. After she arrives home from shopping, she asks,

"What are they looking at?" said Clarissa Dalloway to the maid who opened the door.

The hall of the house was cool as a vault. Mrs. Dalloway raised her hand to her eyes, and, as the maid shut the door to, and she heard the swish of Lucy's skirts, she felt like a nun who has left the world and feels fold round her the familiar veils and the response to old devotions (29).

The slimmer of hope which "Clarissa Dalloway" embodies as she walks through the city is quickly reduced to Mrs. Dalloway's blindness as she enters the male dominated space. The institution of marriage instills a sense of self-sacrifice. It prevents her from *seeing* the things around her and eventually reduces her life to "nothing":

She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible, unseen; unknown; there being no more marrying, no more having of children now, but only this astonishing and rather solemn progress with the rest of them, up Bond Street, this being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa anymore; this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway (10-11).

Before Clarissa Dalloway arrives home from shopping, her existential crisis is reflected in the contrast between Newton and Einstein's ideas of time.

The two different kinds of time Clarissa and Mrs. Richard Dalloway embody are expressed in Woolf's juxtaposition between Clarissa's "this moment of June" (4) and the inconsequential "For it was the middle of June. The War was over. . . . The King and Queen were at the Palace" (5), which later becomes "this matter-of-fact June morning" (30). Woolf distinguishes between an experience of time in which Clarissa is free to create "every moment afresh," to disband social and ontological boundaries in order to connect intimately with her environment and others, to the symbolic time of Empire, which requires the sacrifice of her individuality. This is why in this scene with the King and Queen, when she thinks of "Lady Bexborough who opened *a* bazaar" (*my emphasis* 5), the generic nature of the article "a" reflects the loss of Clarissa's individuality. This is in contrast to the more particular definite article "the" she uses to describe Lady Bexborough after she reads Shakespeare's lines at Hatchards', and before she has lost her individuality: "Think, for example, of the woman she admired most, Lady Bexborough, opening *the* bazaar" (*my emphasis*, 10). The latter example has an immediacy Clarissa, who still has the capacity to "Think," would have noticed. The contrast between Mrs. Dalloway and Clarissa can be seen later as we shift from Mrs. Dalloway to Clarissa:

It is probably the Queen, thought Mrs. Dalloway, coming out of Mulberry's with her flowers; the Queen. And for a second she wore a look of extreme dignity standing by the flower shop in the sunlight while the car passed at a foot's pace, with its blinds drawn. The Queen going to some hospital; the Queen opening some bazaar, thought Clarissa (16-17).

Woolf's depiction of the queen in this passage personifies the struggle Clarissa Dalloway embodies. It shows the difference between what Mrs. Dalloway thinks about and what Clarissa thinks about as Woolf shifts from Mrs. Dalloway's reverential attitude to Clarissa's playfulness, thinking that the Queen would indulge in the seemingly inconsequential, or might even behave like Lady Bexborough, by "opening some bazaar." Clarissa humanizes the Queen, makes her part of the living world. Clarissa's struggle to maintain her sense of self helps to explain what she meant when she says early in the novel that she "remembered once throwing a shilling into the Serpentine" (9), something she recalls towards the end of the novel,

She had once thrown a shilling into the Serpentine, never anything more. But he (Septimus) had flung it away. They went on living (she would have to go back; the rooms were still crowded; people kept coming). They (all day she had been thinking of Bourton, of Peter, of Sally), they would grow old (184).

For the reader, the shift from "this moment of June" to "For it was the middle of June" also signifies a shift in time from the past, and the expansive sense of time and space Clarissa experiences, to the narrowness of Mrs. Dalloway, who exists in the future *relative* to Clarissa. This shift is registered by a shift in tone from Clarissa's more carefree point of view to Mrs. Dalloway's "(but one must economise, not buy things rashly for Elizabeth)" (5). We then follow Mrs. Dalloway through her meeting with Hugh in the park, which is prefaced by the feeling of something "strange, on entering the Park, the silence; the mist, the hum; the slow-swimming happy ducks" (5). The mist and the slow-swimming ducks again suggests a suspension of time and a dissolving of boundaries between the past and present, as Hugh "always made her feel, as he bustled on, raising his hat rather extravagantly and assuring her that she might be a girl of eighteen" (6). Hugh's perception of her as the unmarried woman, "Good-morning to you, Clarissa! said Hugh, rather extravagantly, for they had known each other as children" (5-6), is contrasted with how she sees herself: "I love walking in London," said Mrs. Dalloway" (6). Woolf effectively shifts from the perspective that Hugh has of her in the past to the perspective that Mrs. Dalloway has of herself in the "present." The narrator's characterization of her in this scene as retaining a sense of her old self—"Times without number Clarissa had visited Evelyn Whitbread in a nursing home—and Hugh's of her as "an old friend, Clarissa Dalloway," (6) contrast how he sees her and how she sees herself. Point of view is relative; it depends on where you are in *spacetime*. In this case, Woolf shows how experiencing the past is partly a mental state. Hugh sees Clarissa the way he saw her before she was married and later how he sees her after her marriage, while Mrs. Dalloway has to rely on her memory, "She could remember scene after scene at Bourton" (6). Einstein's relativity is further evident in Woolf's insertion on the next page of the past amidst Mrs. Dalloway's memory of the past:

(June had drawn out every leaf on the trees. The mothers of Pimlico gave suck to their young. Messages were passing from Fleet St. to the Admiralty. Arlington Street and Piccadilly seemed to chafe the very air in the Park and lift its leaves hotly, brilliantly, on waves of that divine vitality which Clarissa loved. To dance, to ride, she had adored all that) (7).<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Woolf does a similar thing in *To The Lighthouse*, where she uses colors to represent the simultaneity of past and present events.

Instead of being presented as a memory which Mrs. Dalloway has, Woolf inserts the past directly into the present. For the reader, who is “observing” the scene, both past and present exist simultaneously. For Mrs. Dalloway, the past only exists in her memory, but in the next paragraph, she expresses the belief that the past could be relived:

For they might be parted for hundreds of years, she and Peter; she never wrote a letter and his were dry sticks; but suddenly it would come over her, If he were with me now what would he say?—some days, some sights bringing him back calmly, without the old bitterness; which perhaps was the reward for having cared for people; they came back in the middle of St. James’s Park on a fine morning—indeed they did (7).

These passage gestures at how her experience with Hugh and with Peter (later in the novel), like her sense of self, of being Clarissa Dalloway, can encompass the past and present. The past was not just a memory. This scene further illustrates her struggle against the forces of patriarchy, which rely on tradition and habit. Her feeling that her life was not bound by the “finality” of death, is expressed in her “soliloquy” after meeting with Hugh, as she takes a detour before walking up Bond Street:

what she loved was this, here, now, in front of her; the fat lady in the cab. Did it matter then, she asked herself, walking towards Bond Street, did it matter that she must inevitably cease completely; all this must go on without her; did she resent it; or did it not become consoling to believe that death ended absolutely? but that somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being part, she was positive, of the trees at home; of the house there; ugly, rambling all to bits and pieces as it was; part of the people she had never met; being laid out like a mist between the people she knew best, who lifted her on their branches as she had seen the trees lift the mist, but it spread ever so far, her life, herself. But what was she dreaming as she looked into Hatchards' shop window? What image of white dawn in the country, as she read in the book spread open:

*Fear no more the heat o' the sun*

*Nor the furious winter's rages* (9).

Along with the allusion to Shakespeare, which Woolf cites as an argument against linear time and history, as I claim in the third chapter, this passage implies that Hugh, in the previous scene, (and Peter) do not appear as ghosts but that the “present” remains and can be re-experienced, as with Einstein’s thought experiments with light. Whitworth states that “Memory becomes something externalized, objective, a feature of the physical world rather than the mind” (181). For Woolf, Einstein’s science offered an alternative model of communion based on the permanence of light. The nod to Einstein can be seen when Peter and old Joseph interrupt Clarissa and Sally’s moment of intimacy—“Star-gazing’ said Peter” (36). Whitworth cites the following passage from Woolf’s *Night and Day* to argue that Woolf understood that “stars contain records of the past”:

Somehow it seemed to her that they were even now beholding the procession of kings and wise men upon some road on a distant part of the earth. And yet, after gazing another second, the stars did their usual work upon the mind, froze to cinders the whole of our short human history, and reduced the human body to an ape-like, furry form, crouching amid the brushwood of a barbarous clod of mud (177).

As I discussed earlier, the idea that the whole of human history is insignificant amidst the vast expanse of the cosmos contained for Woolf a redeeming quality. The “intimacy” Clarissa Dalloway attempts to recapture after she marries, that “old feeling” (34), is based on the ability to re-experience the past and is described as a “religious feeling” (36)—a “moment”—between herself and Sally when they were young. The airplane scene is also described as introducing a “new religion” (23). Quoting Flammarion, Whitworth suggests that Woolf’s ideas about the “existence” of the past could have been influenced by the science writer:

“As the aspect of worlds changes from year to year, from one season to another, and almost from one day to the next, we can represent this aspect as escaping into space and advancing in Infinitude to reveal itself to eyes of distant beholders.” Whether Woolf learnt this idea from Flammarion is difficult to determine, though he is a more likely source than an early popularizer of Einstein (177).

This produces the unreal effect of Einstein’s theories that everything—all of reality—has already happened, as when Clarissa can feel what Septimus feels in the future at the beginning of the novel, or when Peter sees Clarissa’s future death when St. Margaret marks 11:30. It is a matter of seeing it. Woolf seems to suggest that in being able to experience the past, whether through “moments”<sup>135</sup> of intimacy which echo through the cosmos like the light of a star which finally reaches our eye (General Relativity), or “moments” of concentration which dissolve the boundaries of space and time (Special Relativity), characters like Clarissa Dalloway are able to embrace the future. They are able to overcome the fear of death. Clarissa Dalloway is trying to re-capture her ability to “see” in order re-connect with a sense of self that is not burdened by the demands of history. One such example of the past—of General Relativity—affecting Clarissa Dalloway takes place shortly after arriving home from shopping: “That was her feeling—Othello’s feeling, and she felt it, she was convinced, as strongly as Shakespeare meant Othello to feel it...” (35).<sup>136</sup> And, an example of Special Relativity, which I cited earlier, in which Clarissa is able to concentrate to dissolve boundaries takes place shortly after: “Clarissa . . . plunged into the very heart of the moment, transfixed it there—the moment of this June morning in which was the pressure of all the other mornings, seeing the glass . . . collecting the whole of her at one point . . . of Clarissa Dalloway; of herself” (37). Clarissa Dalloway encompasses a large expanse of *spacetime*. This is also evident at the end of the novel when Peter “sees” Clarissa, “It is Clarissa, he said. For there she was” (194). Peter is able to see Clarissa across the vast expanse of *spacetime* partly because he, like Clarissa, has overcome the fear of dying.

After her detour along Piccadilly St. to Hatchards’ bookstore, Clarissa Dalloway walks up Bond St. and stops to see a Dutch painting as she thinks about her body, “But how often now this body she wore (she stopped to look at a Dutch picture), this body, with all its capacities seemed nothing—nothing at all” (10). This scene evokes the Dutch realist tradition, which

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<sup>135</sup> I discuss the blurred boundaries of the “moment of being” in the third chapter.

<sup>136</sup> Shakespeare plays an important role in Woolf’s argument against time, which I discuss in chapter 3.

deemphasized the religious and symbolic, instead focusing on portraiture, and everyday life.<sup>137</sup> The contrast between the symbolic experience of Mrs. Dalloway and the “realistic” experience of Clarissa is portrayed by Woolf geographically as a difference between Old Bond St. and New Bond St. where the latter represents Mrs. Dalloway and the former, Clarissa. This is a significant moment (which has not been accounted for by the various studies which have attempted to trace her path)<sup>138</sup> in that it signifies, for the reader, the future relative to Clarissa, which we can deduce from the fact that she, Mrs. Dalloway, starts walking north to south after she becomes “Mrs. Richard Dalloway” (11), from the fishmonger’s shop at 121 New Bond St., towards the glove shop at 153a New Bond St., and finally to Mulberry’s shop at 42 New Bond St. Mulberry’s shop is located between New Bond St. and Old Bond St., as if in a liminal space between the past and the present, between Clarissa and Mrs. Dalloway, i.e., Clarissa Dalloway. On the one hand her path seems to be divided between Old Bond St. and her thoughts about living her life over and being like Lady Bexborough (9), the realism of the Dutch paintings (10), and New Bond St., with its loss of individuality. This loss of self is prefaced by her detours along Piccadilly to “Devonshire House, Bath House, and the house with the china cockatoo” (9) and Hatchards’ shop window, where she reads Shakespeare’s lines. Her indecisiveness about going up Bond St. to New Bond St. is marked by her musings on death and the veiled allusion to *Hamlet’s* famous soliloquy, “To be, or not to be,” as she ponders whether “death ended absolutely” (9). The image we get is of a woman having an existential crisis. She is caught between the lived memories of a boundless self and her absolute effacement as Mrs. Dalloway—Mrs. Richard Dalloway. Her immersion into patriarchal society characterizes the rest of the section where she is walking up New Bond St (11-14), since it does not contain the existential dilemma of Clarissa Dalloway on Old Bond St. but is invested in the petty trifles of domestic life, a hatred of Miss Kilman, self-loathing, and a reluctance to question her existence.

Around 10:45: Mrs. Dalloway has reached Mulberry’s (14). Mrs. Dalloway is inside Mulberry’s when she hears the “violent explosion” of the “motor car” (14). The government car presents a symbolic resolution to Clarissa Dalloway’s existential dilemma. It is depicted as the “spirit of religion” (14), which brings order to chaos:

passing invisibly, inaudibly, like a cloud, swift, veil-like upon hills, falling indeed with something of a cloud’s sudden sobriety and stillness upon faces which a second before had been utterly disorderly (14).

What is significant about this scene is that “Mrs. Dalloway” not “Clarissa” crosses paths with Septimus. The car stands between them as Mrs. Dalloway “looked out [the window] with her little pink face pursed in inquiry” and “Septimus [also] looked” (15). The shift back to the past and Clarissa only occurs when Mrs. Dalloway tries to imagine who was sitting in the car and wonders if it is the queen (16-17). Another important discrepancy which reflects this shift in time is apparent in the different positions of the car relative to Mrs. Dalloway and Clarissa. In

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<sup>137</sup> “Dutch Golden Age Painting,” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. The Wikimedia Foundation. 22 July 2004. Web. 19 Aug 2014.

<sup>138</sup> See note 123. See also Katherine Hill-Miller, *From the Lighthouse to Monk’s House* (London: Duckworth, 2001), 92-95.

the first instance, it is parked outside of Mulberry's while in the next instance it is between Clarissa and the old Judge while Clarissa is standing "on one side of Brook Street" (17). The car is no longer in front of Mulberry's between Mrs. Dalloway and Septimus but between Clarissa and the Law:

Clarissa was suspended on one side of Brook Street; Sir John Buckhurst, the old Judge on the other, with the car between them (Sir John had laid down the law for years and liked a well dressed woman) (17).

This again points to two different occasions in which Mrs. Dalloway and Clarissa Dalloway go to Mulberry's and reflects Clarissa Dalloway's choice between the kind of space and time Septimus embodies and the time the Judge represents. The first instance is characterized by the feeling that "nobody knew" who was sitting in the car (16). Individual perspectives are neglected in favor of the "enduring symbol of the state which will be known to curious antiquaries . . . The face in the motor car will then be known" (16). In the second instance, Clarissa still retains a sense of her individuality, "Clarissa guessed; Clarissa knew of course; she had seen something white, magical, circular, in the footman's hand, a disc inscribed with a name,—the Queen's, the Prince of Wales's, the Prime Ministers?" (17). The narrator's allusion to the Clarissa Dalloway is marked by the realism of Clarissa's experience, "For thirty seconds all heads were inclined the same way—to the window"( 17-18) in contrast to the "spirit of religion" which descends upon Mrs. Dalloway (14). The contrast between Septimus and Mrs. Dalloway and Clarissa Dalloway and the old Judge accentuate the difference between two kinds of reality and the consequences of Clarissa Dalloway's Shakespearean-like choice. Mrs. Dalloway's perspective is so narrow that she cannot notice Septimus across the street, with whom Clarissa had connected with intimately when she was her younger self.

11:00 (21): The car has exited and the airplane writing the advertisement for a brand of milk and toffee, "Glaxo," "Kreemo" (20),<sup>139</sup> enters the scene. The airplane represents the emergence of new technologies which revealed the limited influence of Newtonian time. Again, Woolf shows a disregard for official clock time as the sound of Big Ben marking the hour is shown to only have an effect on its immediate surroundings, "bells struck eleven times, the sound fading up there amongst the gulls" (21). As the airplane flies over London, writing its advertisement which lingers through space and time, it destabilizes the notion of the historical "present"—the "momentary," symbolic meaning assigned to the car—by expanding the sense of the "here" and "now." Woolf presents us with a new theory, "a new religion," (23) regarding the nature of reality, mainly that characters can free themselves, like the airplane, from the constraints of the present in order to connect their minds and bodies with events from the past, present, and future. As such, the airplane scene represents a "K, an E, a Y" (20) to understand Woolf's interest in Einstein's theories. Like Rezia who asks Septimus to "Look!" (23) at the airplane as it flies overhead, Woolf also seems to be asking us to "look" in order to decipher its meaning:

It had gone; it was behind the clouds. There was no sound. The clouds to which the letters E, G, or L had attached themselves moved freely, as if destined to cross from West to East

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<sup>139</sup> John K. Young, "Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*," *The Explicator* Vol. 58 (2000): 99.

on a mission of the greatest importance which would never be revealed, and yet certainly so it was—a mission of the greatest importance. Then suddenly, as a train comes out of a tunnel, the airplane rushed out of the clouds again, the sound boring into the ears of all people in the Mall, in the Green Park, in Piccadilly, in Regent Street, in Regent's Park, and the bar of smoke curved behind and it dropped down, and it soared up and wrote one letter after another—but what word was it writing? (21).

We can answer the question by taking into account how Einstein's theories redefined the experience of the "present." The Special Theory's shift of our sense of the "present" from the immediate to the vast—events continue to linger in space—makes it possible to think of the "present" of sound waves as they travel from East to West, like light, as determined by our individual place in space. Thus, characters who happen to be on the eastern part of the city hear the sound of the airplane in the present relative to someone who is on the western part of the city for whom it exists in the future. Woolf also ascribes the qualities of light to the airplane's advertisement, which also alters the notion of the present as it floats across the city. Characters on the eastern part of the city see the letters in the future relative to someone who is on the western part for whom the event is now in the past. As the wave of sound travels moves from East to West towards Regent's Park, it meets the letters the plane has written, which are moving from West to East. As they come together, both the "past"—the letters—and "present"—the waves—coexist "now." The Special Theory dissolves the boundaries of linear time by showing how events are experienced in *spacetime*—they simultaneously exist as the past, present, and future—(the plane encompasses both events). Time is relative. The idea of simultaneity is also embodied by the train, which recalls the earlier description from *The Years* where "Past and present became jumbled together."<sup>140</sup> Like characters in different parts of the city, the people on the train experience the plane's letters at their own sense of the "now," recalling Minkowski's observation. The relative speed of the clouds, sound, plane and train challenge our sense of the "present." The answer to the narrator's question is that meaning is not mediated by an abstract notion of time. Rather, it is a function of where characters are in *spacetime*. The airplane's smoky letters belie their importance since they represent an event whose significance, unlike the car, is not determined by an arbitrary symbolic meaning whose effect is only momentary and limited to the immediacy of its surroundings as evinced by the car: "Yet rumors were at once in circulation from the middle of Bond Street to Oxford Street on one side, to Atkinson's shop on the other," (14) and later, "The car had gone but it had left a slight ripple which flowed through glove shops and hat shops and tailor's shops on both sides of Bond Street" (17-18). In both instances of the car passing, the car's significance is limited to a few blocks of the city. The meaning of the airplane's letters on the other hand is determined by the characters relative position to them as they pass through the city. Einstein's theories inverted the question of meaning. Space and time were no longer imposed on the individual; they became part of characters' particular experience of *spacetime*—their location in space. Einstein encouraged a different way of "looking" at reality, which subverted the power of the omniscient forces of history, class dynamics, etc. In the airplane scene, characters are no longer being "looked" at as they are in the car scene; they are free to make out meaning for themselves, just as we are

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<sup>140</sup> From Julia Briggs, 135-136.

encouraged to “look.” The connection between science, economics and politics has been made by Tratner who states that

The plane unleashes desires that the car repressed, in particular a desire for getting outside and beyond the self and the house, even to the kind of cosmic relativity that Einstein represents, in which queens and nations become rather insignificant. Septimus’s interpretations of the car and the plane epitomize in exaggerated form the opposed moods the two vehicles create: to the government car, he reacts “as if some horror had come almost to the surface and was about to burst into flames” (p. 21), while the airplane seems to bring “exquisite beauty . . . [Tratner’s ellipsis] inexhaustible charity,” which “meant the birth of a new religion” (pp. 31-33). The word “exquisite” is the same one Clarissa used to describe the moments that create “deposits” in people upon which they can draw, suggesting that this act of advertising is creating deposits in all the people enjoying looking at it (108).

Meaning became a matter of the individual’s expression of his/her desires—the development of his/her senses. The freedom from linear time the plane personifies is further supported by an imaginative freedom in both instances in which it appears: “The aeroplane turned and raced and swooped exactly where it liked, swiftly, freely, like a skater—‘That’s an E,’ said Mrs. Bletchley—or a dancer—. . . There was no sound” (20-21) and later, “It was strange; it was still. Not a sound was to be heard above the traffic. Unguided it seemed; sped of its own free will” (28-29). The plane’s extension of space and time beyond the limited sound the car makes and even beyond the sound it emits, expresses the notion that events continue to exist in *spacetime* and that individuals have the power to access them. The airplane is a “symbol . . . of man’s soul; of his determination . . . to get outside his body, beyond his house, by means of thought, Einstein,” as we see Mr. Bentley thinking below. The airplane presents the idea that individuals were no longer beholden to the reductive forces of Empire and the State, but could free themselves from linear time to experience past events which offered “exquisite beauty” (21)—a sense of freedom and renewal. Events like the “airplane scene” exist as moments of intimacy which linger in space and have the capacity to elicit an experience of beauty, freedom, and intimacy with others. Woolf’s idea of how the past and present could co-exist is further presented by her concept of the *pattern*; the white and blue, barred with black branches. Sounds made harmonies with premeditation; the spaces between them were as significant as the sounds. A child cried. Rightly far away a horn sounded. All together meant the birth of a new religion (*my emphasis* 23).

Woolf’s notion of the pattern, which plays an important role in my discussion of *To The Lighthouse* in the third chapter, suggests the possibility of bridging the space between the past and present. Just as the airplane’s letters from the past coexist “now” with the sound waves moving from East to West, the shift from the immediate and present, “a child cried,” to the far distance and the past which is now experienced as the present, “Rightly far away a horn sounded” illustrates how the “present” can encompass events which are far apart in *spacetime*: “sounds made harmonies with premeditation”—past and present coexist. The result is a theory which expands our sense of the “now.” The spaces between events have their own experience of “now”—“the spaces between them were as significant as the sounds.” This captures Woolf’s idea that characters can experience a large expanse of *spacetime*, as we saw earlier with Clarissa



Dalloway, Septimus, and Rezia. The simultaneity between the past and present is also evident at the end of the scene as the plane passes over London. We trace its path as it flies from East to West over Greenwich, keeper of Greenwich Mean Time, also understood as Universal Time:

away and away it went, fast and fading, away and away the aeroplane shot; soaring over Greenwich and all the masts; over the little island of grey churches, St. Paul's and the rest till, on either side of London, fields spread out and dark brown woods where adventurous thrushes hopping boldly, glancing quickly snatched the snail and tapped him on a stone, once, twice, thrice.

Away and away the aeroplane shot, till it was nothing but a bright spark; an aspiration; a concentration; a symbol (so it seemed to Mr. Bentley, vigorously rolling his strip turf at Greenwich) of man's soul; of his determination, thought Mr. Bentley, sweeping round the cedar tree, to get outside his body, beyond his house, by means of thought, Einstein, speculation, mathematics, the Mendelian theory—away the aeroplane shot . . .

And a couple of paragraphs later:

And now, curving up and up, straight up, like something mounting in ecstasy, in pure delight, out from behind poured white smoke, writing a T, an O, an F (28-29).

The plane “soaring over Greenwich” and the “island of grey churches” illustrates the insignificance Woolf attributes to them in contrast to the reality of the plane. And panning out from London Greenwich Time to the thrushes keeping time offers a contrast between an artificially constructed experience of time and a more “natural” experience of the “soul,” which Woolf’s reference to Einstein brings out. The first time we see the plane writing its letters is marked by Big Ben striking the hour, 11:00 a.m., as the plane writes the last letter “E” in TOFFEE. This is significant in light of the end of this scene where it writes a “T, and O, an F,” but not presumably the remaining letter or letters. This suggests that as the section comes to a close we have shifted back to the past right as Big Ben strikes 11:00 and the plane writes its last letter, “E.” The obvious and yet veiled allusion to “Einstein,” “E,” is contrasted to Greenwich time and characterizes how the plane’s current path from East to West at the end of the scene exists in the past relative to the wave of sound it produces at the beginning of the scene, from the Mall to Regent’s Park—“sounds made harmonies with premeditation” (23). We have in effect curved back to the past when the plane first emitted its sound. The past is being experienced as a present event. As such, this scene could be read as an example of The General Theory of Relativity since the plane curves up, implying that it is accelerating as it would in The General Theory, or like light, bending around a dense object (this idea is supported by a passage I cite later where Septimus is portrayed as being wrapped around a rock).<sup>141</sup> *Spacetime* curves back upon itself and the airplane scene ends at the same time it began—the past and present coexist. This helps to explain how the airplane scene includes the effects of Special Relativity—the sound waves and advertisement—as part of the more expansive effects of the General Theory. The shift back to the past is further substantiated by Maisie Johnson’s comment at the end of the scene “that should she be very old she would still remember and make it jangle again among her memories how she had walked through Regent’s Park on a fine summer’s morning fifty years ago” (26), implying that she would relive the past. The image of the airplane flying beyond

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<sup>141</sup> See page 68.

audible sound suggests that it is not bound by historical time, and as it flies over Ludgate Circus, which sits above the largest subterranean river in London, the River Fleet, we get the idea of the plane flying beyond Hades, history and the dead souls of England. The significance of this scene is further heightened by Septimus hearing sparrows chirping, “they sang in voices prolonged and piercing in Greek words, from trees in the meadow of life beyond the river where the dead walk, how there is no death” (24). The past remains. The airplane can be seen in a similar fashion: its light, sound waves and advertisement remain even after it has passed through the sky and is no longer visible. The “airplane scene” embodies the notion that events linger in *spacetime* like the light of stars whose light remains, although they may no longer exist. It suggests that past events could be re-experienced in the present. What becomes evident is that the airplane scene does not take place in linear time. The scene does not “exist.” The whole scene takes place when the plane writes the last “E,” which means we revert back to the past when the hour strikes 11:00. The scene exists in suspended time. The airplane, as light that bends around the universe, acts as a metaphor for our capacity to move beyond the narrow view of the present in order to re-experience past events. The airplane scene challenges the conventional way of organizing time in the novel. Recalling my allusion to Flammarion and Woolf’s own ideas on starlight, the airplane scene exists as light which reaches us as we “look,” and in doing so we are able to see the past as the present. It opens up a different way of experiencing reality, our minds and bodies. The blurred boundaries of “now,” Woolf’s “new religion,” represents a more expansive view of reality than the limited view of the present. This would explain why in the airplane scene time splits it husk, as in the moment Woolf evokes: “perhaps at midnight, when all boundaries are lost, the country reverts back to its ancient shape, as the Romans saw it” (24).<sup>142</sup>

11:00 (29). Clarissa Dalloway arrives home from shopping. What is significant about the next section is that it seems to take place right *before* 11:00, as the previous section ends with the airplane writing the letters, T, O, and F. This provides further evidence that the airplane scene does not “occur”—no time elapses from the time Big Ben marks 11 a.m. and Clarissa Dalloway reaches her home. As such, it exists metaphorically as the light of a star which Clarissa Dalloway cannot see. It represents her inability to break free from the boundaries of the “present” in order to experience her past. The “light” of the airplane does not reach her as she enters her home. This seems to be implied when Mrs. Dalloway raises “her hand to her eyes” (29) as if to shield herself from the light the plane represents. Clarissa Dalloway fails to see the plane because she has become Mrs. Dalloway. This contrasts with Clarissa’s more expansive sense of self and ability to hear the plane—the future—at the beginning of the novel before anybody else notices it (3). This suggests that Mrs. Dalloway did not hear the sound of Big Ben sounding the hour as the door to the house is shut because “she feared time itself” (30) as we read on the next page. She had neglected to acknowledge the passage of time because she feared dying but as a consequence had lost herself. This is confirmed at the end of her meeting with Peter, when “The door opened . . . The sound of Big Ben striking the half-hour, 11:30, stuck

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<sup>142</sup> The airplane scene is also significant for the agency that Woolf gives her “simple” characters, the Mrs. Bletchley’s and Mr. Bowley’s who are able to decipher the plane’s advertisement and which they do from their own position relative to others. Echoing Woolf’s lecture to the Workers’ Educational Association, they are free to create meaning for themselves. This helps to explain why Clarissa Dalloway does not notice the airplane but her servants do, when she arrives home.

out between them with extraordinary vigour, as if a young man, strong, indifferent, inconsiderate, were swinging dumb-bells this way and that” (48). Time violently intrudes into Clarissa Dalloway's domestic space. She has to “raise her voice against the roar of the open air, and, overwhelmed by the traffic and sound of all the clocks striking, her voice crying ‘Remember my party to-night!’ sounded frail and thin and very far away as Peter Walsh shut the door” (48). We can gather that Peter must have visited Clarissa around 11:15 (for him to have left her house at 11:30 in order to arrive at the park shortly after), since she says, “it was outrageous to be interrupted at eleven o’clock,” (40) so she indeed did arrive home at 11:00 because she spends about 15 minutes reminiscing about the past before Peter arrives. We are thus compelled to look more closely at the airplane scene to understand how Woolf dissolves the boundaries between the past, present, and future.

After Septimus is shown thinking that the various sensations he has in the park “taken together meant the birth of a new religion” (23), it is shortly after 11 a.m. and Rezia leaves him, “I am going to walk to the fountain and back” (23).

Around 11:15: Rezia comes back to sit by Septimus (25).

It is around 11:15-11:30: Septimus and Rezia walk and sit by the Zoo: “There they sat down under a tree” (25). Peter is sleeping.

The “present” continues on page 65, (around 11:35) where Lucrezia has left Septimus and is walking down the “broad path” and Peter, who has awakened from his dream, sees a child run into her: “the child ran full tilt into her, fell flat, and burst out crying” (65).

A few minutes pass as Rezia “frowned; she stamped her foot. She must go back again to Septimus since it was almost time” (66). At this point, we move from the present to the future on page 66-67: “Then when they got back he could hardly walk. He lay on the sofa and made her hold his hand to prevent him from falling down, down, he cried, into the flames! and saw faces laughing at him, calling him horrible disgusting names, from the walls . . . (66).

We move back to the present at the park: “She was close to him now, could see him staring at the sky, muttering, clasping his hands” (67).

Shortly after, Peter walks by and asks Septimus and Rezia for the time. Big Ben strikes and it is 11:45 (70).

The shift from present to future and back to the present is significant in light of the dissolving of boundaries between the past, present, and future the airplane scene reveals. Septimus embodies this reality:

But what was the scientific explanation (for one must be scientific above all things)?

Why could he see through bodies, see into the future, when dogs will become men? It

was the heat wave, presumably, operating upon a brain made sensitive by eons of evolution. Scientifically speaking, the flesh was melted off the world. His body was macerated until only the nerve fibres were left. It was spread like a veil upon a rock (68).

Septimus, like the airplane, is not limited to the “present” but encompasses a vast expanse of *spacetime*—the millions of years the rock embodies. His disregard for time is evident in his ode to time as he sees Peter:

The word “time” split its husk; poured its riches over him; and from his lips fell like shells, like shavings from a plane, without his making them, hard, white, imperishable words, and flew to attach themselves to their places in an ode to Time; an immortal ode

to Time. He sang. Evans answered from behind the tree. The dead were in Thessaly, Evans sang, among the orchids. There they waited till the War was over, and now the dead, now Evans himself— “For God’s sake don’t come!” Septimus cried out. For he could not look upon the dead. But the branches parted. A man in grey was actually walking towards them. It was Evans! (69-70).

As Peter walks by Septimus and Rezia and asks for the time, we realize that the scene with Septimus and Rezia at the park has to have taken place between 11:00 and 11:45 because their meeting with Dr. Bradshaw is at 12pm. This means that it took Peter fifteen minutes once he left Clarissa at 11:30 (49-70) to reach the park, take a nap, and recall the past, which is impossible given the layout of the city. Peter’s ability to move faster than he should is implied during his walk as he exclaims

He had escaped! was utterly free—as happens in the downfall of habit when the mind, like an unguarded flame, bows and bends and seems about to blow from its holding. I haven’t felt so young in years! thought Peter, escaping (only of course for an hour or so) from being precisely what he was, and feeling like a child who runs outdoors, and sees, as he runs, his old nurse waving at the wrong window (52).

Peter’s suspension of time, like the plane, for an hour or so, recalls Woolf’s comment in *Orlando*:

Time, unfortunately, though it makes animals and vegetables bloom and fade with amazing punctuality, has no such simple effect upon the mind of man. The mind of man, moreover, works with equal strangeness upon the body of time. An hour, once it lodges in the queer element of the human spirit, may be stretched to fifty or a hundred times its clock length; on the other hand, an hour may be accurately represented on the timepiece of the mind by one second. This extraordinary discrepancy between time on the clock and time in the mind is less known than it should be and deserves fuller investigation.<sup>143</sup>

While characters like Mrs. Dalloway are preoccupied with time passing, Woolf shows us that time passes differently than we have been led to believe, or maybe it does not pass at all. As Peter leaves Clarissa the suspension of time which allows the past, present and future to be experienced at once, is again made evident:

Ah, said St. Margaret’s, like a hostess who comes into her drawing-room on the very stroke of the hour and finds her guests there already. I am not late. No, it is precisely half-past eleven, she says. Yet, though she is perfectly right, her voice, being the voice of the hostess, is reluctant to inflict its individuality. Some grief for the past holds it back; some concern for the present. It is half-past eleven, she says, and the sound of St. Margaret’s glides into the recess of the heart and buries itself in ring after ring of sound, like something alive which wants to confide itself, to disperse itself, to be, with a tremor of delight, at rest—like Clarissa herself, thought Peter Walsh, coming down the stairs on the stroke of the hour in white. It is Clarissa herself, he thought with deep emotion, and an extraordinarily clear recollection of her, as if this bell had come into the room years ago, where they sat at some moment of great intimacy, and had gone from one to the other and had felt, like a bee laden with honey, laden with the moment. But what room?

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<sup>143</sup> Woolf, *Orlando* (Harcourt: New York, 1929), 98.

What moment? And why had he been so profoundly happy when the clock was striking? Then, as the sound of St. Margaret's languished, he thought, She has been ill, and the sound expressed languor and suffering. It was her heart, he remembered; and the sudden loudness of the final stroke tolled for death that surprised in the midst of life, Clarissa falling where she stood, in her drawing room. No! No! he cried. She is not dead! I am not old, he cried, and marched up Whitehall, as if there rolled down to him, vigorous, unending, his future (49-50).

This passage illustrates the suspension of time that takes place on a couple of occasions as Big Ben strikes the hour. For Peter, it helps him to relive the past but also to see a future which he must acknowledge he might not have.

11:45: As they leave Regent's Park they cross paths with the beggar woman humming a song. The aesthetic significance of the scene is lost if we do not recognize, says J. Hillis Miller in *Fiction and Repetition*, "that Woolf has woven into the old woman's song, partly by paraphrase and variation, partly by direct quotation in an English translation, the words of the song, "'Allerseelen,' by Richard Strauss, with words by Hermann von Gilm,"<sup>144</sup> who wrote the original poem, "All Souls Day." The beggar's lines, "ee um fah um so / foo swee too eem oo" are described by the narrator as a "sound, a voice bubbling up without direction, vigour, beginning or end, running weakly and shrilly and with an absence of all human meaning . . . the voice of no age or sex, the voice of an ancient spring spouting from the earth" (80). The old woman's song suggests the trauma of the past can be overcome by overcoming the boundaries of time. The vision the beggar gives us expands our spatial-temporal horizons from the religious desire for "meaning" to the cosmological, "singing of love—love which has lasted a million years." This reminds us of Septimus' body being draped over a rock and the meaning of the airplane's advertisement. The beggar's vision is accentuated by the metaphor describing the end of the universe: "death's enormous sickle had swept those tremendous hills, and when at last she laid her hoary and immensely aged head on the earth . . . then the pageant of the universe would be over" (81). Such imagery might seem pessimistic, but the beggar's message resounds with the hope that she will be reunited with her last love,

still, though it issued from so rude a mouth, a mere hole in the earth, muddy too, matted with root fibres and tangled grass, still the old bubbling burbling song, soaking through the knotted roots of infinite ages, and skeletons and treasure, streamed away in rivulets over the pavement and all along the Marylebone Road, and down towards Euston, fertilising, leaving a damp stain (81).

Woolf's own improvisation of the poem/song plays with the idea that moments of intimacy ripple throughout the universe, unseen but felt, "fertilising, leaving a damp stain." The song has an effect on Rezia which lead her to echo the beggar woman's line, "and if some one should see, what matter they?" after receiving a shilling from Peter: "Cheerfully, almost gaily, the *invincible* thread of sound wound up into the air like the smoke from a cottage chimney, winding up clean beech trees and issuing in a tuft of blue smoke among the topmost leaves. 'And if some one

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<sup>144</sup> Miller argues that the song represents the "resurrection of ghosts from the past" (189). *Fiction and Repetition*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 190. See Appendix for a translation of von Gilm's song and Woolf's adaptation.

should see, what matter they?'" (*my emphasis* 82-83). The beggar woman's love song, like Septimus' "voices of the dead," (145) recalls again the redemptive power that certain moments have, which exist beyond the narrow confines of linear time and social conventions it supports—they remain. The permanence of light and sound parallel the lingering perfume of the purple heather flowers, which have been placed on Death's tomb in Woolf's rephrasing of Strauss' song: Death "implored the Gods to lay by her side a bunch of purple heather, there on her high burial place which the last rays of the last sun caressed; for then the pageant of the universe would be over" (81). Woolf's version of Strauss' song follows the theme of the resurrection of the dead, but while the dead only get a day's respite in Strauss and von Gilm versions, in Woolf's version, it is time itself that is being mourned, not a symbolic and temporary respite. "Looking" beyond the petty strife of "passing generations—the pavement . . . crowded with bustling middle-class people" (82) towards the cosmos, to see the past in order to see the future, like Clarissa who sees her future death, has the power to free characters from the narrow scope of the "present" which organizes the emptiness of their daily lives. The old woman's pocketing of the shilling Peter gives her along with her refrain, "and if some one should see, what matter they?," recalls the liberating quality of the airplane and Tratner's comments on the airplane's advertisement as "creat[ing] 'deposits' in people upon which they can draw," is applicable here as well. Einstein's theories diminished the importance of the symbolic, of war, by encouraging a different way of "seeing." For Woolf, Einstein's ideas offered the possibility of rebirth and renewal. They encouraged embodiment and intimacy through the ability to connect with the past and the future. For Mrs. Dalloway, it is her concern for having "lost herself in the process of living," (185) echoed by Peter, "The death of the soul...the death of her soul" (58-59), and his own lament "She is not dead! I am not old" (50). It is only by throwing it all away that they can regain a sense of self.

## Chapter 3

### Creating Intimacy in *To The Lighthouse*

Throughout the first two chapters I have attempted to trace how Woolf deconstructs the abstract concepts of space and time from a mediated “present” moment to an experience of *spacetime*. Whereas in my discussion of *Mrs. Dalloway* in the last chapter I argued that this reality is characterized by a Shakespearean-like choice—characters who give up their freedom for the comforts of the class system lose their ability to “see” it—in this chapter I argue that in *To The Lighthouse* Woolf shows how characters self-consciously investigate their past in order to deconstruct the rational systems of philosophy and religion which structure the class system. Through a self-conscious exploration of the past, Lily and Mrs. Ramsay are able to free their mind and bodies from the limitations imposed upon them by the class system in order to connect intimately with others across *spacetime*. The metaphor that Woolf uses for this process is of a “pattern.” Pattern-making is both an activity of the body and an experience of the mind. Insofar as Woolf describes her childhood experience of trauma as feeling paralyzed, it is through labor which begins with the body, that the past can resurface. Through the natural rhythms of their creative labor, Mrs. Ramsay’s knitting and Lily’s painting, they are able to experience a sense of boundlessness which allows them to uncover and uproot the causes of trauma. They are able to understand and liberate themselves from the “subconscious” forces which structure their reality. As such, Woolf contrasts Mrs. Ramsay’s and Lily’s creative labor—their ability to make patterns—with Mr. Ramsay’s abstract philosophical labor. Mr. Ramsay’s pursuit of knowledge, whose lineage can be traced back to Hegel’s philosophy, represents another instance in the long tradition of abstract thought—having its origins in religion and developing in capitalism—which represses the desires of the body, i.e., the creative impulses. Woolf’s goal was to suggest that the individual has the capacity to make relations with others which involve other senses, other forms of *seeing*, *thinking*, and *feeling* which are more useful than the “visible”<sup>145</sup> reality of war. Woolf’s “ethics” is closely connected to her aesthetics: how we read her novels informs how we relate to ourselves and others. Reading, like Mrs. Ramsay’s knitting and Lily’s painting, is creative labor. It involves the process of making patterns. Pattern-making is grounded in an investigation of our subconscious, i.e., the assumptions which frame our perception of reality. This investigation is characterized by both a contextualization of words like the “thing itself,” “Shakespeare” and the “tablecloth,” which help to reveal the arguments Woolf is making against our common-sense understanding of space and time, and an understanding that Woolf’s use of color to represent emotional states between characters is partly based on the Doppler effect of stars. Woolf’s novels challenge how we perceive reality. As Michael Whitworth says in *Virginia Woolf: Authors in Context*, “Woolf introduces the ‘group’: people who experience a sense of intimacy that does not necessarily depend on the usual mechanisms of language or physical

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<sup>145</sup> Woolf, “A Sketch of the Past,” *Virginia Woolf: Moments of Being*, ed. Jeanne Schulkind (Sussex: The University Press, 1976).

proximity.”<sup>146</sup> The contextualization of Woolf’s concepts, the upheaval of how we think or understand space and time, opens up our ability to make “unconscious,” associative connections—patterns—across the *spacetime* of the novel between various colors, “red,” “silver,” “blue” and “green,” which Lily and other characters use. In situating Lily’s use of color within the tradition of the Post-Impressionists, and going farther back to Da Vinci to discuss her use of shadow and light, I hope to show the rich aesthetic tradition focused on developing the senses that Woolf is following. In this way, the creative labor we engage in as readers exists as part of a larger historical process, recalling Marx’s ideas of free labor and Woolf’s economy of gift-giving, which encourages the development of the human senses. Through the description of her “pattern,” the arguments against space and time which we can glean from concepts like “Shakespeare,” and her treatment of color and light, Woolf challenges our ways of reading, the labor we perform when we read, to introduce a different way of relating.

Lily’s search for intimacy in *To The Lighthouse* is presented as a problem of spatial relations she is trying to solve in her painting: “the problem of space [which] remained” (171)—“The question being one of the relations of masses, of lights and shadows. . . . It was a question, she remembered, how to connect this mass on the right hand with that on the left” (53). It is contrasted with Mr. Ramsay’s solitary pursuit for R:

Whenever she [Lily] “thought of his work” she always saw clearly before her a large kitchen table. It was Andrew’s doing. She asked him what his father’s books were about. “Subject and object and the nature of reality,” Andrew had said. And when she said Heavens, she had no notion what that meant. “Think of a kitchen table then,” he told her, “when you’re not there” (*TTL* 23).

Various critics have argued that Woolf questions Mr. Ramsay’s abstract philosophical labor because it does not take into account the religious ideals which structure it. Michael Lackey argues that Mr. Ramsay’s belief in abstract philosophical categories as the measure of reality deny the

semiotic unconscious,<sup>147</sup> the very knowledge that determines conscious and rational knowledge systems. This is Freud’s unconscious “mental processes,” which make the rational ego no longer a “*master in its own home*” (*Standard* 285). . . . [They resemble] Marx’s claim that “social being” (389) determines consciousness rather than human consciousness determining a person’s being<sup>148</sup>. . . . Nietzsche is clearest and most insightful in depicting the semiotic unconscious. In the Epilogue to *The Case of Wagner*, he claims: “But all of us have, unconsciously, involuntarily in our bodies values, words, formulas, moralities of *opposite* descent—we are, physiologically considered, *false*” (192).<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> *Virginia Woolf: Authors in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 144.

<sup>147</sup> The “semiotic unconscious” corresponds to Woolf’s “subconscious.”

<sup>148</sup> See Marx, *The German Ideology*, 47-48, 50.

<sup>149</sup> Michael Lackey, “Modernist Anti-Philosophicalism and Virginia Woolf’s Critique of Philosophy,” *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 29. 4 (2006), 85.



The abstract values of philosophy are based on a religious repression of the body. We recall the discussion of Marx's critique of Hegel's philosophy as overlooking the religious values of loss which underpin philosophy's pursuit of knowledge, and Nietzsche's comments on *ressentiment*, in the first chapter. This also brings to mind my close-reading analysis of Mr. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe in which we can see Woolf investigating the nature of the subconscious. The early church's adoption of Platonic dualism<sup>150</sup> (the notion of ideal forms) meant the rejection of the desires of the body and the immediacy of embodied social relations. This left a legacy of repression in its wake that influenced Western philosophy and science through Newton. "But if, as Nietzsche and Woolf suggest, the unstable and variable contents of the unconscious significantly influence the way humans frame their experience, then philosophy's rational and conscious dictates would be profoundly unreliable" (86), Lackey claims. Mr. Ramsay's solitary pursuit of knowledge, his belief in the supremacy of theoretical abstractions, is revealed to be a symptom of repression. This then leads him to oppress others, and at certain moments, to express the desire to be in his body. Louise Westling states that Woolf sought

"to turn inside out the unnamed, body-transcending core of traditional Western philosophy and narrative." (TE 42). Hume, Leslie Stephen, and Mr. Ramsay work directly in the transcendental Platonic tradition that assumes the separation of mind from body, and human consciousness from physical nature—hence the very formulation of subject as distinct from object, and the concept of "the nature of reality" as an object of speculation. The philosopher in such a system is a man above other men. Hume himself spoke of "that forlorn solitude, in which I am placed in my philosophy," expelled from all human commerce (862).<sup>151</sup>

Louise Westling further argues that Woolf

rejected the reductionist dualism of Western philosophy and worked progressively in her novels to resist and expose the sterility of the kind of rational humanism that came down to us from Plato and triumphed in Cartesian and Newtonian mechanistic models of the cosmos (855).

Mr. Ramsay's subject-object problem presupposes an alienation from "reality" which can only be overcome by the attempt to extract from life some pure substance, which requires the incessant sacrifice of the body, the rejection of emotions, and subjugation of nature, as I argued in the first chapter. It is the "enormous contempt for the embodied world [which] has always lain just beneath the surface of humanistic claims" (Westling 861), which characterizes Mr. Ramsay's inability to acknowledge his own feelings and thus prevents him from acknowledging the inner life of others, as is shown in *To The Lighthouse*:

[He was] grinning sarcastically, not only with the pleasure of disillusioning his son and casting ridicule upon his wife . . . but also with some secret conceit at his own accuracy of judgment. What he said was true. It was always true. He was incapable of untruth; never tampered with a fact; never altered a disagreeable word to suit the pleasure or

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<sup>150</sup> "Dualism (philosophy of mind)." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. 22 July 2004. Web. 16 Jun. 2014.

<sup>151</sup> From "Virginia Woolf and the Flesh of the World."

convenience of any mortal being, least of all his own children, who, sprung from his loins, should be aware from childhood that life is difficult; facts uncompromising (4). Mr. Ramsay has washed away any residue of “sensual” life to assume the role of mediator between heaven and earth. Echoing Marx’s comments on the philosopher as the “*measuring-rod* of the estranged world,”<sup>152</sup> Lackey states that “philosophers, more than anyone else, are epistemologically superior and therefore best stationed to apprehend [the] Truth” (84). Mr. Ramsay is the gatekeeper to all that is fact or fiction. But as Lorraine Sim says, [in] *To The Lighthouse*, Woolf frequently positions the rational empiricism of Mr. Ramsay as opposed to ordinary life. In the novel, an obsessive commitment to the facts is not equivalent to knowledge or a proper awareness of one’s lived environment. While his meditations center upon ordinary objects, like a kitchen table, or quotidian states in the world, like the weather, those things become mere abstractions that are drained of life and particularity. Although his “kitchen table was something visionary, austere”, it is imagined by Lily Briscoe to be “bare, hard, not ornamental. There was no color in it; it was all edges and angles; it was uncompromisingly plain.”<sup>153</sup>

The abstract table exists as a metaphor for Mr. Ramsay’s self-abstraction from life but his “heroic fantasies” (Sim 39) come at the price of needing other people’s sympathy. This is Lily’s portrayal of Mr. Ramsay: “It was astonishing that a man of his intellect could stoop so low as he did—but that was too harsh a phrase—could depend so much as he did upon people’s praise” (22-23). This reveals the shaky ground upon which the “permanent, universal, and/or objective” (Lackey 86) truth of Mr. Ramsay’s philosophy is built. Mr. Ramsay rejects the body but unconsciously desires to be in his body. He projects this desire on others as a need for sympathy. He experiences a semblance of pleasure through the sacrifice he imposes on others. Mr. Ramsay’s prioritization of logic, facts, and categories over and against the sensuality of the body and the immediacy of emotional life creates a void which needs to be continually filled with other people’s sacrifices. I hope that my attempt to thread together the relationship between religion, the class structure, and philosophy in the first chapter has addressed Lackey’s concern that “What has yet to be clarified in Woolf studies, however, is precisely how Woolf links philosophy and this coercive, imposing, egotistical, and tyrannical mindset” (88). The “teleological” (Lackey 83) impulse of Mr. Ramsay’s philosophy follows this tradition where men are seen as the purveyors of knowledge and truth. It informed Victorian social ideals, “patriarchal and class conventions” (Sim 43).

As I discussed in the first chapter, while Woolf was not conventionally political, she was not afraid to get dirty and labored deep in the trenches to deconstruct the abstract edifice of Western reality. Emily Hinnov argues that Woolf seeks to “undermine those social systems

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<sup>152</sup> 1844, 110.

<sup>153</sup> Lorraine Sim, *Virginia Woolf: The Patterns of Ordinary Experience* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010), 39.

which continually militarize the lives of women and the lower classes”<sup>154</sup>—reducing individuals to sacrificial offerings for an ideology which sustains the State apparatus. Woolf’s solution to the repression which informs social relations in Western society, viz., religion and capitalism, is to bring the repressed subconscious to conscious awareness:

Woolf’s sage words—“Let us try to drag up into consciousness the subconscious Hitlerism that holds us down. It is the desire for aggression; the desire to dominate and enslave . . . [Hinnov’s ellipsis] They are slaves who are trying to enslave”—speak to this necessity to rediscover ourselves as well as those in our wider community in order to make real progress in preventing war. She still hopes that our cooperative creativity will make a positive difference: “They would give them other openings for creative power. That too must make part of our fight for freedom. We must help the young Englishmen to root out from themselves the love of medals and decorations. We must create more honorable activities for those who try to conquer in themselves their fighting instinct, their subconscious Hitlerism” (247). Woolf’s collective intellectual project resists internalizations of a naturalized perception of self-superiority, a subconscious fascism. The only fighting Woolf affirms is the fight for common emancipation from the tyrannies of authorized history (Hinnov 20-21).

For Woolf, the solution to war and other forms of attacks on the body, lies in recognizing and coming to terms with the aggressive tendencies in ourselves which have been forced upon us by a system which seeks to enslave us, as well as empathizing with those who have repressed their desires like Mr. Ramsay only to project their self-repression onto others. Digging up and working through our subconscious, deconstructing the abstract belief systems which inform our seemingly intrinsic alienation and “insane love of power” (Hinnov 20) allows us to connect with our humanity, “mind, body, and soul” (Hinnov 21), so that we can acknowledge the humanity of others. Hinnov goes on,

for Woolf it is vital that we excavate the darkness within, the potential power-monger in all of us. We might then recreate a purity and authenticity of the self, which has been mired by histories of war and fascism most potently connected with World War II, in order to find an outlet of healthy, productive, even ethical community (19).

By unearthing our repressed desires and thus finding ourselves, finding our creativity in all its varied forms like Robinson Crusoe perfecting his art of making clay pots or Elizabeth exploring her way “down the Strand” (137), we are able to acknowledge the desires and creativity of others and by extension the larger community of the species—our creative capacity as common ground. As we acknowledge our own human powers, we are able to acknowledge others’ unique contribution to society. As we learn to relate to ourselves, we are then able to relate to others. In *To The Lighthouse*, Mrs. Ramsay’s and Lily Briscoe’s ability to search and scrutinize their past in order to free themselves from the tyrannical forces of their society allows them to create a different sense of community based on intimacy and sharing, which blurs the boundaries between self and others, past, present, and future. Woolf seeks to re-appropriate what it means to be in the mind and body by analyzing the forces which lead to their separation. So also “For

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<sup>154</sup> Emily Hinnov, “‘Each is part of the whole: We act different parts; but are the same’: From fragment to Chorale Community in the Late Work of Virginia Woolf,” *Woolf Studies Annual*, Vol. 13, (2007), 15.

Nietzsche, the beginning of “knowledge” is to recognize our physiologically false condition,” Lackey writes (85).

I argue that Woolf sees creative labor as the antidote to forces of repression which keep people alienated from themselves and others. Instead of a social system “ratified by Greenwich” (*MD* 102) time, mediated by the philosophers, priests, and capitalists, Woolf dissolves the boundaries of common sense space and time, the human and non-human. She does away with the artificial boundaries of the subject-object problem: “I begin to doubt the fixity of tables, the reality of here and now, to tap my knuckles smartly upon the edges of apparently solid objects and say, ‘Are you hard?’ . . . Am I one and distinct? I do not know. . . . There is no division between me and them,” muses Bernard in *The Waves*.<sup>155</sup> Westling states that Woolf “celebrates human community and its continuity with all the world which sustains it” (862). And later, she says that Woolf’s alternative reality

is immersed in Being, formed and continuing in dynamic participation with things and beings, all coextensive together, displaying themselves and calling us into relations with them. Thus our sensations are the active expression of relationship, a continuing *communion* with the living world (864).

Westling’s comments recall Woolf’s economy of gift-giving with its emphasis on sharing and inclusion and Marx’s idea of free labor. We share ourselves, relate to others, through the objects we create. In exploring our desires through our creative labor we are able develop our senses. This embodiment, feeling at home in our bodies, frees us to encourage others to explore their desires. This recalls my discussion of Wicke’s definition of Keynes’s and Woolf’s ideas of the marketplace, in the first chapter. For Keynes, the market was transformed into a “fluid, unpredictable, social, emotional, and sacrally consuming,” space and Woolf’s “market modernism emphasizes fluidity, sexual and social difference, and the active thrusts of consumption” (Wicke 120). This broader and more expansive sense of community is in contrast to the belief in private property which rejects the body in favor of the exchange values of the class system. Westling states that “Through the portrait of Mr. Ramsay, Woolf has rejected the humanist pretensions of separation and transcendence, returning to a focus upon embodiment and thus reversing her culture’s long dismissal of the living world” (863). For Hinnov, Woolf’s work evinces a politico-aesthetics particularly concerned with the threat posed by fascism as a totalitarian ideology stemming from patriarchal notions and the success of imperialism, dependent upon militarism, and implicit in British public and private life as well as abroad. Woolf focuses instead on the cosmic pattern that transcends distinctions between the past, present, and future and its connection with the everyday interfaces between selves. Her later novels and essays illustrate counternarratives of community in action against fascism (7).

The sense of community that Marx, Woolf, and Keynes argued for required a different way of experiencing the mind and body where choice is grounded on feeling. Woolf’s model of *felt* relations has drawn comparisons to Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology. Mark Hussey suggests that Merleau-Ponty

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<sup>155</sup> *The Waves*, 288.

starts from a position very different to that of Descartes. Any apprehension of the world, and our place in it, is from the situation of a body: the body is our general medium for having a world. The body is both that through which we experience the world immediately, and that by which we are experienced (initially) in the world by others (3).<sup>156</sup>

And Westling states that Woolf

anticipates Merleau-Ponty's emphasis on interrelationship as a central reality. For Merleau-Ponty "we are collaborators for each other in consummate reciprocity. Our perspectives merge into each other, and we co-exist through a common world" (*PP* 354). This is the social world we all carry with us unconsciously, and which is inseparable from us (*PP* 362) (868).

Woolf seeks to turn on its head the values of philosophy by recognizing the importance that the development of the senses has in the fight against war and oppression. In embracing the body, we could begin to discover various other senses through which we relate to others or experience the world.

In contrast to Mr. Ramsay's abstract labor and the body-denying rational systems which lead to war and oppression, Woolf's focus in *To The Lighthouse* on Mrs. Ramsay's knitting, Lily's painting, and Mrs. McNab's scrubbing and cleaning, relocates the possibility for meaningful social relations in acts of creative labor<sup>157</sup>—making "patterns." The sensual rhythm of making patterns offer a way to re-connect with the body. Through her knitting, Mrs. Ramsay is able to transcend all the temporal and physical boundaries of her social identity:

To be silent; to be alone. All the being and the doing, expansive, glittering, vocal, evaporated; and one shrunk, with a sense of solemnity, to being oneself, a wedge-shaped core of darkness, something invisible to others. Although she continued to knit, and sat upright, it was thus that she felt herself; and this self having shed its attachments was free for the strangest adventures. When life sank down for a moment, the range of experience seemed limitless. And to everybody there was always this sense of unlimited resources, she supposed; one after another, she, Lily, Augustus Carmichael, must feel, our apparitions, the things you know us by, are simply childish. Beneath it is all dark, it is all spreading, it is unfathomably deep; but now and again we rise to the surface and that is what you see us by. Her horizon seemed to her limitless. There were all the places she had not seen; the Indian plains; she felt herself pushing aside the thick leather curtain of a church in Rome. This core of darkness could go anywhere, for no one saw it. They could not stop it, she thought, exulting. There was freedom, there was peace, there was, most welcome of all, a summoning together, a resting on a platform of stability. Not as oneself did one find rest ever, in her experience (she accomplished something dexterous with her needles) but as a wedge of darkness. Losing personality, one lost the fret, the hurry, the

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<sup>156</sup> *The Singing of the Real World: The Philosophy of Virginia Woolf's Fiction* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1986).

<sup>157</sup> Woolf intimately understood the importance of creative labor as a form of self-therapy which she must have experienced while setting the type to *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To The Lighthouse*.

stir; and there rose to her lips always some exclamation of triumph over life when things came together in this peace, this rest, this eternity (*TTL* 62).

Instead of Mr. Ramsay's abstract philosophical labor, which is grounded on self-denial, but which is an unconscious desire to experience the body, Mrs. Ramsay's goal is to find herself, to be at home in her body. Through the rhythmical quality of her knitting, making patterns, she is able to reconnect with her body and by "losing personality," is no longer bound to the narrowness of the "present." Woolf's own definition of her pattern in "A Sketch of the Past" reveals the importance that creative labor—the desire to re-discover the body—has for Woolf in subverting abstract categories of reality:

This intuition of mine—it is so instinctive that it seems given to me, not made by me—has certainly given its scale to my life ever since I saw the flower in the bed by the front door at St. Ives. If I were painting myself I should have to find some — rod, shall I say — something that would stand for the conception. It proves that one's life is not confined to one's body and what one says and does; one is living all the time in relation to a certain background of rods or conceptions. Mine is that there is a pattern hid behind the cotton wool. And this conception affects me every day. I prove this, now, by spending the morning writing, when I might be walking, running a shop, or learning to do something that will be useful if war comes. I feel that by writing I am doing what is far more necessary than anything else (72-73).

The act of "painting"—creative labor—implies a more active way of "reading" Woolf's biography as well as her novels. The creative labor that Woolf engages in to represent herself also becomes part of our own creative labor. By introducing a different way of "seeing" the self based not on conventional uses of language or on Mr. Ramsay's abstract philosophical labor, Woolf seeks to alter how we perceive reality, to do away with the boundaries which keep us apart. In Mrs. Ramsay's and her own description, we can see how Woolf develops a contrast between habitual reality, the "cotton wool"—the "apparitions" of practical life—"what you see us by,"—and a boundless reality, the "pattern," through visual metaphors of visible versus invisible light. Woolf's notion of "rods" could be interpreted to mean photoreceptors of the retina used for night vision which outnumber "Cones" used for the visible spectrum by 20:1.<sup>158</sup> They imply the possibility of seeing light which does not fall in the visible spectrum. This trope of darkness combined with the metaphor of "conceptions" suggests a creative process—making patterns—which does not rely on the usual mechanisms we use to organize reality. While "walking" or "running a shop" could be read as "useful" activities which would help Woolf survive "if war comes," she sees writing as "necessary" for what can be understood as the spirit or the soul of the species. Creative labor—creating patterns—gives Mrs. Ramsay the ability to free her body and mind from the constraints of ideology, space and time, in order to "see" and come to terms with the past. By doing so, she is then able to connect intimately with others in *spacetime*. As Schulkind states,

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<sup>158</sup> Ronald Sahyouni, "Visual Sensory Information," *Khan Academy*, 8 May 2014. Web. 23 May 2014. <https://www.khanacademy.org/science/health-and-medicine/nervous-system-and-sensory-infor/sight-2014-03-27T18:45:34.237Z/v/vision-summary>

The questions repeatedly posed by the characters of her novels—what is life? What is love? What is reality? Who are you? Who am I?—lead to this one end, the spiritual continuum which embraces all life, the vision of reality as a timeless unity which lies beneath the appearance of change, separation, and disorder that marks everyday life . . .

The emphasis on the change and continuity of personal identity . . . applies only to a self that inhabits the finite world of physical and social existence. During moments of being, this self is transcended and the individual consciousness becomes an undifferentiated part of a greater whole. Thus, just as the outer limits of personality are blurred and unstable because of the responsiveness of the self to the forces of the present moment, so the boundaries of the inner self are vague and, at moments, non-existent. For Virginia Woolf, when the self merges with reality, all limits associated with the physical world cease to exist. Mrs. Dalloway, so definite and dartlike on the surface, becomes a consciousness transcending all temporal and physical boundaries, merging, through her imaginative, intuitive identification with Septimus Warren Smith, with the impersonal, universal consciousness that lies behind all those characters in the novel not irrevocably sealed off from reality (18).

Woolf's "intuition" breaks down the boundaries between the past, present, and future and postulates a different way of seeing, based on creative labor, which leads to a different way of being. Woolf's pattern is not an abstract design but an experience of the body and the mind which "is not confined to one's body and what one says and does" (*ASP* 73). As Sim observes, Woolf's special sense of "reality" is, according to [Mark] Hussey, associated with the apprehension of [a] "pattern" in life and such moments of insight involve states of rest and stability: "Throughout the oeuvre a state of rhythmic rest gives rises to the psychic perception of pattern." Many moments of being during which "reality" is apprehended involve acts of making or following patterns; for example, in certain domestic activities like Clarissa's sewing in *Mrs. Dalloway* and Mrs Ramsay's knitting and Lily's painting in *To The Lighthouse*. For Hussey, such female characters are attributed with the capacity to perceive a "pattern behind daily life, a harmony that contrasts with male methodolatory, theorizing, and system making." He finds that "[r]hythm, rest, and loss of identity, silence, darkness, and namelessness are the common features of this primary experience in the fiction and are common to "self-awareness" and an apprehension of "reality" (164).

Making patterns is not limited to her characters but is an integral aspect of reading her novels, as we shall see. Through our own creative labor, we can free ourselves from the reified ways of seeing reality in order to make connections across *spacetime* between different characters.

Creative labor thus allows Mrs. Ramsay to re-experience and work through the causes of trauma:

Often she found herself sitting and looking, sitting and looking, with her work in her hands until she became the thing she looked at—that light, for example. And it would lift up on it some little phrase or other which had been lying in her mind like that—"Children don't forget, children don't forget"—which she would repeat and begin adding to it, It will end, it will end, she said. It will come, it will come, when suddenly she added, We are in the hands of the Lord (*TTL* 63).

By identifying with the light, Mrs. Ramsay is able to enter a state of meditation where she can re-experience the traumatic past not as a memory but as part of the lived present. Mrs. Ramsay's identification with the beam of light recalls Einstein's thought experiments and the possibility of reliving the past. Erik Auerbach states that Woolf introduces characters who are able to revisit the causes of traumatic experiences long forgotten: "consciousness views its own past layers and their content in perspective," which enable it to free them from "their exterior temporal continuity as well as from the narrow meanings they seemed to have when they were bound to a particular present. . . . the subject . . . has detached himself from it as observer and thus comes face to face with his own past."<sup>159</sup> Mrs. Ramsay is able to work through the beliefs which have been inculcated in her in order to reconnect with a feeling of freedom which she lost long ago:

But instantly she was annoyed with herself for saying that. Who had said it? Not she; she had been trapped into saying something she did not mean. She looked up over her knitting and met the third stroke and it seemed to her like her own eyes meeting her own eyes, searching as she alone could search into her mind and heart, purifying out of existence that lie, any lie. She praised herself in praising the light, without vanity, for she was stern, she was searching, she was beautiful like that light. It was odd, she thought, how if one was alone, one leant to inanimate things; trees, streams, flowers, felt they expressed one; felt they became one; felt they knew one, in a sense were one; felt an irrational tenderness thus (she looked at that long steady light) as for oneself. There rose, and she looked and looked with her needles suspended, there curled up off the floor of the mind, rose from the lake of one's being, a mist, a bride to meet her lover.

What brought her to say that: "We are in the hands of the Lord?" She wondered. The insincerity slipping in among the truths roused her, annoyed her. She returned to her knitting again. How could any Lord have made this world? she asked. With her mind she had always seized the fact that there is no reason, order, justice: but suffering, death, the poor. . . . She knitted with firm composure (63-64).

For Woolf, light is not just something that is seen but becomes part of the body's experience. The self is no longer bound by the present but is able to encompass all lived experience. Woolf develops the metaphor of invisible versus visible light by assigning the trite idiom, "We are in the hands of the Lord?" to the narrow band of the visible light spectrum, "the insincerity slipping in amongst the truths," while the much broader and insubstantial reality is depicted by Mrs. Ramsay as a ray of light. Identifying with the light allows Mrs. Ramsay's unflinching scrutiny of herself and the moral values which uphold her conventional reality, which is required in order to find herself. Lackey writes,

The subtle but coercive discourse of belief entraps Mrs. Ramsay, so to liberate herself, she must probe her inner life and scrutinize the degree to which she has been *subjected* into being a religious person. Once she identifies how the theist's "lie" has taken possession of her at the level of the unconscious [Woolf's "subconscious"], she can then begin the process of "purifying" herself (85).

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<sup>159</sup> *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality*, 542.



Mrs. Ramsay's creative labor allows her to undo the trauma instilled by religion and the repressive forces of patriarchy—reason is re-appropriated to root out the cause of trauma which has interrupted the synchronicity between body and mind—in order to re-experience an unadulterated sense of joy:

She stopped knitting; she held the long reddish-brown stocking dangling in her hands a moment. She saw the light again. With some irony in her interrogation, for when one woke at all, one's relations changed, she looked at the steady light, the pitiless, the remorseless, which was so much her, yet so little her, which had her at its beck and call (she woke in the night and saw it bent across their bed, stroking the floor), but for all that she thought, watching it with fascination, hypnotised, as if it were stroking with its silver fingers some sealed vessel in her brain whose bursting would flood her with delight, she had known happiness, exquisite happiness, intense happiness...(64-65).

By understanding the causes which narrowed her life to being Mr. Ramsay's wife, Mrs. Ramsay reconnects with a feeling of freedom where the boundaries of space and time between self and other are dissolved. Unfettered from her domesticated existence, Mrs. Ramsay shares this experience with others. This becomes evident when immediately after her ecstasy, Mr. Ramsay "turned and saw her. Ah! She was lovely, lovelier now than ever he thought" (65). Mr. Ramsay recognizes the "beauty" she feels inside but cannot help also projecting his desires on her, "She was aloof from him now in her beauty, in her sadness" (65), which she is able to intuit. By freeing herself, Mrs. Ramsay is able to clearly see Mr. Ramsay's motivations. She recognizes that "he wished, she knew to protect her" (65). Lackey writes that,

It is knowledge of the unconscious that makes Mrs. Ramsay and Lily able to understand others and thereby make life more meaningful for those around them. What is most important to Mrs. Ramsay and Lily is the "art" of understanding the inner life ("secret chambers" [51]) of others. As Lily tries to use this "art" to enter the inner life of Mrs. Ramsay, she says that this experience is "not knowledge but unity," but then, in the same sentence, she concludes that it is "intimacy itself, which is knowledge" (86).

The knowledge that Mrs. Ramsay and Lily seek exists in stark contrast to Mr. Ramsay's. Mrs. Ramsay's self-knowledge allows her to recognize the same inherent creativity in others—"to everybody there was always this sense of unlimited resources"—and to acknowledge and empathize with their *sensual* development. By finding herself, she creates the possibility for others to do the same. As Hinnov comments,

For Woolf, men and women must reform themselves first, and then urge those of their own class to join in the revolution. It is the recognition of a renewed and whole self, a reunion with one's inner spirit, which precedes and even allows the restoration of greater society (13).

Her self-knowledge has the effect of momentarily freeing Mr. Ramsay from his own alienation, but as Lackey states, Mr. Ramsay has to go through the same psychological "journey as his wife, purging his inner life of the theological lie that holds him captive at the level of the semiotic unconscious" (90):

The critique of the philosophical mindset is crucial in Woolf's project to create the epistemological conditions for experiencing human intimacy. If the semiotic unconscious, as "creative mode" and/or tyrannical power, is the basis and foundation of our uniquely

human being, our being as humans, then ignorance of it would make us incapable of knowing and/or connecting with other humans. Therefore, to experience “intimacy itself, which is knowledge,” one must acknowledge the existence of the ever-mutable and always-contingent semiotic unconscious. Having done that, one could develop the “art” of pressing through into the “secret chambers” of a person’s complex interior. Acknowledging the existence and primacy of the semiotic unconscious may be, according to Woolf, devastating to philosophers, since the semiotic unconscious implicitly casts doubt on philosophy’s metaphysical mind and absolute Truth, but acknowledging its existence and power also has the virtue of enabling people to understand and appreciate the inner lives of others, something that makes human intimacy possible. For Woolf, we only have much to gain by embracing the semiotic unconscious and abandoning philosophy (93-94).

Mr. Ramsay’s temporary elation can be transformed into intimacy with others only if he is willing to follow through and plunge into his subconscious. By inverting the primacy of abstract labor which produces metaphysical knowledge, i.e., abstract space and time, over emotional and physical space, which requires other senses, we allow the unconscious to rise to the surface. In our self-knowledge we are then able to recognize the distinct individuality of others. In other words, through the process of deconstructing our behaviors and the rational systems which form them, we are able to relate empathically with others. As Lackey states, “Something intrinsic to the philosophical mindset epistemologically disables and debilitates people, such that philosophically-inclined individuals tend to be arrogant and autocratic and consequently cannot enter into healthy relationships with others” (95). Mrs. Ramsay’s courage in uncovering the oppressive causes of her beliefs has the capacity to restore human agency by offering an alternative model of social relations—“one’s relations changed”—based on sharing, giving, and inclusion counterposed to Mr. Ramsay’s selfishness and abstract categorizing. If trauma is localized in the body and mind, “Mrs. Ramsay searches her heart and mind in order to purge herself of a knowledge system (theological in nature) that has taken possession of her from within” (Lackey 90), then it was through the everyday rhythms of creative labor that the semiotic subconscious could be uncovered and understood.

As we will see later in this chapter, it is through her painting that Lily is able to begin the process of reconnecting with her body and in doing so is able to relate to others who have hurt or helped her, viz., Mr. Bankes, Mr. Carmichael, Mrs. Ramsay and even Mr. Ramsay. Lily’s psychological process blurs the boundaries between the past and present, self and other: she sees “through Williams’ eyes, the shape of a woman, peaceful and silent” (177); hears, feels, and sees what Mrs. Ramsay felt as Mr. Ramsay intruded upon her knitting, even though this moment took place in the past: “he stood over her and looked down at her. Lily could see him” (198); she thinks the same things as Mr. Carmichael (208) and is able to establish an intimacy with Mr. Ramsay, “to give him what she had wanted to give him” (208). This connects him intimately across space and time with Mrs. Ramsay. In a letter to Ethyl Smyth, Woolf wrote, “I think its a bad thing that we are so inseparable . . . but how in this world of separation, does one break

it?” (LVI, 460).<sup>160</sup> Creative work stands as an argument against abstract notions of truth and meaning which isolate and alienate characters and readers from themselves and others. The expansive freedom and unity with others that Mrs. Ramsay finds in darkness requires a different way of seeing and relating to others which is not based on common forms of perceiving space and time and understanding the function of labor. As Woolf explains,

Only when we put two and two together; two pencil strokes, two different words, two bricks do we overcome dissolution and set up some stake against oblivion. The passion with which we seek out these creations and attempt endlessly, perpetually to make them is of a piece of the instinct that sets us preserving our bodies, with clothes, food, roofs, from destruction.<sup>161</sup>

Creative labor is a way to undo the desire for meaning in the face of the infinite which structures religion and Mr. Ramsay’s philosophy. Unity for Woolf was found in the “dark places of psychology”<sup>162</sup> instead of in visions of the transcendental.

Woolf’s experience of the “pattern” was the result of “moments of being,” which she described as “single and solemn moments of concentrated emotion.”<sup>163</sup> For Woolf life was lived either attentively or inattentively, characterized by moments of *being* or *non-being*. In other words, either as the attentive and conscious engagement with the ordinary things, people, and activities of everyday life which gave way to a more connected reality, or subconscious moments of domesticated existence which existed merely on the surface. Life was as Woolf described it, a matter of “proportion” (ASP 20) between these two states. Schulkind notes that

The difficulties facing the writer who seeks to convey a value of this order [of moments of being] are daunting in a special way; for such a moment has few consequences which can be objectively demonstrated. Furthermore, the moment of being is so personal, the belief in a transcending order so intuitive, that, as Virginia Woolf herself wrote in describing her “philosophy”: “it will not bear arguing about; it is irrational” (19).

Woolf’s moment of being and pattern are “irrational” insofar as they are not mediated experiences. Individuals can access them through their labor, labor which does not conform to rational categories which establish boundaries between the mind and the body, self and other. They are irrational.

Woolf’s notion of the pattern is grounded in her early childhood memories in which she experienced a fluidity between her body and the natural world. One memory,

is of lying half asleep, half awake, in bed in the nursery at St. Ives. It is of hearing the waves breaking, one, two, one, two, and sending a splash of water over the beach; and then breaking, one, two, one, two, behind a yellow blind. It is of hearing the blind draw its little acorn across the floor as the wind blew the blind out. It is of lying and hearing

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<sup>160</sup> *The Letters of Virginia Woolf VI: 1936-1941*. Eds. Nigel Nicolson and Joanne Trautmann. (New York: Harcourt, 1980), 460.

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<sup>161</sup> From Sim, 159-160.

<sup>162</sup> “Modern Fiction,” M.H. Abrams, e.d., (New York: W.W. Norton & Company), 2152.

<sup>163</sup> From Schulkind, 19.

this splash and seeing this light, and feeling, it is almost impossible that I should be here; of feeling the purest ecstasy I can conceive. . . .

And she continues her description further down the page:

the impression of the waves and the acorn on the blind; the feeling, as I describe it sometimes to myself, of lying in a grape and seeing through a film of semi-transparent yellow... (*ASP* 64-65).

Woolf's childhood memories evince simple and immediate sensations of the body, "seeing," "hearing," and an experience of time, "one, two, one, two," and awareness of space which is confined to her immediate surroundings. These memories offer a unity with nature which was "impressed" upon her and which Woolf described in the following terms:

I am hardly aware of myself, but only the sensation. I am only the container of the feeling of ecstasy, of the feeling of rapture. Perhaps this is the characteristic of childhood memories; perhaps it accounts for their strength. Later we add to feelings much that makes them more complex (*ASP* 67)

An added layer of complexity can be seen in Woolf's second description of the same memory which becomes more elaborate and conceptually abstract:

If I were a painter I should paint these first impressions in pale yellow, silver, and green. There was the pale yellow blind; the green sea; and the silver of the passion flowers. I should make a picture that was globular; semi-transparent. I should make a picture of curved petals; of shells; of things that were semi-transparent; I should make curved shapes, showing light through, but not giving a clear outline. Everything would be large and dim; and what was seen would at the same time be heard; sounds come through this petal or leaf—sounds indistinguishable from sights. Sound and sights seem to make equal parts of these first impressions. When I think of the early morning in bed I also hear the caw of rooks falling from a great height. The sound seems to fall through an elastic, gummy air; which holds it up; which prevents it from being sharp and distinct. The quality of the air above Talland House seemed to suspend sound, to let it sink down slowly, as if it were caught in a blue gummy veil. The rooks cawing is part of the waves breaking—one, two, one two—and the splash as the wave drew back and then it gathered again, and I lay there half awake, half asleep, drawing in such ecstasy as I cannot describe (*ASP* 66).

As she grew older, Woolf was able to convey her first impressions through metaphor and simile. Language functions to both distance her further from her first impressions but also allows her to nuance her understanding—"when I think"—of those memories. It is interesting that like her earlier depiction of her pattern, Woolf sees herself "painting" her memory, which adds a spatial dimension, "rooks falling from a great height," and a temporal dimension—"the air above Talland House seemed to suspend sound,"—not part of the original memory. These reveal a more complex and integrated experience of space and time which reflect her development as an artist. Furthermore, the synesthesia of the visual and the auditory and the image of semi-transparency can be seen as part of Woolf's argument against the rigid philosophical boundaries between internal and external reality she later develops in her novels. Woolf's memory adds a

layer of complexity to the original memory which attempts to convey the idea of “blurred”<sup>164</sup> boundaries which characterize her pattern, and the intimacy between characters across *spacetime* seen in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To The Lighthouse*. As she says in “Modern Fiction,”

Life is not a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible? . . .<sup>165</sup>

Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance.

It is interesting to contrast her early childhood memory and recollection of it with what she later describes as the experience of a tree in “The Mark on the Wall”:

Wood is a pleasant thing to *think* about. It comes from a tree; and trees grow, and we don’t know how they grow. For years and years they grow, without paying attention to us, in meadows, in forests, and by the side of rivers—all things one likes to *think* about. . . . I like to *think* of *the tree itself*: first of the close dry sensation of being wood; then the grinding of the storm; the slow, delicious ooze of sap; I like to *think* of it, too, on winter’s nights standing in the empty field with all leaves close-furled, nothing tender exposed to the iron bullets of the moon, a naked mast upon an earth that goes tumbling, tumbling, all night long. The song of birds must sound very loud and strange in June; and how cold the feet of insects must feel upon it, as they make laborious progresses up the creases of the bark, or sun themselves upon the thin green awning of the leaves, and look straight in front of them with diamond-cut red eyes (*my emphasis*).<sup>166</sup>

This poignant illustration of the tree engages a variety of senses. It dramatically shifts our perspective from the immediate to cosmological space and time and back to the small insects “with diamond-cut red eyes.” What is significant about this passage is the role that “thinking” has for Woolf: it expresses the capacity to feel. We usually associate the capacity to think with logic and categories, but Woolf re-appropriates it to show how thinking, concentrating on something, opens up the mind’s ability to make attentive connections with the environment. Thinking allows her to understand the tree in relation to the vast reaches of space and time. As we will see with respect to Lily’s painting, the intimate connections with the past and with others occur through “thinking” and “feeling,”—the mind’s and the body’s capacity to make relations. Woolf makes *thinking* and *feeling* part of the same process of making patterns. Woolf’s memories and experience of the tree suggest that as we grow older our senses evolve to understand the more complex notions of space and time and intimate relationships with our environment and others, like those Woolf experienced during “moments of being” when she was a child.

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<sup>164</sup> Lily describes her canvas as “blurred” (208).

<sup>165</sup> “Modern Fiction,” 2150.

<sup>166</sup> “The Mark on the Wall,” M.H. Abrams, e.d., (New York: W.W. Norton & Company), 2147.

Moments of being took place during periods of deep concentration which opened up to a more expansive connection with nature and the environment. Woolf describes moments of being as “sudden violent shock(s)” — “it was the difference in the first place between despair and satisfaction,” she states (*ASP* 71). Woolf’s description of the flower — “that was the real flower; part earth; part flower. It was a *thought* I put away as being likely to be pretty useful to me later” (*ASP* 71) — is a moment of satisfaction distinguished by a vaster sense of space and unity with her surroundings which the childhood memories have yet to develop. Instead of the feelings of physical ecstasy and rapture which characterized her early memories and which she felt were impressed upon her, these moments take place after a period of concentration, “I was looking at a plant with a spread of leaves; and it seemed suddenly plain that the flower itself was part of the earth . . . that was the real flower; part earth; part flower;” (*ASP* 71). Moments of being thus preface the intimate connections between others she makes later in her life, which exist behind the appearances of social life — “behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern. . . . And I see this when I have a shock” says Woolf (*ASP* 72). For Woolf “these moments of being of mine were scaffolding in the background; were the invisible part of my life as a child. But in the foreground there were of course people; and these people were like characters in Dickens. They were caricatures; they were simple; they were immensely alive” (*ASP* 73). Woolf’s interesting depiction of Dickens’ characters as flat but alive suggests, as I mentioned earlier, that Woolf saw her daily life as existing between two dimensions, *being* and *non-being*, between moments where life was lived attentively, consciously, and moments which were lived habitually, subconsciously. As Woolf states,

These separate moments of being were however embedded in many more moments of non-being. I have already forgotten what Leonard and I talked about at lunch; and at tea; although it was a good day the goodness was embedded in a kind of nondescript cotton wool. This is always so. A great part of every day is not lived consciously. One walks, eats, sees things, deals with what has to be done; the broken vacuum cleaner; ordering dinner; writing orders to Mabel; washing; cooking dinner; bookbinding. When it is a bad day the proportion of non-being is much larger. I had a slight temperature last week; almost the whole day was non-being (*ASP* 70).

Moments of being are experienced as matches struck to light, “threaded in among scenes, of typical days and occasions, describing the physical environment, the social forces, the family and personal attachments and passions, which shape the outer self,” notes Schulkind (19). As Schulkind writes,

To convey these two levels of being — the surface and the spreading depths — was the challenge taken up by Virginia Woolf the memoir writer as well as Virginia Woolf the novelist. As she once wrote of De Quincey: “To tell the whole story of a life the autobiographer must devise some means by which the two levels of existence can be recorded — the rapid passage of events and actions; the slow opening up single solemn moments of concentrated emotion” (19).

Woolf’s moments of being suggest that below the surface tension of life with all of its attachments, jealousy, and insecurities, exists a much deeper and more intimate reality where the boundaries of the ego that we have assumed as real give way. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Clarissa catches a glimmer of

what she lacked. It was not beauty; not mind. It was something central which permeated; something warm which broke up surfaces and rippled the cold contact of man and woman, or of women together. For *that* she could dimly perceive. . . . she did undoubtedly feel what men felt. Only for a moment; but it was enough. It was a sudden revelation. . . . for that moment, she had seen an illumination; a match burning in a crocus; an inner meaning almost expressed. But the close withdrew; the hard softened. It was over—the moment (32).

Woolf's descriptions of moments of being suggest both a feeling of connectedness with nature and intimacy with others but are also characterized by moments of "despair," connected to traumatic experiences, during which Woolf feels overwhelmed, "they seemed dominant; myself passive" (*ASP* 72), and which she describes as, "My body seemed paralyzed . . .," (*ASP* 71) "exposed to a whole avalanche of meaning that had heaped itself up and discharged itself upon me, unprotected, with nothing to ward it off, so that I huddled up at my end of the bath, motionless. I could not explain it" (*ASP* 78). It is interesting that Woolf associates "meaning" with pain. Sim suggests that these moments

centre on feelings of pain, not pleasure, and anxieties about the body's autonomy and control. . . .

The incomprehensibility of death is a cognitive trauma expressed through the body. The body, like the mind, is checked by an unanalysable or unintelligible fact (152). While Woolf experienced moments of satisfaction as the feeling of receiving a myriad of impressions from nature, moments of despair were imposed upon her. Sim further states that these moments represent "an epistemological crisis during which Woolf loses all sense of the world's reality. Her response to this again is expressed through her body" (153). As trauma becomes embedded in her body—"the pain of discovering that people hurt each other; that a man I had seen had killed himself. The sense of horror held me powerless"—(*ASP* 72), it is only by writing about it—a labor of the body and mind—that she can understand why it held her powerless. Woolf explains, "as one gets older one has a greater power through reason to provide an explanation; and . . . this explanation blunts the sledge-hammer force of the blow (*ASP* 72). If moments of "satisfaction" depict feelings of unity and a continuity of life, moments of "despair" represented an opportunity to engage and come to terms with the forces which drive the unconscious belief in the abstract as a way of explaining away feelings of meaninglessness. As Woolf states,

And so I go on to suppose that the shock-receiving capacity is what makes me a writer. I hazard the explanation that a shock is at once in my case followed by the desire to explain it. I feel that I have had a blow; but it is not, as I thought as a child, simply a blow from an enemy hidden behind the cotton wool of daily life; it is or will become a revelation of some order; it is a token of some real thing behind appearances. I make it real by putting it into words. It is only by putting it into words that I make it whole; this wholeness means that it has lost its power to hurt me; it gives me, perhaps because by

doing so I take away the pain, a great delight to put the severed parts together (ASP 72).<sup>167</sup>

What in her youth had been a violent blow became as she grew older a welcomed revelation. By allowing traumatic experiences to surface, Woolf was able to come to terms with the past—as she ostensibly does by investigating the nature of the class system—in order to free herself—her mind and body—from trauma. Piecing together the various fragments of the past was both an emotional process of the body in which the past, as Woolf states, “come[s] to the surface unexpectedly” and a “rational” process of piecing together these emotions, “to put the severed parts together” akin to how Mrs. Ramsay scrutinizes her past (ASP 71,72). Woolf further describes the past which remains as scenes which erupt into consciousness: “the sensation that we are sealed vessels afloat on what is convenient to call reality; and at some moments, the sealing matter cracks; in floods reality” (ASP 122).<sup>168</sup> Woolf’s moments of being help to bring to the surface that which lies repressed. The repressed for Woolf can be seen as the locus of trauma and a more substantial reality of connectedness.

Reading for Woolf, like other forms of creative labor she portrays in *To The Lighthouse*, is also characterized by the process of making patterns. As Schulkind suggests, Many of [Woolf’s] novels are similarly organized; that is, scenes, characters, images and so on, that might initially appear to have been selected arbitrarily are subsequently revealed to be pieces of the hidden pattern. During the day of Mrs. Dalloway’s party not only do the scenes in the minds of the major characters suggest patterns of significance built over a lifetime, of which only fragments are brought to the surface, but the sharp differences between Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith, reinforced by the implausible juxtaposition of scenes from their respective lives, are shown, by revelation of this other reality—to be merely superficial. Similarly, in *To The Lighthouse* two passages of time separated by an interval of ten years and seemingly selected at random are ultimately locked in a pattern of significant moments in the minds of several of the characters (20-21).

Like her moments of being, reading requires concentration. This opens up the mind’s ability to make relations. In discussing Woolf’s essay “The Cherry Orchard,” Melba Cuddy-Keane notes that Woolf “tropes unconscious response - as she frequently does - as a descent into water: ‘we seemed to have sunk below the surface of things and to be feeling our way among submerged but recognizable emotions (E III:248)’” (123). This process is described by Woolf as “Unconsciousness, which means presumably that the under mind works at top speed while the upper mind drowns, is a state we all know.”<sup>169</sup> As I observed earlier in the chapter, Woolf employs metaphors of darkness to suggest a different way of “seeing” reality. By concentrating on the work of reading, *thinking* about the work, the “unconscious” mind is able to make

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<sup>167</sup> See also, 122.

<sup>168</sup> See also Ronald Schleifer, *Modernism and Time*, 56.

<sup>169</sup> From Melba Cuddy-Keane. *Virginia Woolf, The Intellectual and the Public Sphere*, (Cambridge University Press, 2003). 125.



relations—patterns, associations—with concepts, emotions, etc, which we would otherwise gloss over. One such example we saw in *Mrs. Dalloway* was the importance of three o'clock in establishing a pattern of connections between characters. I will turn later in this chapter to the way Woolf re-appropriates ordinary words like those for the colors “silver,” “red,” “blue,” and “green” to designate an emotional connection between characters in *spacetime*.<sup>170</sup> As Woolf herself states in her essay, “Phases of Fiction,”

By cutting off responses which are called out in the actual life, the novelist frees us to take delight, as we do when ill or traveling, in *things themselves*. We can see the strangeness of them only when habit has ceased to immerse us in them, and we stand outside watching what has no power over us one way or the other. Then we see the mind at work; we are amused by its power to make *patterns*; by its power to bring out relations in things and disparities which are covered over when we are acting by habit or driven on by the ordinary impulses. (*CE2*, 82 *my emphasis*).<sup>171</sup>

Instead of imposing meaning on the text, we allow the text's underlying interconnected reality to rise to the surface. Josephine Donovan quotes Woolf's “On Re-reading Novels” where she says that

“the ‘*book itself*’ is not form which you see but emotion which you feel”. . . . Woolf concludes that the form that matters in fiction is not a visual form such as one might find in Renaissance painting, but an emotional order: form in fiction means [as Woolf says], “that certain emotions have been placed in the right relation to each other” (129 *my emphasis*).<sup>172</sup>

Cuddy-Keane further cites Woolf's essay “Fishing,” where Woolf describes the reader's relationship with her texts. Of Woolf's phrase “Now, if the art of writing consists in laying an egg in the reader's mind from which springs the thing itself (*CE II*: 301),” Cuddy-Keane comments, “The destabilizing provisionality and uncertainty (“if the art of writing”), the suggestive metaphor (“laying an egg) suggests a process that defies or eludes logical definition. Woolf's sentence enacts its own meaning, requiring its thought to be completed in the associative caverns in the readers' mind” (123). The creative labor that we engage in as readers thus depends on acts of concentration reminiscent of moments of satisfaction.

Woolf frames the activity of making patterns by the equally important process of deconstructing the assumptions we have about how we read, how we define creative labor. In other words, how we experience reality. Along with an unconscious response, Cuddy-Keane sees Woolf encouraging a conscious, critical engagement with her texts through her use of questions:

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<sup>170</sup> Woolf's associative connections also span her other works and echo other writers. For example, her use of the word “Look” in *Mrs. Dalloway* recalls T.S. Eliot's similar use of the word in *The Waste Land*, where he asks his readers to engage with the text's various literary allusions. Other examples of Woolf's intertextual connections include “Shakespeare” and the “thing itself,” which I turn to shortly.

<sup>171</sup> From Sim, 21.

<sup>172</sup> “Everyday Use and Moments of Being: Towards a Nondominative Aesthetic,” *Aesthetics in Feminist Perspective*, ed. Hilde S. Hein (Indiana University Press, 1993), 57-58.

Woolf's essays usually begin by posing some question or problem, which she then explores in relation to specific literary works, often pursuing different possible approaches in the course of a single essay. She might suggest an answer or offer an opinion, only to change or even reverse it, or she might view a work through different and even conflicting lenses. She presents her own views and judgments but she simultaneously examines the process through which her ideas were formed. By foregrounding her process of thinking, Woolf conveys a theoretical approach that is speculative and open-ended rather than definitive and conclusive. She also presents the literary text as dynamic and changeable - acquiring its meaning through its interaction with the context in which it was written and the context in which it is read (133).

A salient passage in *Mrs. Dalloway* shows the importance of contextualization for Woolf:

But what was she dreaming as she looked into Hatchards' shop window? What was she trying to recover? What image of white dawn in the country, as she read in the book spread open

*Fear no more the heat o' the sun*

*Nor the furious winter's rages* (9).

In this passage, Woolf “foregrounds [the] process of thinking”—how we know—through Clarissa’s questions and the allusion to Shakespeare. Contextualization occurs by figuring out where Hatchards’ shop is located. This situates Clarissa’s experience in a physical setting which allows us to stand in her shoes in order to see Clarissa standing outside the bookstore reading Shakespeare’s lines. It is as if we are standing in front of Hatchards’ bookstore; Shakespeare is speaking to us. Clarissa’s questions become our questions; they become part of our own psychological process, as the nature of Shakespeare’s lines and work imply. The questions that Clarissa is trying to answer—How do you connect to a more elemental reality and what function does the past have in this process?—exist as part of a larger pattern of ideas in which Woolf constantly seems to move from the surface to the depths of the psychological. In her allusion to Shakespeare in this particular passage, Clarissa enacts the same process of reading which Woolf asks of her readers. For Woolf, the present is informed by the past. Moving from the practicality of shared “common” social space into the depths of Clarissa’s psyche, as words like “dreaming,” “window,” “recover,” and “Shakespeare” suggest, requires a process of textual contextualization<sup>173</sup> which suggests that we exist in the present moment with Clarissa but are simultaneously part of a larger spatial and temporal constellation of ideas which traverse the novel, Woolf’s other texts, and Shakespeare’s own work. The nod to Shakespeare suggests that we might find answers to Clarissa’s questions by looking to the past and reading the poet whose lines are repeated by various characters in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To The Lighthouse*. By reading Shakespeare, as I will show later, we discover that the goal of Woolf’s questions is to have us question the assumptions that we have about how we perceive reality, “to examine the process

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<sup>173</sup> In discussing *Mrs. Dalloway*, Whitworth says that “It would, however, be misleading to describe *Mrs. Dalloway* as being a novel ‘about’ shell shock or more generally ‘about’ ex-soldiers; it would be a mistake to allow the parliamentarian and the doctor to determine its final meaning. . . . Identifying the politically charged keywords in the network requires a thoroughly textual form of contextualization, one that refers as much to contemporary books and pamphlets as to real events.” *Authors in Context: Virginia Woolf* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 135.

through which (our) ideas were formed.” This brings to the surface the question of how we produce meaning. In her discussion of Woolf’s essay, “On Not Knowing Greek,” Cuddy-Keane states that Woolf

question[s] the norm of language as “representational and intentional,” or as “the discourse of truth and falsehood,” to recognize differing and multiple motivations and assumptions in both author and reader, and to situate our utterances within the complicating power relations that make conversation no simple “exchange” between equal participants. Woolf . . . acknowledges a power structure among different readerships and works to undo it. . . . the essay on “*not* knowing” turns out to be about knowing - the whole vexed question of interpretation. . . .

By destabilizing the reader’s relation to the text, Woolf foregrounds the role played by the reader in any interpretation of the text’s meaning and, in the rest of the essay, *how* we interpret is the continuing theme” (140).

For Woolf, our critical dialogue with novels like *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To The Lighthouse*, the labor of reading, ends in questioning *how* we produce meaning. It is Cuddy-Keane’s idea that Woolf’s essay “On Not Knowing Greek” “teaches us to know ourselves” (141). Woolf encourages us to question and investigate our assumptions about how we “know,” how we perceive reality. She compels us to investigate the past. This activity of questing our ontological assumptions is similar to what occurs during moments of despair. “Thinking” about our epistemological assumptions also mimics the process of making patterns since it allows us to reconnect with and deconstruct the past. By questioning how we perceive reality, Woolf seeks to acknowledge our individual mode of producing meaning, our “unconscious” ability to make patterns. As Cuddy-Keane further argues, “Woolf’s method offers a productive alternative to the confrontational, assertive public discourse of her time” (141). Woolf’s is a “discourse that empowers all voices at the table” (Cuddy-Keane 135). Conscious and unconscious response suggests that “in the act of reading . . . it [is] crucial to employ the whole range of the mind,” says Cuddy-Keane (132). Woolf’s focus on how we know, how we establish intimacy with others, can be further understood through a contextualization of her use of Kant’s concept of the thing-in-itself.

Woolf’s notion of the “thing itself” plays an important role in her emphasis on unconscious response. There are various instances in this chapter where I have cited Woolf’s use of the thing itself: she uses it to describe her experience of the “tree itself”; the “book itself” which Woolf suggested was not seen but felt; the “thing itself” which sprouts by laying an egg in the reader’s mind; and “things themselves.” All of these instances speak to the “unconscious” activity of reading through which characters and readers create patterns. “Concentrating” on the thing itself opens the possibility of making associations, connections between the past and the present in *spacetime*, as is evident when Prue sees her mother:

“That’s my mother,” thought Prue. Yes; Minta should look at her; Paul Rayley should look at her. That is the *thing itself*, she felt, as if there were only one person like that in the world; her mother . . .

Instantly, for no reason at all, Mrs. Ramsay became like a girl of twenty, full of gaiety. A mood of revelry suddenly took possession of her. Of course they must go; of course they must go; she cried, laughing (*my emphasis* 116-117).

Here, Prue creates a connection between Mrs. Ramsay's past self, who has not yet succumbed to Mr. Ramsay, and her present self. The *thing itself* is the potential inherent in the object to be something other than it is. To experience it as such is to liberate it from the habitual and socially codified ways of knowing, which is what Lily desires as she tries to reconnect with Mrs.

Ramsay:

But what she wished to get a hold of was that very jar on the nerves, the *thing itself* before it has been made anything. . . . Let it come, she thought, if it will come. For there are moments when one can neither think nor feel. And if one can neither *think* nor *feel*, she thought, where is one? (*my emphasis* 193-194).

In this passage, Woolf highlights both the conscious, *thinking* act of concentration, and “unconscious,” *feeling*, but also makes a connection between the thing itself and a state between thinking and feeling which can be best described as an openness or lack of judgment in the process of knowing—what Cuddy-Keane describes as a “theoretical approach that is speculative and open-ended rather than definitive and conclusive” (133). It is this open-ended question of “knowing,” *how* to know Mrs. Ramsay, which preoccupies Lily throughout the novel:

Could the body achieve, or the mind, subtly mingling in the intricate passages of the brain? or the heart? Could loving, as people called it, make her [Lily] and Mrs. Ramsay one? for it was not knowledge but unity that she desired, not inscriptions on tablets, nothing that could be written in any language known to men, but intimacy itself, which is knowledge, she had thought, leaning her head on Mrs. Ramsay's knee (51).

Woolf seems to suggest that our ability to develop intimate relations with others begins with the simple act of questioning our assumptions.

In Woolf's various allusions to the thing itself, the act of knowing is characterized by a disregard for the Newtonian categories of space and time. This distinguishes Woolf's “philosophy” (*ASP* 71) and her use of the thing-itself, from Kant. By investigating what Kant meant by the “thing-itself,” we can see how Woolf re-appropriates the concept to acknowledge characters and readers creative capacity. Kant's notion of the thing-itself exists as an a priori law of nature which needs to be actualized in order to make our subjective intuitions about space and time meaningful. To quote James Ellington, “For Kant, pure concepts [the thing-itself] are those of substance, cause, possibility, existence, and necessity are coterminous with pure forms of intuition, time, and space. Experience is the result of the synthetic activity of the intellect by means of such pure concepts in organizing empirically given sense perceptions which are arrayed in time and space.”<sup>174</sup> In other words, space and time are one part of how our mind makes experience possible. Space and time are the matrix which allows the thing-in-itself to manifest itself and vice versa, the thing-in-itself is the software which gives meaning to space and time. But Kant's adherence to a Newtonian conception of space and time,<sup>175</sup> which underpinned Enlightenment thinking, opened the door for the mediator's rational assimilation of individual

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<sup>174</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, trans. James Ellington, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001), xiii, xiv.

<sup>175</sup> Michael Rohlf. "Immanuel Kant", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2014 Edition), Ed. Edward N. Zalta, URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/kant/>>. See also, *Immanuel Kant: Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, XI.

perspectives into ideology, as we saw with Jameson and Mr. Ramsay, in which social habits and conventions structure our conceptions of space and time. The thing-itself shifted from being a category of scientific knowledge to a category of specialized knowledge, which was the domain of the mediator. For Woolf, on the other hand, the thing itself does not exist as an a priori law of nature, or as a category of knowledge in which our experience of space and time is subsumed, but as our inherent creative capacity—space and time are part of our creative process of making patterns—to make emotional connections with others not determined by hegemonic versions of history. This again recalls Einstein’s theories, which make the infinite the domain of the individual. In this way we can see how Woolf engages with Newton’s ideas of space and time through her interest in Kant’s concept.

By further contextualizing the thing-itself within Woolf’s work, we can see how Woolf uses it to describe a larger historical process focused on the development of the senses. Woolf’s “philosophy” emphasizes the importance that creative labor has in liberating the repressed:

From this I reach what I might call a philosophy; at any rate it is a constant idea of mine; that behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern; that we—I mean all human beings—are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work of art. *Hamlet* or a Beethoven quartet is the truth about this vast mass that we call the world. But there is no Shakespeare, there is no Beethoven; certainly and emphatically there is no God; we are the words; we are the music; we are the *thing itself*. (my emphasis ASP 72).

Woolf’s suggestion that there is no God who has brought the world into being but that instead *we* are the creative force, the *thing itself*, challenges the reified forms of reality which are imposed on the reader. The work of art exists for us to discover our creative talents. In doing so, we allow others to discover their talents. Creative labor produces creative labor. It encourages the development of the senses instead of their impoverishment as we saw with Dr. Bradshaw, Mr. Ramsay, and Jameson. Woolf shifts the value of art and creation from abstract qualities to the basic creative nature, the thing itself, that binds us all through time. Woolf’s sought to counter “fascism, patriarchy, and militarism [which together fell] under the category of a ‘history’ defined as master narrative and tool of oppression whose form relies upon notions of progress and teleology” (2), Hinnov writes. For Cuddy-Keane, Woolf approaches “literature as a living thing, she directs our attention to the multiplicity and the plurality of a text’s meanings, to the on-going, developing process of the critic’s thinking, and to the dynamic dialogic relation between writer and reader” (133). She says that “Woolf objects to monologic prose because it forestalls and prohibits such negotiation. Literature’s essential life, she argues, is curtailed and suppressed when discourse employs an authoritative, impersonal, didactic mode (133). For Woolf, art challenges how we perceive reality by disrupting our habitual ways of seeing the world. Her allusion to *Hamlet* speaks to the historical shift towards the self, desires, and an investigation of the traumatic past, as the aforementioned passage with Clarissa standing in front of Hatchards’ implies. And her allusion to Beethoven brings to mind the fact that he was nearly deaf towards the end of his career. In fact, it would seem that Beethoven no longer heard music but was able to see it. We can take Beethoven as an example of what Woolf was trying to accomplish in *To The Lighthouse*. She encourages a different way of seeing, a different kind of labor, as I have previously suggested Woolf implies, by “painting” herself. If Beethoven created music that was

simultaneously heard and seen, Lily's painting shows how Woolf uses color as a visual and emotional space, which brings characters together in *spacetime*. By challenging how we relate to the work of art, Woolf compels us to acknowledge a different way of relating to ourselves and others—of experiencing reality—with the goal that our becoming producers will encourage others to do the same. Woolf's engagement with Kant's ideas is part of her own attempt to find a solution to the philosophical problem of subject-object which is preoccupied with what reality is and how it can be known, and which frames Lily's act of painting.<sup>176</sup> What distinguishes Woolf from Kant and Western philosophy is her desire to question and investigate the causes of alienation. Philosophy had presupposed a division between mind and body, the subject-object problem, but had failed to investigate its religious origins. By understanding the origins of alienation, Woolf, as she implies with her allusion to Shakespeare and her notion of the pattern—creative labor—sought to show the causes and effects of trauma in Western reality. Uncovering these subconscious forces could lead to an emancipation of all our creative faculties—"mind, body, and soul" (Hinnov 21)—and make possible an experience of intimacy with ourselves and others which challenged conventional ways of relating.

Like her use of the thing itself, Woolf's various allusions to Shakespeare call for a similar contextualization. By reading Shakespeare we can see her argument against abstract, historical, time; it informs our reading of the aforementioned passage where Clarissa reads Shakespeare's lines in front of Hatchards'. Woolf's argument against history helps us understand how to "see" Lily's painting. In *To The Lighthouse*, Mr. Ramsay thinks:

If Shakespeare had never existed, . . . would the world have differed much from what it is today? Does the progress of civilization depend on great men? Is the lot of the average human being better now than in the time of the Pharaohs? Is the lot of the average human being, however, he asked himself, the criterion by which we judge the measure of civilization? Possibly not. Possibly the greatest good requires the existence of a slave class. The liftman in the Tube is an eternal necessity. The thought was distasteful to him. He tossed his head. To avoid it, he would find some way of snubbing the predominance of the arts. He would argue that the world exists for the average human being; that the arts are merely a decoration imposed on top of human life; they do not express it. Nor is Shakespeare necessary to it. Not knowing precisely why it was he wanted to disparage Shakespeare and come to the rescue of the man who stands eternally in the door of the lift, he picked a leaf sharply from the hedge (42-43).

Mr. Ramsay cannot find answers to his questions because he is unwilling to question the foundations upon which civilization and his own identity rests. His straw man argument against Shakespeare shifts attention away from his assumption that Shakespeare is a "great" man who somehow expresses the idea that civilization is divided between the "average human being" and a slave class. He does not explain why Shakespeare is great. As I have suggested, Woolf envisions Shakespeare as more of a liberating figure than a "priest" of literature we look up to. It is thus ironic that Mr. Ramsay belittles Shakespeare when he envisions himself as a great man:

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<sup>176</sup> "Subject-object problem," *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikimedia Foundation. 22 July 3004. Web. 24 July 2014.

It was his power, his gift, suddenly to shed all superficialities . . . and so to stand on his little ledge facing the dark of human ignorance, how we know nothing and the sea eats away the ground we stand on—that was his fate, his gift (44).

His shortsightedness regarding the value of Shakespeare, as my previous allusion to Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, and the thing itself suggest, is due to his blind acceptance of Victorian social ideals and the belief in the progress of civilization they promise. Mr. Ramsay's portrait of Shakespeare as a great man, like his own heroic illusions, and the class system, are something he has conjured up in his imagination and has no basis in reality. As the text reads,

he had promised . . . to talk "some nonsense" to the young men of Cardiff about Locke, Hume, Berkeley, and the causes of the French Revolution. But this and his pleasure in it, his glory in the phrases he made, in the ardor of youth, in his wife's beauty, in the tributes that reached him from Swansea, Cardiff, Exeter, Southampton, Kidderminster, Oxford, Cambridge—all had to be deprecated and concealed under the phrase "talking nonsense," (45).

Mr. Ramsay, as the text represents his thoughts, reveals his internal contradictions. Woolf questions Mr. Ramsay's role as philosopher and the capacity of philosophy in general to explain the nature of reality and historical events. As such, Mr. Ramsay's allusion to Shakespeare and *Hamlet* is significant because of Woolf's interest in recovering the repressed—it helps to frame Mr. Ramsay's neglect of his emotions. Mr. Ramsay's reluctance to question his selfish desires for recognition prevents him recognizing his self-contradictions. The synchronicity between Woolf and Shakespeare can be seen in another passage in "The Mark on the Wall":

And the novelists in future will realise more and more the importance of these reflections, for of course there is not one reflection but an almost infinite number; those are the depths they will explore, those the phantoms they will pursue, leaving the description of reality more and more out of their stories, taking a knowledge of it for granted, as the Greeks did and *Shakespeare* perhaps—but these 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, from which one could not depart save at the risk of nameless damnation. Generalisations bring back somehow Sunday in London, Sunday afternoon walks, Sunday luncheons, also ways of speaking of the dead, clothes, and habits—like the habit of sitting all together in one room until a certain hour, although nobody liked it. There was a rule for everything. The rule for tablecloths at that particular period was that they should be made of tapestry with little yellow compartments marked upon them, such as you may see in photographs of the carpets in the corridors of the royal palaces. *Tablecloths* of a different kind were not real tablecloths. How shocking, and yet how wonderful it was to discover that these real things, Sunday luncheons, Sunday walks, country houses, and tablecloths were not entirely real, were indeed half phantoms, and the damnation which visited the disbeliever in them was only a sense of illegitimate freedom (*my emphasis*).<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> "The Mark on the Wall," 2145.

Woolf's allusion to "Shakespeare" and the "thing itself" in this passage suggests that the repetition of trauma—Woolf's obsession with the loss of her mother—were a normal and "real" part of English society, "half phantoms" imposed on the individual and passed down from generation to generation. Woolf's characterization of her obsession with her mother as "passions, attachments - there is no single word for them, for they changed month by month - which bound her to other people" (*ASP* 79-80) are part of this socialized behavior of trauma evident in *Mrs. Dalloway*, and *To The Lighthouse*. In the former, various characters repeat the lines from the song in Shakespeare's plays *Cymbeline*, "Fear no more the heat of the sun, nor the furious Winter's rages" (*MD*, 9).<sup>178</sup> The repetition of the lines from *Cymbeline* in *Mrs. Dalloway*, as well as Mr. Ramsay's own incessant recitation of various lines from Tennyson's poem, "The Charge of the Light Brigade," underscore characters' unconscious desire to reconnect with an un-traumatized self.<sup>179</sup> Woolf's description of her obsession with her mother's ghost in "A Sketch of the Past" alludes to the community's role in maintaining the values of loss:

I could hear her voice, see her, imagine what she would do or say as I went about my day's doings. She was one of the invisible presences who after all play so important a part in every life. This influence, by which I mean the consciousness of other groups impinging upon ourselves; public opinion; what other people say and think; all those magnets which attract us this way to be like that, or repel us the other and make us different from that; has never been analysed in any of those Lives which I so much enjoy reading, or very superficially (80).

Woolf's haunted existence and that of her characters echo Shakespeare's similar representation of the ghostly figures in *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth* (with Lily Briscoe being modeled after Hamlet).<sup>180</sup> On the surface, Shakespeare's play, like Woolf's use of the lines, can and have been read as an allusion to historical events,<sup>181</sup> or as examples of tragedy, but Woolf uses these lines and alludes to Shakespeare throughout her texts as part of a larger argument against the

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<sup>178</sup> See also, 30, 39, 139, 186.

<sup>179</sup> The desire to find some respite from the traumatic past can also be gleaned from the line from *Cymbeline*, "Ghost unlaid forbear thee," which has been interpreted as "May the ghost not yet laid leave you alone." See Derbyshire, John. "The Song from Shakespeare's Cymbeline." *Readings*. John Derbyshire. Web. 30 July 2014. <http://www.johnderbyshire.com/Readings/cymbeline.html>

<sup>180</sup> Lily's willingness to commune with Mrs. Ramsay's presence and question Mr. Ramsay's philosophy can be compared to Hamlet's: "In his openness to embrace the message of the ghost, Hamlet assuages Horatio's wonderment with the analytical assertion, 'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.'" "Hamlet." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. 22 July 2004. Web. 30 July 2014.

<sup>181</sup> The allusion to *Cymbeline* has been read as Woolf's response to the effects of WWI as "at once an elegiac dirge and a profoundly dignified declaration of endurance." "Cymbeline." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. 22 July 2004. Web. 30 July 2014. Shakespeare's own version of the play is influenced by his reading of Raphael Holinshed's chronicles from which he "freely adapts the legend and adds entirely original sub-plots." Shakespeare's interest in the psychological can be seen in his penchant for blurring the boundaries between the past and the present and is evident in his introduction of ghosts and the idea that Imogen "dies" but comes back to life. See also, "Raphael Holinshed." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. 22 July 2004. Web. 30 July, 2014.



“Generalisations” of history and time which she felt were imposed on the individual and which led to the incessant repetition of the traumatic past. As she says in “The Mark on the Wall,”

The tree outside the window taps very gently on the pane . . . [Woolf’s ellipsis] I want to think quietly, calmly, spaciouly, never to be interrupted, never to have to rise from my chair, to slip easily from one thing to another, without any sense of hostility, or obstacle. I want to sink deeper and deeper, away from the surface, with its hard separate facts. To steady myself, let me catch hold of the first idea that passes . . . [Woolf’s ellipsis] *Shakespeare*. . . . [Woolf’s ellipses] Well, he will do as well as another. A man who sat himself solidly in an arm-chair, and looked into the fire, so— A shower of ideas fell perpetually from some high Heaven down through his mind. He leant his forehead on his hand, and people, looking through the open door,—for this scene is supposed to take place on a summer’s evening— But how dull this is, this historical fiction! (*my emphasis*, 2144).

The trauma glorified by historical fiction and tragedy prevents characters, and prevented Woolf, from being free to express themselves. Woolf illustrates in “A Sketch of the Past” what the trauma of historical time did to her as a child:

Yet it is by such invisible presences that the “subject of this memoir” is tugged this way and that every day of his life; it is they that keep him in position. Consider what immense forces society brings to play upon each of us, how that society changes from decade to decade; and also from class to class; well, if we cannot analyze these *invisible presences*, we know very little of the subject of the memoir; and again how futile life-writing becomes. I see myself as a fish in a stream; deflected; held in place; but cannot describe the stream (*my emphasis ASP* 80).

The contradictory status Woolf finds herself in, like a fish unable to swim, unable to explain the social forces which hold her in place, recalls Mr. Ramsay’s own inability to understand why he disparaged Shakespeare. Woolf places a great deal of importance on analyzing the “invisible presences,” the class system which narrows life down to this vanishing present moment where the past has been lost but still lingers as a ghost and the fruitless struggle against the future looms ahead. It is only by digging to unearth the causes of the class system that she is also able to understand the trauma it inflicted on her. Woolf seems to have gleaned from Shakespeare a similar desire to transform the historical event which has caused trauma and loss into a positive aesthetic experience—by allowing the past to be re-experienced. In discussing her mother and writing *To The Lighthouse* she states,

It is perfectly true that she obsessed me, in spite of the fact that she died when I was thirteen, until I was forty-four. . . . But I wrote the book very quickly; and when it was written, I ceased to be obsessed with my mother. I no longer hear her voice; I do not see her (*ASP* 81).

Unwilling to investigate the “invisible presences” which caused his belief in the “progress of civilization,” Mr. Ramsay feels the deep solitude of the class system. It is this delusion of himself as the heroic figure, his “narrowness, his blindness” (46), as Mr. Bankes suggests, which keeps him from grasping what Woolf seems to have gleaned from Shakespeare—a skepticism about time, history, and civilization—and which leads him to exclaim that “The very stone one kicks with one’s boot will outlast Shakespeare” (35).

By contextualizing Woolf's allusions to Shakespeare we can see her argument against abstract time. Contextualizing Woolf's use of the tablecloth, on the other hand, reveals how the unbounded sense of space she experienced as a child is reduced to the symbolic space of marriage. Woolf refers to the tablecloth in the aforementioned passage<sup>182</sup> where she also mentions Shakespeare—"There was a rule for everything. The rule for tablecloths at that particular period was that they should be made of tapestry with little yellow compartments marked upon them." In *To The Lighthouse* when Lily is sitting at the dinner table and the solution to her painting flashes before her eyes: "In a flash she saw her picture, and thought, Yes, I shall put the tree further in the middle; and then I shall avoid that awkward space . . . She took up the salt cellar and put it down again on a flower in pattern in the table-cloth, so as to remind herself to move the tree" (84-85); and later as she recalls her painting, "She had been looking at the table-cloth, and it had flashed upon her that she would move the tree to the middle and need never marry anybody, and she had felt an enormous exaltation. She had felt, now she could stand up to Mrs. Ramsay. . . . Do this, she said, and one did it" (176)., the tablecloth comes to represent an unbounded sense of space which the rules of society disavow. Woolf, like Lily, sees the social space of marriage as alienating people from each other. This is apparent in the dinner scene of *To The Lighthouse* where "nothing seemed to have merged. They all sat separate" (83) at the dinner table. All the characters are disconnected from the fluid boundaries between the self and the world Woolf experienced as a child. She describes her childhood in "A Sketch of the Past" as surrounded by

vast empty places. How large for instance was the space beneath the nursery table! I see it still as a great black space with the *table-cloth* hanging down in folds on the outskirts in the distance; and myself roaming about there, and meeting Nessa. "Have black cats got tails?" she asked, and I said "NO", and was proud because she had asked me a question.

Then we roamed off again into that vast space (*my emphasis* 78).

Her sense of vastness imagines a playful self not bound by the symbolic conventions of space and time. It is only after suffering trauma that Woolf's experience of reality is inverted from an experience of time as a kind of vast space to time as an abstraction that she feels is imposed on her:

This is how I shape it; and how I see myself as a child, roaming about in that *space of time* which lasted from 1882 to 1895. A great hall I could liken it to; with windows letting in strange lights; and murmurs and spaces of deep silence. But somehow into that picture must be brought, too, the sense of movement and change. Nothing remained stable long. One must get the feeling of everything approaching and then disappearing, getting large, getting small, passing at different rates of speed past the little creature. One must get the feeling that made her press on, the little creature driven on as she was by growth of her legs and arms, driven without her being able to stop it, or to change it, driven as a plant is driven up out of the earth, up until the stalk grows, the leaf grows, buds swell. That is what is indescribable, that is what makes all images too static, for no sooner has one said this was so, that it was past and altered. How immense must be the force of life which

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<sup>182</sup> See note 177.

turns a baby, who can just distinguish a blot of blue and purple on a black background, into the child who thirteen years later can feel all that I felt on May 5th 1895—now almost exactly to a day, forty-four years ago—when my mother died (*my emphasis ASP* 79).

Echoing Einstein's idea of *spacetime*, Woolf offers a tantalizing picture of her childhood as a "space of time" in contrast to the repetition of the traumatic past, May 5th, 1895. This she develops through an interest in recuperating the vast space of the un-traumatized self by challenging the way space is experienced. Earlier in *To The Lighthouse*, Woolf contrasts the unadulterated experience of the child to the rigid boundaries of the socialized self. Woolf juxtaposes Prue's unbounded sense of space to the Ramsays' social space:

So that is marriage, Lily thought, a man and a woman looking at a girl throwing a ball. . . . And suddenly the meaning which, for no reason at all, as perhaps they are stepping out of the Tube or ringing a doorbell, descends upon people, making them symbolical, making them representative, came upon them, and made them in the dusk standing, looking, the symbols of marriage, husband and wife (72).

And in the next instance:

still, for one moment, there was a sense of things having been blown apart, of *space*, of irresponsibility as the ball soared high, and they followed it and lost it and saw the one star and the draped branches. In the failing light they all looked sharp-edged and ethereal and divided by great distances. Then, darting backwards over the *vast space* (for it seemed as if solidity had vanished altogether), Prue ran full tilt into them and caught the ball brilliantly high up in her left hand, and her mother said, "Haven't they come back yet?" whereupon the spell was broken. Mr. Ramsay felt free to laugh out loud at the thought that Hume had stuck in a bog and an old woman rescued him on condition he said the Lord's prayer, and chuckling to himself he strolled off to his study. Mrs. Ramsay, bring Prue back into throwing catches again, from which she had escaped, asked "Did Nancy go with them?" (*my emphasis* 73).

Prue represents a momentary respite from the symbolic space of marriage by "blowing apart" its perceived solidity. But Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay quickly fall back into the comfort of their social identities. This passage is also significant in light of Woolf's early childhood memory, which is characterized by large spaces:

Looking back, then, at Kensington Gardens, though I can recover incidents . . . I cannot recover, save by fits and starts, the focus, the proportions of the external world. It seems to me that a child must have a curious focus; it sees an air-ball or a shell with extreme distinctness; I still see the air-balls, blue and purple,<sup>183</sup> and the ribs on the shells; but these points are enclosed in vast empty spaces (*ASP* 78).

Woolf suggests that in gaining the symbolic status of marriage, a certain freedom is lost, as Mrs. Ramsay feels "When life snaked down for a moment, the range of experience seemed limitless. . . . There was freedom, there was peace" (62). It is this freedom which Lily fights for in the novel.

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<sup>183</sup> "blue and purple" air-balls are also part of Woolf's early childhood memory. See "A Sketch of the Past," 79.

Woolf's criticism of the "universal law" (50) of marriage and symbolic space in *To The Lighthouse* can also be seen in the next section (section 14, p.73) immediately after the scene with Prue where Mr. Ramsay recalls Hume being trapped in a bog. Nancy, who abhors the idea of marriage, "the horror of family life" (73), presents a threat to Mrs. Ramsay's adherence to the symbolic, which affords her some sense of meaning and identity in an otherwise meaningless existence:

Well then, Nancy had gone with them, Mrs. Ramsay supposed, wondering . . . whether the fact that Nancy was with them made it less likely or more likely that anything would happen; it made it less likely, somehow, Mrs. Ramsay felt, very irrationally, except that after all holocaust on such a scale was not probable. They could not all be drowned. And again she felt alone in the presence of her old antagonist, life (79).

The entire section (73-78) is set off by brackets, implying that the reality depicted there does not fit into the idea of continuity the Ramsays advocate. As if bracketed herself, Nancy stands outside, looking in at family life. When Minta sings the lines "Damn your eyes, damn your eyes" (74), we recognize that the establishment of marriage destroys the children's unadulterated way of looking at things. Thus when Minta holds Nancy's hand, Nancy sees

the whole world spread out beneath her, as if it were Constantinople seen through a mist, and then, however heavy-eyed one might be, one must needs ask, "Is that Santa Sofia?" "Is that the Golden Horn?" . . . Here and there emerged from the mist (as Nancy looked down upon life spread beneath her) a pinnacle, a dome; prominent things, without names (73-74).

This sense of boundlessness disappears as Minta leaves Nancy to join Paul to become a woman, which for Paul would be

far and away the worst moment of his life when he asked Minta to marry him. He would go straight to Mrs. Ramsay, because he felt somehow that she was the person who had made him do it. . . . He had felt her eyes<sup>184</sup> on him all day today, following him about (though she never said a word) as if she were saying, "Yes, you can do it. I believe in you. I expect it of you" (78).

Needless to say, Nancy sees the world from a vastly different perspective than Mrs. Ramsay: Brooding, she changed the pool into the sea, and made the minnows into sharks and whales, and cast vast clouds over this tiny world by holding her hand against the sun, and so brought darkness and desolation, like God himself, to millions of ignorant and innocent creatures, and then took her hand away and let the sun stream down. Out on the pale criss-crossed sand, high-stepping, fringed, gauntleted, stalked some fantastic leviathan (she was still enlarging the pool), and slipped into the vast fissures of the mountain side. And then, letting her eyes slide imperceptibly above the pool and rest on that wavering line of sea and sky, on the tree trunks which the smoke of steamers made waver upon the horizon, she became all that power sweeping savagely in and inevitably withdrawing, hypnotised, and the two scenes of that vastness and tininess (the pool had diminished again) flowering within it made her feel that she was bound hand and foot and

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<sup>184</sup> "Looking" as we saw in the first chapter, is an important aspect of the social; "the thought of royalty looking at them" orders individual experiences in the car scene.

unable to move by the intensity of feeling which reduced her own body, her own life, and the lives of all the people in the world, for ever, to nothingness. So listening to the waves, crouching over the pool, she brooded (75-76).

Nancy's ability to change her point of view so that she is looking at the earth and her life from a God-like perspective reveal the insignificance of the idea of linear time and symbolic space which structures Mrs. Ramsay's reality. Nancy does not fit into the causally ordered reality of the Ramsays, which explains why this section with the children at the beach is set off by brackets and essentially exists apart from the preceding and following sections. Still, Nancy's nihilistic self-exclusion from social life does not represent the solution to the problem of alienation for Woolf. Nancy's point of view resembles Mr. Ramsay's own self-appointed God-like perspective. Woolf, instead, finds art and creative labor as the antidote to the question of meaning. In her diary on June 1927 she wrote: "Now one stable moment vanquishes chaos. But this I said in *The Lighthouse*."<sup>185</sup> This statement recalls the power that creative labor has in overcoming the infinite, as we see in the Time Passes section with Mrs. McNab. For Lily, the question her painting presents is how to connect intimately with others in an otherwise meaningless and lonely existence: "Perished. Alone. The grey-green light on the wall opposite. The empty places. Such were some of the parts, but how to bring them together?," she asks (147).

Lily's painting, like Mrs. Ramsay's knitting, allows her to work through the trauma which has embedded itself in her body and mind and alienated her from herself and others. Trauma, which produces neurosis and obsessive behaviors, as it produced Woolf's obsession with the loss of her mother, can be overcome through a reconnection "with the everyday, material world and its recuperation is necessary in order . . . to overcome the experience of existential and epistemological crisis," Sim writes (153). Woolf suggests that Lily's conquest of the traumatic past begins through the body, when she picks up her paint brush and begins to paint:

She had taken the wrong brush in her agitation at Mr. Ramsay's presence, and her easel, rammed into the earth so nervously, was at the wrong angle. And now that she had put that right, and in so doing had subdued the impertinences and irrelevances that plucked her at attention and made her remember how she was such and such a person, had such and such relations to people, she took her hand and raised her brush. For a moment it stayed trembling in a painful but exciting ecstasy in the air. Where to begin?—that was the question at what point to make the first mark? One line placed on the canvas committed her to innumerable risks, to frequent and irrevocable decisions. All that in idea seemed simple became in practice immediately complex; as the waves shape themselves symmetrically from the cliff top, but to the swimmer among them are divided by steep gulfs, and foaming crests. Still the risk must be run; the mark made (157).

In "Time Passes," Woolf had already shown how Mrs. McNab and others are able to bring harmony to the chaos which surrounds them through their labor:

And now as if the cleaning and scrubbing and the scything and the mowing had drowned it there rose that half-hearted melody, that intermittent music which the ear half catches

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<sup>185</sup> From Gillian Beer, *Virginia Woolf: The Common Ground* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 46.

but lets fall; a bark, a bleat; irregular, intermittent, yet somehow related; the hum of an insect, the tremor of cut grass, dissevered yet somehow belonging (141).

As Lily gets into her work she attains a

dancing rhythmical movement, as if the pauses were one part of the rhythm and the strokes another, and all were related; and so lightly and swiftly pausing, striking, she scored her canvas with brown running nervous lines which had no sooner settled there than they enclosed (she felt it looming out at her) a space (158).

Woolf suggests that the real work of analyzing the past begins once Lily is able to overcome the surface level physical and mental paralysis inculcated on her by those who told her she “can’t paint, can’t write” (159). Lily has to confront her habituated feelings of self-doubt:

What was the good of doing it then, and she heard some voice saying she couldn’t paint, saying she couldn’t create, as if she were caught up in one of those habitual currents in which after a certain time experience forms in the mind, so that one repeats words without being aware any longer who originally spoke them (159).

The rhythmical nature of her creative labor allows Lily, like Mrs. Ramsay earlier, to enter into a creative and impersonal state where the distant past is able to rise to the surface, and she is able to confront it:

so that while her hand quivered with life, this rhythm was strong enough to bear her along with it on its current. Certainly she was losing consciousness of outer things. And as she lost consciousness of outer things, and her name and her personality and her appearance, and whether Mr. Carmichael was there or not, her mind kept throwing up from its depths, scenes, and names, and sayings, and memories and ideas, like a fountain spurting over that glaring, hideously difficult white space, while she modeled it with greens and blues (159).

As Woolf says in “A Sketch of the Past”:

The past only comes back when the present runs so smoothly that it is like the sliding of a deep river. Then one sees through the surface to the depths. In those moments I find one of my greatest satisfactions, not that I am thinking about the past; but that it is then that I am living most fully in the present. For the present when backed by the past is a thousand times deeper than the present when it presses so close that you can feel nothing else, when the film on the camera only reaches the eye. But to feel the present sliding over the depths of the past, peace is necessary. The present must be smooth, habitual (98).<sup>186</sup>

Woolf seeks to replace the “habitual currents” of neurosis with the habit of creative states of deep concentration. In doing so, Lily is able to come face-to-face with the causes of her self-alienation. As Lily continues to journey into her subconscious she encounters the aforementioned “scene on the beach . . . this moment of friendship and liking [with Charles Tansley]—which survived, after all these years complete . . . like a work of art” (160). Even though this scene reminds her of Mrs. Ramsay’s attempt to make of the “moment something permanent (as in another sphere Lily herself tried to make of the moment something permanent),” Lily approaches the solution to her painting from a religious angle—“What is the

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<sup>186</sup> See also Sim, 55.

meaning of life?” (161). The religious pursuit of meaning, as I argued in the first chapter, involves the process of abstracting from life a “temporary” moment of significance—“The great revelation had never come. The great revelation perhaps never did come,” states the narrator in this scene (161). Much like Crusoe, Lily’s search for permanence requires that she deconstruct the question of meaning. Lily has to stand outside of the values of social life—to have distance—in order to connect intimately with Mr. Ramsay and Mrs. Ramsay, which is the purpose of her painting. Part of this process seems to take place behind the scenes of the narrative (pages 162-170 shift to Mr. Ramsay, James and Cam sailing to the Lighthouse) as Lily “hoped nobody would open the window or come out of the house, but that she might be left alone to go on thinking, to go on painting. She turned to her canvas. But impelled by some curiosity, driven by the discomfort of the *sympathy* which she held undischarged... (*my emphasis* 161-162).

Lily’s emotional connection with Mr. Ramsay is not a matter of “sympathy,” as Jessica Berman observes.<sup>187</sup> The sympathy which Mr. Ramsay craves amounts to an act of self-sacrifice, as we saw in the first chapter. Mr. Ramsay in the boat imagines himself “desolate” and people sympathizing with him; staged for himself as he sat in the boat, a little drama; which required of him decrepitude and exhaustion and sorrow (he raised his hands and looked at the thinness of them, to confirm his dream) and then there was given him in abundance women’s sympathy, and he imagined how they would soothe him and sympathize with him, and so getting in his dream some reflection of the exquisite pleasures of women’s sympathy was to him, he sighed and said gently and mournfully

*But I beneath a rougher sea*

*Was whelmed in deeper gulfs than he, (166).*

The sense of alienation in Cowper’s poem, “The Castaway,”<sup>188</sup> that Mr. Ramsay recites is further accentuated by the preceding line from the poem which Woolf omits in this allusion, “We perish’d, each alone.”<sup>189</sup> This adds to Mr. Ramsay’s feeling of self-importance, as we saw in the first chapter, which places such a great emotional demand on his family, who must support him because he rejects his emotions (162-170), as well as on Lily—“The sympathy she had not given him weighed her down. It made it difficult to paint” (170). Lily’s painting, on the other hand, represents an attempt to find a different way of relating to Mr. Ramsay which does not require that she sacrifice herself to him. If she does not find another way, then she will only end up perpetuating the same kind of oppression he and society have imposed on her: “(But the war had drawn the sting of her femininity. Poor devils, one thought, poor devils, of both sexes)” (159). So it is difficult for her to refuse the distorted pleasures of sympathy. Berman, on the other hand, argues that Woolf postulates an ethical recognition of the “other” which then moves to the larger realm of community. As she states in her essay, “Ethical Folds: Ethics, Aesthetics, Woolf,”

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<sup>187</sup> Other references to sympathy in the novel occur on pages, 150-156, 166, 168, 170. It must be noted my attempt is to define Woolf’s definition of sympathy, which I understand, might contrast with how the term is defined in other realms of study.

<sup>188</sup> “William Cowper.” Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. *Wikimedia Foundation*. 22 July 2004. Web. 25 Aug 2014.

<sup>189</sup> Mr. Ramsay does quote the line on page 165.

our obligation towards subjectivity, or toward an other, always takes part in our obligation toward our community—they are folded into each other. The question of ethics, or of being-otherwise, verges towards the question of politics. . . . Woolf's work begins with the question of intimacy, of subject to subject relationships which forms the basis for ethical understanding.<sup>190</sup>

Berman, argues that Woolf, in compelling us to make an “imaginative leap toward that subject position . . . we understand the ethical demands placed upon us” (165). “Septimus's shell shock is everyone's shell shock; his war death engages us all in the confrontation with death and our responsibility for it,” Berman claims (169). But for Woolf, our experience of others does not begin ethically or imaginatively and then lead to the larger realm of the political because, I would argue, Woolf suggests the ethical is based on our projection of how we imagine the other is experiencing reality. In other words, we project our fantasies of subjectivity on others—seek affirmation for our feelings of self-lack—by imagining others how we imagine ourselves to be. This I discussed in the first chapter with Mr. Ramsay, Doris Kilman, and others subconscious projection of their self-sacrifice onto others. The other is sacrificed, impoverished, for our fleeting illusion of power. The dynamic of self-repression/oppression leads to imperialism and war. The inability to understand the self, have self-intimacy, is what prevents us from actually connecting intimately with others, as Lackey argued, and as we can see in Mr. Ramsay's case. Woolf shows his inability to acknowledge the feelings of his daughter, Cam:

He clutched his fingers, and determined that his voice and his face and all the quick expressive gestures which had been at his command making people pity him and praise him all these years should subdue themselves. He would make her smile at him. He would find some simple thing to say to her. But what? For, wrapped up in his work as he was, he forgot the sort of thing one said. There was a puppy. They had a puppy. Who was looking after the puppy today? he asked (167-168).

Woolf implies that Mr. Ramsay fails to understand his daughter's feelings because he is not in touch with his own: “he could not understand the state of mind of any one” (167). This suggests, as against Berman, that the recognition of others begins through a process of self-knowledge. It begins in the first place by investigating the political forces which alienate us from ourselves and others. In achieving self-knowledge, characters like Lily and Mrs. Ramsay are able to experience a sense of intimacy and community not mediated by politics. For politics, instead of joining us together as Berman argues, only serves to keep us further apart. The political is a fabricated opposition, a symptom of self-alienation, which only distances us further from ourselves and others. Woolf's common ground acknowledges the fundamental humanity of “others” (this is its starting point—we do not recognize it by sympathizing with Septimus's shell shock), while also gesturing at the larger political and social forces which seek to suppress characters' capacity to relate to others empathically, or through other senses. Only by understanding the forces that separate her from others and alienate her from herself is Lily able to relate to Mr. Ramsay, not sympathetically in an “imaginative leap,” but emphatically, as Woolf was able to relate to her mother and father after investigating the “invisible presences” of the

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<sup>190</sup> Berman, *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol. 50, Num 1, (Spring 2004), 170.



class system. It is through her painting that Lily is able to free herself from the past to connect intimately with Mrs. Ramsay and in turn “to give him [Mr. Ramsay]” (208)<sup>191</sup>, an “intimacy which is knowledge.” Woolf’s comment, in her letters, that we must “leave the ivory tower of ethics (*Letters*: 414)” gestures at the need for other ways of experiencing intimacy with others than through the mediated forms of the intellectual. Woolf seeks a more direct form of intimacy.

The creative labor that a novel like *To The Lighthouse* encourages has the potential to liberate us from the impoverished limits of our capitalistic imagination—how we relate to ourselves and others. Lily’s painting, like Woolf’s work, requires for a critical contextualization of certain words and also seeks to elicit an “unconscious” response from the reader. By understanding how Woolf uses color, we can understand how Woolf, Lily and readers of the novel experience the passage of time and space. As Lily continues to paint, colors begin to take on a synesthetic quality which allows her to connect to the past:

she began to lay on a red, a grey, and she began to model her way into the hollow there. *At the same time*, she seemed to be sitting beside Mrs. Ramsay on the beach.

“Is it a boat? Is it a cask?” Mrs. Ramsay said. And she began hunting around for her spectacles. And she sat, having found them, silent, looking out to sea. And Lily, painting steadily, felt as if a door had opened, and one went in and stood gazing silently about in a high cathedral-like place, very dark, very solemn. Shouts came from a world far away. Steamers vanished in stalks of smoke on the horizon. Charles threw stones and sent them skipping (*my emphasis*) (171).

This passage suggests that the rhythmical quality of work opens the door to the past for Lily, an experience reminiscent of Woolf’s own vision of her mother being “in the centre of a great Cathedral space which was childhood (*ASP* 81). The past is not something Lily only remembers, but actually re-experiences. When she begins to “lay on a red,” the narrator states that “At the same time, she seemed to be sitting beside Mrs. Ramsay on the beach.” Lily’s use of red in this passage is, I think, an allusion to the Doppler Effect,<sup>192</sup> whereby stars that are moving farther away from earth are perceived as red in color. Thus, while Lily is sitting next to Mrs. Ramsay, Woolf uses the color red to indicate that Mrs. Ramsay, the married woman, is moving further away from Lily as she develops a greater intimacy with the “real” Mrs. Ramsay. The idea that Mrs. Ramsay “recedes further and further from us” (174) is connected on the next page with what I take to be Woolf’s allusion to red shifted stars: “(Suddenly, as suddenly as a star slides into the sky, a reddish light seemed to burn in her mind, covering Paul Rayley, issuing from him. It rose like a fire sent up in token of some celebration by savages on a distant beach. She heard the roar and the crackle...)” (175). This scene stands out in part because of how Woolf uses color to suggest a different way of looking at how Lily is experiencing the past and because it follows Woolf’s pattern of bracketing scenes which do not fit into the linear idea of time, as with Nancy’s section. The idea that the past can be re-experienced is further suggested by the line, “She heard the roar and crackle” of “savages” from the distant past. The idea that Lily uses colors to designate a temporal and emotional experience is also addressed by Sim, who claims

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<sup>191</sup> See also, 150: “She would give him what she could.”

<sup>192</sup> “Redshift.” Wikipedia: The Online Encyclopedia. *Wikimedia Foundation*. 9 November 2013 at 1:54.

that Woolf's use of color in her short essay "'Walter Sickert' makes explicit [how] 'different people see colours differently,' and common-sense statements such as 'The grass is green' or 'The sky is blue' may not have captured what it was to talk about colour in Britain in the 1920's (CE2, 234; O, 70)" (77). Sim goes on, "Through its experimental form, [Woolf's essay] "Blue & Green" disrupts practical and habituated responses to color and challenges the reader to stop and reflect creatively upon its associative nature and emotional effects" (77). Thus for Woolf, I think, the relationship between characters takes on the form of color. Color becomes an emotional space; it is experienced by the reader as a relation in *spacetime*. Sim also situates Woolf's use of color in relation to the philosopher G.E. Moore. Woolf's essay, "Blue & Green," Sim writes, "unravels a key assumption of Moore's argument; that the words 'blue' and 'green' refer to a universal thing at all (whether that thing be an independent object or a universal idea)" (70). And later she says, "Woolf encourages the reader, contra Moore, to experience colour not habitually, 'like this' (E4, 160), but imaginatively, associatively and emotionally" (75). Sim's interesting ideas on Woolf's use of color complement my suggestion that the universal ideas of time and space might not be as infallible as we believe they are. Sim further states that

In her reflection on colour, Woolf expresses an interest in the ways in which we represent our experiences of colour in language and what it might be that the proper name of a colour actually refers to. This is connected to her interest in her relationship between writing and painting (71).<sup>193</sup>

Sim's comments recall Woolf's own description of herself in "A Sketch of the Past," as "painting herself." If language fails to describe the self then maybe there are other ways of experiencing others and by extension, reality. (This recalls Woolf's re-appropriation of philosophical categories like "being," "non-being," and the "thing-itself"). Lily is thus compelled to ask a series of questions as she re-experiences Mrs. Ramsay as if in the present:

Mrs. Ramsay sat silent. She was glad, Lily thought, to rest in silence, uncommunicative; to rest in the extreme obscurity of human relationships. Who knows what we are, what we feel? Who knows even at the moment of intimacy, This is knowledge? Aren't things spoilt then, Mrs. Ramsay may have asked (it seemed to have happened often, this silence by her side) by saying them? Aren't we more expressive thus? The moment at least seemed extraordinarily fertile. She rammed a little hole in the sand and covered it up, by way of burying in it the perfection of the moment. It was like a drop of *silver* in which one dipped and illuminated the darkness of the past (*my emphasis* 171-172).

This scene recalls Mrs. Ramsay's moment of illumination as she held the stocking in her hand and identified with the light which to her seemed "as if it were stroking like *silver* fingers some sealed vessel in her brain whose bursting would flood her with delight," for she had known happiness, exquisite happiness, intense happiness, and it silvered the rough waves a little more brightly, as daylight faded, and the blue went out of the sea and it rolled in waves of pure lemon which curved and swelled and broke upon the beach and

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<sup>193</sup> See also, 70-78.

the ecstasy burst in her eyes and waves of pure delight raced over the floor of her mind and she felt, It is enough! It is enough! (*my emphasis* 65).

The color silver connects Lily and Mrs. Ramsay together emotionally across *spacetime* in ways that language and speech fails to do so. The identification of silver with the beam of light which Mrs. Ramsay “saw bent across their bed” (65) recalls Einstein’s thought experiments regarding the re-experiencing of the past. Lily’s painting, like Mrs. Ramsay’s knitting, has the capacity to foster a moment of intimacy which changes one’s relationship to the world one lives in—“for when one woke at all, one’s relations changed” (64), Mrs. Ramsay says. The recalibration of how one experiences space and time allows Mrs. Ramsay and Lily to reconnect with their creative and embodied selves. It is these moments of intimacy which art conveys for Woolf and which have the quality of permanence: “In the midst of chaos there was shape” (161). They can be shared when abstract language and symbols fail. Lily’s friendship with Charles is one example:

this scene on the beach for example, this moment of friendship and liking—which survived, after all these years complete, so that she dipped into it to re-fashion her memory of him, and there it stayed in the mind affecting one almost like a work of art. “Like a work of art,” she repeated (161).

This passage recalls Woolf’s comments in “A Sketch of the Past,” in which she states that “we are the words; we are the music; we are the *thing itself*.” The work of art can help us discover our creative nature.

To better understand Lily and Woolf’s own Post-Impressionistic<sup>194</sup> aesthetic in *To The Lighthouse*, it is important to distinguish what Woolf’s good friend and artistic critic Roger Fry calls the artistic vision from the creative vision. Fry’s artistic vision can be defined as that vision which attempts to depict an object as an end in itself. Art exists for its own sake; it has no value outside the pleasure it gives the viewer. In the artistic vision, the artist is concerned with the harmony between form and color. As Fry explains in *Vision and Design*, the artist “may be intensely realistic . . . Or he may give us the merest suggestion of natural forms, and rely almost entirely upon the force and intensity of the emotional elements involved in his presentment.”<sup>195</sup> The point of the artistic vision is to elicit emotions which will compel the viewer to sympathize with artist’s representation of an idea of form (Fry 50). By detaching the object, a pot for example, from “considerations of space or time” (Fry 50), the artist gives us a more realistic representation of the pot, allows us to contemplate the form of the pot we would not have otherwise been able to experience because of the demands of practical life. Fry cites Picasso as an example of the artist who does “not seek to imitate form, but to create form; not to imitate life but to find an equivalent for life” (Fry 239). Lily’s own artistic struggle with form has a similar aim:

Other worshipful objects were content with worship; men, women, God, all let one kneel prostrate: but this form, were it only the shape of a white lamp-shade looming on a

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<sup>194</sup> See also Sim, 63.

<sup>195</sup> Roger Fry, *Vision and Design*. (New York: Brentano’s, 1924), 38.

wicker table, roused one to perpetual combat, challenged one to a fight in which one was bound to be worsted (158).

Instead of other worshipful objects, Lily is interested in seeing Mrs. Ramsay as a real person not that “essence which sat by the boat, that abstract one made of her” (158). Lily’s conversation with Mr. Bankes regarding what she meant by the “triangular purple shape” (52), which stands for Mrs. Ramsay and James, exemplifies the artistic vision. As Lily says, “She knew his objection—that no one could tell it for a human shape. But she had made no attempt at likeness” (52).<sup>196</sup>

On the other hand, the creative vision requires a further detachment from the exigencies of convention. Fry defines the creative vision as

the most complete detachment from any meanings and implications of appearances . . . as he [the artist] contemplates the particular field of vision, the (aesthetically) chaotic and accidental conjunction of forms and colours begin to crystalize into a harmony; as this harmony becomes clear to the artist, his actual vision becomes distorted by the emphasis of the rhythm which has been set up within him. Certain relations of directions of line become for him full of meaning; he apprehends them no longer casually or merely curiously, but passionately, and these lines begin to be so stressed and stand out so clearly from the rest that he sees them far more distinctly than he did at first. Similarly colours, which in nature have almost a certain vagueness and elusiveness, become definite and clear to him, owing to their now necessary relation to other colors (51).

For Lily, the “relations of masses, of lights and shadows . . . was a question, she remembered, how to connect this mass on the right hand with that on the left,” portrays this relationship as a geometric relationship of lines and colors. Alluding to Fry, Sim aligns Woolf’s aesthetic with his concepts of the artistic and creative visions, saying,

To varying degrees, both the artistic and the creative vision involve the apprehension of the relation between forms and colours as they are present in the object, and this apprehension necessitates the detachment of the object from its surrounding reality— of space and time - and any other meanings or implications of the object’s practical appearance. This detachment from reality, or “disinterestedness”, is central to Fry’s and also Clive Bell’s theory of the aesthetic emotion (49).

Jane Goldman suggests that Fry and Bell “increasingly understood art in relation to the classical notion of disinterestedness . . . By 1912, Bell and Fry wanted to present Post-Impressionism as a movement interested in “pure emotion” and free of literary, social, political, and historical associations.”<sup>197</sup> Along with the artist’s treatment of the object, Bell and Fry also advocated for the aesthetics of “Significant Form,”

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<sup>196</sup> Woolf seems to allude to her friendship with Fry in *To The Lighthouse*: “Thanks to his [Mr. Bankes] scientific mind he understood—a proof of disinterested intelligence which had pleased her and comforted her enormously. One could talk of painting then seriously to a man. Indeed, his friendship had been one of the pleasures of her life. She loved William Bankes” (176).

<sup>197</sup> From Sim, 64.

a phrase coined by Clive Bell in his book *Art* (1914), [which] sought to define the “common quality” in objects capable of eliciting aesthetic emotions: “In each, lines and colours combined in a particular way, certain forms and relations of forms, stir our aesthetic emotions . . . ‘Significant Form’ is the one quality common to all works of visual art.”<sup>198</sup>

And Berman also states that

“Significant Form” as an aesthetic principle becomes in many ways synonymous with Kantian conceptions of disinterested beauty. The realist distinction lies not in the conception of the aesthetic object itself—like Kant they focus on form as the immediately apprehensible aspect of aesthetic beauty—but in the process and source of aesthetic judgment. Thus if Kant claims that the pleasure of the form of an object is only produced by the process of reflection and judgment (which is separate from sensation) (*Critique of Judgment* 27), the realists argue that the form of a perceived object directly ignites aesthetic emotions (156).

Kant’s and Fry’s ideas can be seen in Lily’s conversation with Mr. Bankes, as we have already seen. In their exchange before her painting, the similarity between Fry’s and Bell’s ideas and Mr. Bankes’ are apparent:

She did not intend to disparage the subject which, they agreed, Raphael had treated divinely. She was not cynical. Quite the contrary. Thanks to his scientific mind he understood a proof of *disinterested intelligence* which had pleased her and comforted her enormously. One could talk of painting then seriously to a man (*my emphasis* 176).

The reference to Raphael seems to be an allusion to his various depictions of the “Madonna and Child”—also Lily’s subject matter. The parallel between Raphael’s abstract and idealized representations and Lily’s painting is confirmed when Lily sees how Mr. Bankes imagines Mrs. Ramsay:

She saw through William’s eyes, the shape of a woman, peaceful, silent, with downcast eyes. She sat musing, pondering (she was in grey that day, Lily thought). Her eyes were bent. She would never lift them. Yes, thought Lily, looking intently, I must have seen her look like that, but not in grey; nor so still; nor so young, nor so peaceful. The figure came readily enough. She was astonishingly beautiful, as William said. But beauty was not everything. Beauty had this penalty—it came too readily, came too completely. It stilled life—froze it. One forgot the little agitations; the flush, the pallor, some queer distortion, some light or shadow, which made the face unrecognizable for a moment and yet added a quality one saw for ever after (177).

Lily’s painting is unequivocally indebted to Fry’s later theories on art. As her conversation with Mr. Bankes reveals, Fry’s ideas helped Woolf understand the emotions she wanted to represent. If Mr. Bankes’ “disinterested intelligence” exemplifies Fry’s early aesthetic theories, it is Fry’s later work in *Vision and Design*, which heavily influenced Woolf.<sup>199</sup> Woolf wanted to appeal to

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<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>199</sup> *Vision and Design* was published in 1917 and *To The Lighthouse*, in 1927, so we can imagine both Woolf and Fry discussing their ideas on art like she portrays Lily and Mr. Bankes doing.

the particular, individual emotions of her characters and evidence suggests she took her cue from Fry who seems to have exposed her to contemporary post-impressionist art an older tradition of painters. Lily's description of her painting and interest in how to connect the different spaces between characters echoes Fry's description of Matisse: "In opposition to Picasso who is pre-eminently plastic, Matisse aims at convincing us of the reality of his forms by the continuity and flow of his rhythmic line, by the logic of his space relations, and above all, by an entirely new use of colour" (Fry 240). Lily's use of a triangle to depict Mrs. Ramsay can be traced to the work of Picasso and the Post-Impressionists, but Lily's painting also harkens back to an older tradition.

The psychological depth which Lily's Post-Impressionist painting is trying to achieve with its play between light and shadow follows in the footsteps of the High Renaissance painters, specifically Leonardo Da Vinci. Both Raphael (176) and Michelangelo—cf. the "authenticated masterpiece by Michael Angelo" (30) Mrs. Ramsay throws the green shawl over—are mentioned in *To The Lighthouse*, indicative of the importance of the old masters for Woolf.<sup>200</sup> But it is Leonardo's interest in the science of light which leaves an indelible mark on Woolf's description of Lily's attempt to capture the psychological effect of lights and shadows. We can see it in her conversation with Mr. Bankes:

But she had made no attempt at likeness, she said. For what reason had she introduced them then? he asked. Why indeed?—except that if there, in that corner, it was bright, here, in this, she felt the need of darkness.

But the picture was not of them, she said, Or, not in his sense. There were *other senses* too in which one might reverence them. By a shadow here and a light there, for instance. Her tribute took that form if, as she vaguely supposed, a picture must be a tribute. A mother and child might be reduced to a shadow without irreverence. A light here required a shadow there (*my emphasis*, 52-53).

Lily's notion that there were "other senses" in which Mrs. Ramsay and her son could be seen was evident in Lily's use of the color red. And her use of light and shadow in this passage seems to be a reference to Da Vinci's own use of light and shadow to represent consciousness. In *Vision and Design*, Fry discusses Da Vinci's interest in the use of light to depict psychological states:

It was his almost prophetic vision of the possibilities of psychology which determined more than anything else the lines of his work. In the end almost everything was subordinated to the idea of a kind of psychological illustration of dramatic themes—an illustration which was not arrived at by an instinctive reconstruction from within, but by deliberate analytic observation. Now in so far as the movements of the soul could be interpreted by movements of the body as a whole, the new material might lend itself readily to plastic construction, but the minuter and even more psychologically significant movements of facial expression demanded a treatment which hardly worked for aesthetic unity. It involved a new use of light and shade, which in itself tended to break down the fundamental division of design. . . . Michelangelo, to some extent, and Raphael still more, did, of course, do much to re-establish a system of design on an enlarged basis

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<sup>200</sup> Da Vinci is mentioned by Woolf in *An Unwritten Novel* and in "The Modern Essay" *Virginia Woolf: A Woman's Essays*. Ed. Rachel Bowlby. (New York: Penguin, 1992), 42..

which would admit of some of Leonardo's new content, but one might hazard the speculation that European art has hardly yet recovered from the shock which Leonardo's passion for psychological illustration delivered (184-185).

It is this veiled allusion to Da Vinci's work which explains Lily's comment, "some queer distortion, some light or shadow, which made the face unrecognisable for a moment yet added a quality one saw for ever after." Fry thus describes art as "one of the chief organs of what, for want of a better word, I must call the spiritual life. It both stimulates and controls those indefinable overtones of the material life of man which all of us at moments feel to have a quality of permanence and reality that does not belong to the rest of our experience" (55). Both Da Vinci and Woolf disregarded the surface quality of beauty; instead, they tried to capture the hidden aspects of personality and they resorted to the discoveries of science to complete their vision. Sue Roe cites Kenneth Clark, who "has identified as characteristic of Leonardo the fact that 'his love of fantastic effects [of light] is united with a scientific desire to describe accurately an actual scene (*Landscape into Art*, pp. 55-6): we may see Virginia Woolf, throughout the short stories, drawing on and echoing this."<sup>201</sup> Woolf, like Da Vinci, employs her own scientific understanding of light and color to accurately depict Lily's psychological process. Woolf uses light and shadow, and different colors to depict the contradictions which make up Lily's emotional life. Woolf thus uses the color red, for example, to show how Lily is simultaneously freeing herself from Mrs. Ramsay's influence at the same time as she encounters her own childish reactions and early emotions:

Mrs. Ramsay has faded and gone, she thought. We can over-ride her wishes. She recedes further and further from us. Mockingly she seemed to see her there at the end of the corridor of years saying, of all incongruous things, 'Marry, marry! . . . And one would have to say to her, It has all gone against your wishes (174-175).

And as Mrs. Ramsay recedes farther away, a "reddish light seemed to burn in her mind [Lily's], covering Paul Rayley," and Lily "felt again her own headlong desire to throw herself off the cliff and be drowned looking for a pearl brooch on a beach" (175). Roe aligns Woolf with the tradition of the "post-impressionists [who] wished to depict a vision of simultaneity which would show the shifting uncertainties within the human psyche which move us from - for example - bliss to despair and back again" (179).

Woolf's own idea of herself as a painter when describing her pattern and early childhood memories reflects the importance which she places on light and colors to introduce a different way of experiencing the self and our relations with others. In his *Paragone* of 1270, Da Vinci prefaces Woolf's notion of "using other senses":

[Music], when setting her suave melodies in rhythmic divisions of time, composes them in various voices. But the poet is debarred from such harmonious discrimination of voices; and although poetry like music entered through the ear to the seat of understanding, he is unable to give an equivalent of musical harmony, because it is beyond his power to say different things simultaneously as the painter does in his harmonious proportions when component parts are made to react simultaneously and can

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<sup>201</sup> Sue Roe. "The Impact of Post-Impressionism," *A Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, ed. Sue Roe and Susan Sellers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 176.

be seen at one and the same time both together and separately; together, by viewing the design of the composition as a whole, and separately, by viewing the design of its component parts. For these reasons the poet ranks far below the painter in the representation of visible things, and far below the musician in that of invisible things.<sup>202</sup> Similarly, we can read *To The Lighthouse* as Woolf's canvas, blending together of different perceptual registers as she paints with colors that are simultaneously seen and felt by the reader. In discussing Da Vinci, Fry observes how "It was after all a Florentine who made the best prophecy of the results of modern aesthetic when he said: 'Finally, good painting is a music and a melody which intellect can only appreciate and that with difficulty'" (185). The psychological process which Woolf depicts through Lily's painting, like her own "self-portraits," seeks to convey not just an intellectual experience but also an emotional one which she re-locates in the body:

And she wanted to say not one thing, but everything. Little words that broke up the thought and dismembered it said nothing. "About life, about death; about Mrs. Ramsay"—no, she thought, one could say nothing to nobody. The urgency of the moment always missed its mark. Words fluttered sideways and struck the object inches too low. Then one gave it up; then the idea sunk back again; then one became like most middle-aged people, cautious, furtive, with wrinkles between the eyes and a look of perpetual apprehension. For how could one express in words these emotions of the body? express that emptiness there? (She was looking at the drawing-room steps; they looked extraordinarily empty.) It was one's body feeling, not one's mind. The physical sensations that went with the bare look of the steps had become suddenly extremely unpleasant. To want and not to have, sent all up her body a hardness, a hollowness, a strain. And then to want and not to have—to want and want—how that wrung in her heart, and wrung it again and again! Oh, Mrs. Ramsay! she called out silently, to that essence which sat by the boat, that abstract one made of her, that woman in grey, as if to abuse her for having gone and then having gone, come back again (178).

By re-locating emotional experience in the body, Woolf aligns her ideas of recovering the past with Einstein's ideas of *spacetime*. Recovering the past is as much an experience of the body as of the mind. Fry exposed Woolf to the problem of form, and the scientific innovations of Da Vinci, and her interest in Einstein's theories, influenced her use of color, light and shadow. In her biography of Fry she discusses how in Fry's "later years," "a balance seemed to have been arrived at—a balance between the emotions and the intellect, between Vision and Design,"<sup>203</sup> implying that he had relied too much on design at the expense of the emotional life in his early years. Woolf uses color to appeal to the psychological, but behind this exists a scientific context, *design*, encouraged by Fry, which grounds her ideas. Lily's painting is such an example:

Beautiful and bright it should be on the surface, feathery and evanescent, one colour melting into another like the colours of a butterfly's wing; but beneath the fabric must be

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<sup>202</sup> Leonardo Da Vinci, *Paragone; A Comparison of the Arts*, trans. Irma A. Richter (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1949), 79.

<sup>203</sup> Woolf, *Roger Fry: A Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 245.



clamped together with bolts of iron. It was to be a thing you could ruffle with your breath; and a thing you could not dislodge with a team of horses (171).

By understanding the science behind the red and blue Doppler effects, Woolf's arguments against space and time, and her interest in Da Vinci, etc, allows us to grasp the emotional significance Woolf assigns to colors and how they help Lily to solve the "problem of space" (171).<sup>204</sup> Lily's painting acts as a template for our own pattern making, making connections in *spacetime*. Woolf further experiments with color: Lily "dipped into the blue paint, she dipped too into the past there. Now Mrs. Ramsay got up, she remembered" (172). While Woolf uses red to represent stars moving farther away, blue shifted light is emitted by stars moving closer to the observer. The color blue is another way in which Lily is able to re-experience the past. While red represents Mrs. Ramsay the married woman moving farther away, blue designates Lily's distance from social conventions that allow her to see things more clearly, which then afford her an emotional closeness with Mrs. Ramsay and makes the past a present "now." Woolf's use of free-indirect discourse and the deictic in "Now Mrs. Ramsay got up," produces the fleeting sensation that Mrs. Ramsay actually stands up in the present while the past tense of the parenthetical "she remembered," marks it as a past event (*my emphasis* 171). This stylistic conflation of past and present further accentuates Lily's use of blue. Like "red," "blue" is also simultaneously a visual and emotional space for Lily in *spacetime*. Lily creates a similar intimacy a few pages later when the Ramsays' journey to the lighthouse becomes part of her painting: "moved as she was by some instinctive need of distance and blue," Lily sees the Ramsays' boat as a "brown spot in the middle of the bay" (182). Through this distant perspective that blue affords, Lily is able to nullify the trauma of the war and bring the individual members of the Ramsay family closer to themselves and their environment:

the cliffs looked as if they were conscious of the ships, and the ships looked as if they were conscious of the cliffs, as if they signaled to each other some message of their own. For sometimes quite close to the shore, the Lighthouse looked this morning in the haze an enormous distance away.

"Where are they now" Lily thought, looking out to sea. Where was he, that very old man who had gone past her silently, holding a brown paper parcel under his arm? The boat was in the middle of the bay.

The next section switches to the perspective of Cam and James in the boat:

They don't feel a thing there, Cam thought, looking at the shore, which, rising and falling, became steadily more distant and more peaceful. Her hand cut a trail in the sea, as her mind made the green swirls and streaks into *patterns* and, numbed and shrouded, wandered in imagination in that underworld of waters where pearls stuck in clusters to white sprays, where in green light a change came over one's entire mind and one's body shone half transparent enveloped in a green cloak . . . .

Everything became close to one. For the sail, upon which James had his eyes fixed until it had become to him like a person whom he knew, sagged entirely; there they came to a

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<sup>204</sup> It may not be a coincidence that Woolf uses red and blue to describe Lily's psychological process. Both colors fall on the opposite side of the visible spectrum, which acts as a metaphor for the range of emotional experiences Woolf is trying to portray.

stop, flapping about waiting for a breeze, in the hot sun, miles from shore, miles from the Lighthouse. Everything in the whole world seemed to stand still. The Lighthouse became immovable, and the line of the distant shore became fixed. The sun grew hotter and everybody seemed to come close together and to feel each other's presence, which they had almost forgotten (*my emphasis* 182-183)

The sense of distance we get from Lily's point of view produces the effect for the reader of seeing Lily's painting hanging on the wall with the boat in the middle of the bay, but Cam's perspective produces the simultaneous effect of collapsing the space between her and Lily. Both perceiver and perceived share the same space. Lily's painting is not two-dimensional but combines different emotional spaces together, an effect Cam is able to achieve through her patterns. This is represented by the fluid boundaries of Cam's green, which also recall the earlier scene where Mrs. Ramsay takes the "green shawl off the picture frame [the picture of Michael Angelo], and gone to him. For he wished, she knew, to protect her" (65). Mrs. Ramsay sacrifices herself to Mr. Ramsay in this scene but the damage is done. Her creative labor removes the veil of the "cotton wool," just like she removes the shawl from Michael Angelo's painting, which allows her to "see" Mr. Ramsay clearly. Thus in this passage, green is portrayed as an "underworld of waters" where "one's entire mind and one's body shone half transparent" (183). Mr. Carmichael, with his "smoky vague green eyes," (178) (we can imagine reality dissolving into them), embodies the idea of a much vaster sense of space and time, and blurred boundaries between the past and present and between others, which Lily is trying to accomplish with her painting (as Mrs. Ramsay does with her dinner party), as she attempts to bring the Ramsays' closer together:

For the whole world seemed to have dissolved in this early morning hour into a pool of thought, a deep basin of reality, and one could almost fancy that had Mr. Carmichael spoken, for instance, a little tear would have rent the surface pool (179).

Lily's use of green characterizes Woolf's "pattern" (represented by the darkness Lily, Mrs. Ramsay, and Cam experience), depicted as the conflation of the vast and the immediate, the large and the small. Woolf thus uses blue and red to describe the psychological journey Lily undertakes in order to achieve the shared intimacy of green. Woolf illustrates this process in the pages of the novel as she places Lily's blue sea next to Cam's green swirls (188-189):

(The sea without a stain in it, thought Lily Briscoe, still standing and looking out over the bay. The sea stretched like silk across the bay. Distance had an extraordinary power; they had been swallowed up in it, she felt, they were gone for ever, they had become part of the nature of things. It was so calm; it was so quiet. The steamer itself had vanished, but the great scroll of smoke still hung in the air and drooped like a flag mournfully in valediction) (188).

The implied distance of blue also shows how Lily mourns the death of the social family. The brackets mark the distancing effect from the social—the thing itself before it has been made anything—of the color blue Lily is trying to achieve, but they also accentuate our own relationship with color in the novel. In the next section, we see the effect of Cam's pattern:

But with the sea streaming through her fingers . . . all had slipped, all had passed, all had streamed away. What then came next? Where were they going? From her hand, ice cold, held deep in the sea, there sputtered up a fountain of joy at the change, at the adventure

(that she should be alive, that she should be there). And the drops falling from this sudden and unthinking fountain of joy fell here and there on the dark, the slumbrous shapes in her mind; shapes of a world not realized but turning in *darkness*, catching here and there a spark of light; Greece, Rome, Constantinople (*my emphasis* 188-189).

Woolf's juxtaposition of blue and green provides a visual metaphor for the reader of Lily and Cam's psychological process. Woolf makes the process of creating "patterns" across *spacetime* a visual experience for the reader.<sup>205</sup> In this way she follows Da Vinci's work on light. Cam's green, like Mrs. Ramsay's green shawl, blurs spatial and temporal boundaries as she connects with her mother's own sense of darkness and adventure: the "spark of light" recalls Mrs. Ramsay "pushing aside a thick leather curtain of a church in Rome." It is this intimacy with her mother which has the capacity to subdue chaos and compels Cam in the next line to ask, "Small as it was, and shaped something like a leaf stood on its end with the gold-sprinkled waters flowing in and about it, it had, she supposed, a place in the universe—even that little island?" (189). The supreme value of the gold stands out here since it expresses the culmination of a journey Cam undergoes. The effect of "blue" becomes further dramatized:

So much depends then, thought Lily Briscoe, looking at the sea which had scarcely a stain on it, which was so soft that the sail and the clouds seemed set in blue, so much depends, she thought, upon distance: whether people are near us or far from us; for her feeling for Mr. Ramsay changed as he sailed further and further across the bay. It seemed elongated, stretched out; he seemed to become more and more remote. He and his children seemed to be swallowed up in that blue, that distance; but here, on the lawn, close at hand, Mr. Carmichael suddenly grunted (191).

Woolf uses blue to play on the irony regarding the poet Mr. Carmichael, whose work was "extremely impersonal; it said something about death. There was an impersonality about him" (195) but who nevertheless could "hear the things she could not say" (179); "who seemed (though they had not said a word all this time) to share her [Lily's] thoughts" (194); and who at the end of the novel is depicted as being able to think what Lily is thinking (208). The pairing of Lily's blue with Mr. Carmichael's green suggests that distance from the conventional ways of looking for Lily and reader allows for a perception of the fluid reality behind appearances:

She seemed to be standing up to the lips in some substance, to move and float and sink in it, yes, for these waters were unfathomably deep. Into them had spilled so many lives. The Ramsays'; the children's; and all sorts of waifs and strays of things besides. A washerwoman with her basket; a rook; a red-hot poker; the purples and grey-greens of flowers: some common feeling held the whole together.

It was some such feeling of completeness perhaps which, ten years ago, standing almost where she stood now, had made her say that she must be in love with the place. Love had a thousand shapes. There might be loves whose gift it was to choose out the

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<sup>205</sup> Woolf has already attempted a similar experiment in her essay "Blue & Green." Sim notes that "In the original Hogarth edition of *Monday or Tuesday*, the two sketches have the appearance of paintings, as the paragraphs are almost square and are positioned in the centre of two pages opposite one another. Thus, both in terms of their spatialization and content, they resemble paintings hanging in a gallery" (See Figure 1), 72-73.

elements of things and place them together and so, giving them a wholeness not theirs in life, make some scene, or meeting people (all now gone and separate)...(192).

Lily's painting is an attempt to bring the different members of the Ramsay family closer together by seeing through the appearances of their social selves and undoing the division between body and mind inculcated by Western reality.

Woolf's conflation of "thinking" and "seeing," of mind and body in the last chapter, seeks to undermine the division set up by the subject-object problem. Lily experiences the Lighthouse as having "melted away into a blue haze, and the effort of *looking* at it and the effort of *thinking* of him landing there, which both seemed to be one and the same effort, had stretched her *body* and *mind* to the utmost" (208). This line is significant in light of an earlier passage where she shares a connection with Mrs. Ramsay: "What did the hedge mean to her, what did the garden mean to her? (Lily looked up, as she had seen Mrs. Ramsay look up; she too heard a wave falling to the beach)" (198). This bracketed scene is followed shortly after with her sense that Mrs. Ramsay is sitting next to her as she paints:

And then, quietly, as if she refrained, that too became part of ordinary experience, was on level with the chair, with the table. Mrs. Ramsay—it was part of her perfect goodness—*sat there* quite simply, in the chair, flicked her needles to and fro, knitted her reddish-brown stocking, cast her shadow on the step. *There she sat.*

And as if she had something she must share, yet could hardly leave her easel, so full her mind was of what she was *thinking*, of what she was *seeing*, Lily went past Mr. Carmichael holding her brush to the edge of the lawn. Where was the boat now? And Mr. Ramsay?

She wanted him (*my emphasis* 202).

In these passages Woolf presents the process of revisiting the emotions of the past as "looking," which recalls Woolf looking at a flower when she describes the moment of being. And her ability to connect with Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay across the expanse of *spacetime* can be described as "thinking." This recalls Woolf's description of thinking of the tree itself, which allows her to see it tumbling through the cosmos. Lily is able to stretch her body to work through the trauma of the past to create a connection of intimacy between the "real" Mrs. Ramsay and Mr. Ramsay in the present (which can also be thought of as the future relative to Lily if we imagine that Mr. Ramsay is closer to the lighthouse—the light reaches Mr. Ramsay before it reaches Lily): "Whatever she had wanted to give him, when he left her that morning, she had given him at last" (208). Woolf implies that the mind and body are not confined to the limitations of the "present." The self does not exist in isolation from itself and others. Hence, at the end of the novel we can see how the moment Lily finishes her painting she is able to connect intimately with Mr. Ramsay, who has just reached the Lighthouse while James thinks, "as if he were saying, "There is no God," and Cam thought, as if he were leaping into space, and they both rose to follow him as he sprang, lightly like a young man, holding his parcel, on to the rock" (207). The boundaries between self and other, past, present, and future are blurred in the final scene as Lily stands next to Mr. Carmichael:

They had been thinking the same things and he had answered her without her asking him anything. He stood there as if he were spreading his hands over all the weakness and suffering of mankind; she thought he was surveying, tolerantly, compassionately, their

final destiny. Now he has crowned the occasion, she thought, when his hand slowly fell, as if she had seen him let fall from his great height a wreath of violets and asphodels which, fluttering slowly, lay at length upon the earth (209).

Lily's intimacy with Mr. Carmichael and Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay is only achieved when she picks up her brush and begins to paint. As the novel ends and Lily describes her painting as all "greens and blues, its lines running up and across, its attempt at something" (208), we recognize the lines as crossing across space and time to create emotional connections between characters in the past and characters in the present and future. At the end of the novel we are left with the lingering sweet smell of violets and the mythical connection of asphodels<sup>206</sup> with the underworld. They gesture at the permanence of Lily's painting, like the old beggar woman's song in *Mrs Dalloway*: "It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision" (209). In this last stroke, we recognize Lily's vision as something which is not imposed upon us but which we create.

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<sup>206</sup> "Asphodelus" *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. 22 July 2004. Web. 31 July 2014.

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## Appendix

von Gilm's poem:      Stell auf den Tisch die duftenden Reseden,  
Die letzten roten Asters trag herbei,  
Und laß uns wieder von der Liebe reden,  
Wie einst im Mai.

Gib mir die Hand, daß ich sie heimlich drücke,  
Und wenn man's sieht, mir ist es einerlei,  
Gib mir nur einen deiner süßen Blicke,  
Wie einst im Mai.

Es blüht und [funkelt] duftet heut auf jedem Grabe,  
Ein Tag im Jahr ist ja den Toten frei,  
Komm an mein Herz, daß ich dich wieder habe,  
Wie einst im Mai.<sup>207</sup>

(My translation):      Place the fragrant mignonettes on the table,  
Bring the last red Asters here,  
And let us talk once again of love,  
Like how we once did when we were young.

Give me your hand so that I may hold it,  
And if others see, it is all the same to me,  
Give me just one of your sweet glances,  
Like you once did when we were young.

Everything sparkles and there are flowers on each grave,  
The dead are free to roam today,  
Let me see you once again,  
Like I saw you once in May.

Woolf's version:      ee *um* fah *um* so  
foo *swee* too *eem* oo—  
ee *um* fah *um* so  
foo *swee* too *eem* oo  
look in my eyes with thy sweet eyes intently  
give me your hand and let me press it gently  
and if some one should see, what matter they?  
ee *um* fah *um* so  
foo *swee* too *eem* oo  
And if some one should see, what matter they? (*MD* 80-83).

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<sup>207</sup>Emily Ezust, "All Souls' Day," The LiederNet Archive, recmusic, 2014. Web. 18 Dec 2014