

Processing Trauma: Dialogic Memory and Communal Discourses in Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room*, *Mrs Dalloway*, *The Waves*, and *Between the Acts*.

A Thesis Submitted to the College of  
Graduate Studies and Research  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master's of Arts  
in the Department of English  
University of Saskatchewan  
Saskatoon

By

Jessica Patrucco

© Jessica Patrucco, October 2010. All rights reserved.

## Permission to Use

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Postgraduate degree from the University of Saskatchewan, I agree that the Libraries of this University may make it freely available for inspection. I further agree that permission for copying of this thesis in any manner, in whole or in part, for scholarly purposes may be granted by the professor who supervised my thesis work or, in her absence, by the Head of the English Department or the Dean of the College in which my thesis work was done. It is understood that any copying or publication or use of this thesis or parts thereof for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission. It is also understood that due recognition shall be given to me and to the University of Saskatchewan in any scholarly use which may be made of any material in my thesis.

Requests for permission to copy or to make other uses of materials in this thesis in whole or part should be addressed to:

Head of the Department of English  
University of Saskatchewan  
9 Campus Drive  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 5A5  
Canada

OR

Dean  
College of Graduate Studies and Research  
University of Saskatchewan  
107 Administration Place  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 5A2  
Canada

## Abstract

In this thesis I examine relationships between recollections of loss and the narrating of memory in works of Modernist author, Virginia Woolf. Woolf's position within discussions of early twentieth-century responses to trauma has long been the subject of debate, and her focus on alienation, death, and the detrimental influence of the larger, patriarchal sphere is crucial to critical analyses of her works. I argue that Woolf's depiction of memory is a more sophisticated one than has been previously recognized. In her fictional delineations of death and destruction, as well as in her theoretical musings on the process of remembering, Woolf conceives of a local communal sphere that is more conducive to the experience of individuated responses to loss, rather than the public sphere where notions of national identity, appropriate expressions of bereavement, and performed masculinity facilitate a continuous cycle that both produces and perpetuates such violence. These ideas are further complicated through Woolf's depiction of a different means of ordering the larger collective, one that can only be conceived through spontaneous moments of unity and connection.

My argument situates Woolf's position both contextually and theoretically, with reference to her own essays addressing recollection, along with contemporary discussions of the process of narrating memory and moments of trauma. It is organised in terms of the chronological publication of her novels, with the chapters moving from *Jacob's Room* to *Mrs Dalloway*, followed by *The Waves*, and ending with her final work of fiction, *Between the Acts*. Within this framework I delineate a progression in Woolf's own theories that marks her growing interest in, and working through of, unexpected loss, as well as a response that permits individuated expressions of mourning and temporary moments of connection. I end with a brief discussion of her suggested responses to such devastation, concluding that her conceptualisation of a dynamic,

remembering community is a means by which she can challenge the homogeneity of the patriarchal status quo, as well as emphasising the importance of not only the articulation of trauma, but also the listening to and legitimising of such discourses.

## Acknowledgements

This project has resulted from the generous participation and encouragement of a number of people, and I would like to express my gratitude to all who supported me through the creation of this thesis.

I would like to warmly thank my supervisor, Dr Ann Martin, for her tireless assistance throughout the researching and writing of this thesis. Her guidance has been invaluable, and her continuous support throughout these past two years has made this such a rewarding experience.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to the members of my Advisory Committee – Dr Hilary Clark, Dr Bob Calder, and Dr Tammy Marche – for their thoughtful questions and insights.

Thanks to the Grad Chairs, Dr Lisa Vargo and Dr Ron Cooley, for keeping an eye on me and offering their help whenever they sensed it was needed.

Thanks to Pat Harpell and Nik Thomson for their endless assistance in all matters.

Thanks to Dr Marni Stanley, who first introduced me to the beautiful words of Virginia Woolf.

Thanks to my family and friends for putting up with me these past two years, and for enduring my cycles of anxiety and euphoria that accompanied this degree.

I also wish to acknowledge the generosity of the University of Saskatchewan, as well as the Joel and Lilly Green Memorial Award, for financial assistance.

## List of Abbreviations

*Between the Acts* (BA)

*Jacob's Room* (JR)

*Mrs Dalloway* (MD)

“A Sketch of the Past” (SP)

*The Waves* (TW)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PERMISSION TO USE.....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER ONE: “It is no use trying to sum people up”: CONSTRUCTING THE OTHER IN <i>JACOB’S ROOM</i> .....	6
CHAPTER TWO: “The future lies in the hands of young men”: CONNECTING PRIVATE AND PUBLIC IN <i>MRS DALLOWAY</i> .....	30
CHAPTER THREE: “we are for ever mixing ourselves with unknown quantities”: COMMUNAL DISCOURSES IN <i>THE WAVES</i> .....	49
CHAPTER FOUR: “we are members, one of another”: COMMUNAL DIALOGUES IN <i>BETWEEN THE ACTS</i> .....	70
CONCLUSION.....	88
WORKS CITED.....	91

## Introduction

Virginia Woolf's approaches to memory have largely been examined within the theme of alienation or loss. Mei-Yu Tsai details the traumatic reverberations of World War I, and argues that the death of Septimus Smith in *Mrs Dalloway*, influenced by memories of his experience as a soldier, is indicative of the protracted trauma and chaos that encircled the First World War. Susan Dick's analysis of the final chapter of *The Waves* focuses on Bernard's negotiation of himself and his memories in relation to Woolf's portrayal of a world without a self. In these instances, memories become the conduits through which trauma is relived, thereby emphasising characters' senses of solitude. Woolf's writings complicate this interpretation, however, and through an analysis of the process of narrating memory as a means to overcome loss and alienation, this thesis will illustrate that the communication of remembered devastation is neither an enactment of the pathway of traditional mourning, from grief to acceptance, nor is it the utter abjection<sup>1</sup> of self in response to unmitigated death and destruction. Rather, it is through the continuous dialogic interchange between a reconfiguration of the past and the subsequent repositioning of the present that Woolf envisions a means of reclaiming traumatic instances, and the resultant grief associated with them, within a personalised and individuated space. "Dialogic," in this sense, borrows its definition from Mikhail Bakhtin's exploration of the term in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, where the "constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others" (426) informs his conception of language as existing in a reciprocal relationship with other languages. It is within this "constant interaction" between the dialogic communities that form themselves around such consummate trauma that Woolf conceives of the possibility of a different kind of social structure,

---

<sup>1</sup> For a thorough consideration of the state of abjection, please refer to Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*.



one whose formation challenges the infrastructure of the status quo as a system that perpetuates the institutionalisation and endorsement of such widespread devastation. It is through Woolf's own perspectives of the relationship between trauma and memory that I approach her texts.

Although there is a large body of scholarship pertaining to memory studies, one that is constantly evolving as new and innovative research is being conducted, I anchor this project in Woolf's personal essays on the topic, thus establishing how her fiction both reflects her perspectives on remembering violence, and opens itself to more contemporary research on mourning and recollection.

The first chapter focuses on *Jacob's Room*, examining individual uses of memory and how such recollections can be used in the construction of another person. The act of recalling a past moment is valued not only by the individual engaging in the recollection, but also for the remembered sense of communal belonging it generates; this suggests that memory acts in dialogue, as representations of the past also influence and shape moments in the present. Furthermore, as individual memories are varied and unstable, the primacy of remembered factual accuracy is destabilised. Therefore, individuated memories of Jacob Flanders create a continuously evolving representation of him that can never be entire or complete. This is offset by the very public office Jacob holds as a soldier, an identity that attempts to fix him – there is no space for individual deviation while at war – as a static member of a larger, homogeneous community. Through his death the young man becomes representative of the privileging of uniformity that occupies the public sphere, but through memories of Jacob, the primacy of this space is challenged through the possibility of a more localised exchange of recollections, one that encourages dialogue and permits divergent experiences.

This tension between the private and the public is examined at greater length in Chapter Two's analysis of *Mrs Dalloway*. As noted in the previous chapter, the status quo encourages the homogeneity of civic experience; in *Mrs Dalloway* such enforcement by the dominant ideology appropriates personal expressions of grief. Thus, Septimus's reactions to his continuous reliving of his war experiences are seen as dangerous. The juxtaposition of images of approved public mourning and representations of private grief and disavowed loss illustrates the dislocation between socially endorsed expressions of bereavement and the reality of post-war life. This reflects the processes of memory, as images from the past and their reconstitution in the present are enacted through personal and communal manifestations of despair.

The strain between private and public memory is problematic for Clarissa as well, as she struggles to permit past constructions of her identity to fit comfortably within her own perceptions of her present self. The intersection of Septimus's suffering with Clarissa's emphasises the disparity between individual experiences and communal narratives; the sudden shock that accompanies death destabilises the present moment, and through such instances Woolf explores the possibility for connection that exists in epiphany. Such a defamiliarising and unanticipated moment challenges the patriotic, patriarchal ideology through individual acts of assertion, and both Septimus's suicide and Clarissa's party resist, in their respective ways, closure and reconciliation.

Chapter Three examines the uses of dialogic memory in *The Waves*, a process where destabilising instances in the present impact memories of the past, which in turn then rejuvenates the immediate moment. Loss is alienating, but through a collective experience of dialogic remembering one can challenge abjection through the continuous turning of the individual to the immediate community of friendship, thereby emphasising the ceaseless evolutionary action of

memory. As Neville, Louis, Jinny, Rhoda, Susan, and Bernard participate in dialogic remembering after the death of Percival, such private discourses underscore the impossibility of reductive, public narratives to adequately encapsulate personal experience, further destabilising the dominant ideology's endorsement of country and empire. The epiphany experienced by Clarissa at the end of *Mrs Dalloway* is realised more fully in *The Waves*: a moment of being – an instant of unpremeditated shock that Woolf discusses at length in “A Sketch of the Past” – offers brief glimpses of a different means of arranging the status quo, one that challenges the hypocrisy of the existing dominant ideology.

Chapter Four seeks to understand how this alternative structure might be enacted, now that the pattern of connection has been exposed behind the “cotton wool.” *Between the Acts* examines cultural memory, in which the historical past – patriarchal and static in its factual representation – is challenged by Miss La Trobe's own representation of events. The audience's spontaneous interaction with the pageant players, along with their surroundings, engenders a collective moment of individuated experiences that embraces unity over uniformity. As dialogic memory gives way to dialogue, the tragic figures of Jacob, Septimus, and Percival are subverted, and the qualities of the patriarchal order they embodied are dismantled by the Reverend Streatfield's gesture towards openness and community.

Such an analysis of the processes of memory in relation to trauma and loss does not foreclose on personal experiences of grief in lieu of communal discussion and acceptance of death. Rather, it not only creates a space where the progress of recollected loss is explored, but also provides glimpses of an alternative to the social system that engenders such institutionalised destruction. As the emphasis rests on the communal narration of memory, the onus shifts not

just to the act of communication itself, but to the responsibilities of the person towards whom such connection extends.

## Chapter One

“It is no use trying to sum people up”<sup>2</sup>: Constructing the Other in *Jacob’s Room*

As the subject of numerous biographies, Virginia Woolf represents the desire of scholars and academics to fix an accurate and complete representation of her, yet the multitudinous depictions of the woman that continue to emerge gesture towards the impossibility of achieving this. The work of biographers is to resolve the complexities of a person into as manageable and authentic a portrayal as possible, yet this is a complex task that, as Hermione Lee notes in her introduction to *Virginia Woolf’s Nose: Essays on Biography*, requires the gentle sifting of physical evidence – correspondence, diary entries, photographs – in order to “nose out the personality and the life of the writer” (4) that is hidden behind. Much of Woolf’s fiction is considered autobiographical in nature, and *Jacob’s Room*, centring on the sudden demise of the young Jacob Flanders, is often read as the textual working through of the death of her brother, Thoby. Julia Briggs notes this, stating that “the senseless death of a young man in the prime of life was only too actual to her, through the premature death of her brother Thoby from typhoid” (86), and Lee suggests in her biography of the writer that Woolf makes the death of Thoby more bearable by “turning him into fiction [...] by associating him with, and characterising him through, an ideal of classical stoicism and clarity” (227).

However, the inability to fix Jacob Flanders is also the inability to fix Thoby Stephen. Neither young man can be summed up or properly depicted with all his multitudinous characteristics intact. Facticity and truth become redundant in such an exercise, as the instability of memory undermines the possibility of any “true” representation. By challenging the prominence of physical evidence – what one said, where one was – as the markers of selfhood, Woolf destabilizes the act of biography as being simply a recapitulation of remembered facts. It

---

<sup>2</sup> Woolf, *Jacob’s Room*, 123.

is “not exactly what is said, nor yet entirely what is done” (*JR* 123); rather, through *Jacob’s Room* Woolf suggests that the interactive nature of remembering, with its possibilities for more personal connections between individuals being created through the sharing of particular memories of Jacob, permits a dynamic representation of the young man to arise instead of simply locating him in a reductive remembered portrayal of the other.

The impossibility of rendering the complete sense of an individual is one of the major themes in *Jacob’s Room*, and this is emphasised by the narrator as she considers particular representations of Jacob:

But how far was he a mere bumpkin? How far was Jacob Flanders at the age of twenty-six a stupid fellow? It is no use trying to sum people up. One must follow hints, not exactly what is said, nor yet entirely what is done. Some, it is true, take ineffaceable impressions of character at once. Others dally, loiter, and get blown this way and that. Kind old ladies assure us that cats are often the best judge of character. A cat will always go to a good man, they say; but then, Mrs Whitehorn, Jacob’s landlady, loathed cats. (123-24)

To provide a clear and distinct representation of Jacob is an exercise in futility, for conveying what he says or what he does cannot fully depict the complexity of his person. The narration of the novel underscores this premise, as the events of Jacob’s life are conveyed to the reader through a series of flashes of some instance or other, illuminating briefly some particular aspect of Jacob’s personal history but never providing a concise statement of character or a precise rendering of the entirety of his person. This reflects Woolf’s own philosophy of memory and the unknowability of the other as she discusses it in “A Sketch of the Past.” She ruminates upon the process of creating a memoir, and lands almost immediately upon one of the great many difficulties in life writing: the reason so many memoirs are failures, as she terms it, is that “[t]hey

leave out the person to whom things happen. The reason is that it is so difficult to describe any human being” (65). This is further complicated by the simple fact that recollections themselves can be compromised, supplying information that has been forgotten by others, or adding details to events that have not transpired (67). Thus, the essential ‘truth’ of who an individual is cannot be relayed, as both divergent perspectives and incorrect or incomplete recollections ensure that at most only fragments can be known. Thus, the best a narrator or reader can do is to make use of flashes of insight and momentary glimpses of Jacob’s life in order to expose some of the subtleties of his character.

A person’s memory of a particular event or individual creates a singular perspective that connects his or her own private remembrance with the larger communal and historical realm that the subject of the memory occupies. Woolf was very much invested in the interplay between the private and public spheres, and the means in which personal memory connected these temporal locales. Autobiographical and biographical writings infuse remembered instances of private moments into a communal narrative, and as Lee discusses in her biography of the writer, Woolf was very much intrigued as to how rendering such moments for public consumption transcends the demarcation between these two spheres (12). For Woolf, the importance of personal memory resides in the power it has to refresh the present moment through a refashioning of previous events. In particular, memories of a troubling nature or moments of violence that are strongly imprinted upon one’s memory provide a significant disruption to everyday life, and casting one’s mind back to these traumatic instances allows the present moment to be refigured in relation to the previous upheaval. Because these individual memories exist in dialogue with the larger communal context that surrounds them, the primacy of factual accuracy in remembering and articulating a particular event is undermined; the divergence of perspective on any singular event

ensures that no one recollection can be valued as the most truthful account. Therefore, the dialogue that ensues between the past and present, event and context, gains significance not through the accuracy of recollection, but through the individual productive engagement in such an exchange, which manifests itself in the subsequent articulation of such memories to a sympathetic audience. Thus, the death of a young man like Jacob is not simply a transient moment of upheaval; this moment also gestures towards the possibility of communal rejuvenation through a dialogue between affected individuals. This exchange creates a space in the recollected construction of a person – Jacob, but also Thoby – that resists closure by taking into account the remembered significance of the traumatic event. The exchange of perspectives creates a sense of community, as the dialogic exchange between the past and the present also connects the self to the other, and ultimately the storyteller to the audience.

In her biography of Woolf, Julia Briggs suggests that the need to “make it whole’ has long haunted Woolf’s thinking” (353). This need to complete “the experience by adding everything that belonged to it” (353) consists of not only adding to a scene or rounding out a character, but also providing a bridge between the reader and the writer. The completion of this experience between the reader and the writer, Briggs proposes, contains a therapeutic element as well: it “heal[s] a trauma, bringing split selves together, so that a shock loses its capacity to damage or wound” (353). The solitary figure, the “individual artist,” is insignificant; of import is the unification of the singular with the many (354). The process of completing the experience draws the individual out of solitary seclusion and into a community, helping to heal the traumatic rupture through the creation of a bridge between the self and the other, between the reader and the artist.



Not surprisingly, Woolf's own autobiographical piece "A Sketch of the Past" is often invoked to define her conception of memory and its relationship to autobiography. Through this essay Woolf differentiates between moments of non-being and moments of being, where moments of non-being are made up of the general day-to-day activities, events that are inattentively performed: "Yesterday [...] was fine. [...] I walked over Mount Misery and along the river; and save that the tide was out, the country, which I notice very closely always, was shaded as I like [...]. [I]t was a good day" (70). Woolf refers to these mundane activities of daily life as being "embedded in a kind of nondescript cotton wool" (70). Such moments of non-being, then, are obfuscating, as the typical and habitual occur without impediment and among this one simply drifts along: "A great part of every day is not lived consciously" (70). In the midst of these moments of non-being, however, erupts a moment that is a "sudden [and] violent shock" (71). This occurs spontaneously, and Woolf's repetition of the word "violent" – "there was a sudden violent shock, something happened so violently that I have remembered it all my life" (71) – connects these emergent instances to trauma and discomfort. The occurrence of non-being is much higher than that of such shocks, yet the suddenness and the intensity with which moments of being appear ensure that they disrupt the soft cotton wool and stand out.

Woolf connects her personal recognition of the significance of these sudden shocks, and her desire to explain what these unforeseen and unfamiliar moments mean, to her ability as a writer (72). She states that the process of delineating the import of these sudden shocks turns these occasions founded in duress into "[p]erhaps [...] the strongest pleasure known to me. It is the rapture I get when in writing I seem to be discovering what belongs to what; making a scene come right" (72). She notes that it is through her articulations about moments of being that she approaches what might be termed her philosophy: "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” (72). Christopher C. Dahl notes that in writing these moments of being, or “scene-making” as Woolf also refers to it, Woolf demonstrates her personal theories on autobiography, which contrast the “Victorian mode of description by analogy and comparison” (191-192). Woolf’s conception of this alternative artistic work emphasises a lateral connection between human beings, who all contribute in its co-creation, as well as an alternative means of ordering humanity in a way that challenges the hierarchical constructs of daily life and the infrastructure that supports it. Woolf states that “there is no Shakespeare, there is no Beethoven [...] we are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself” (“SP” 72), locating eminence not with the sole creator, but in the ensuing dialogue between art and audience.

These instances are distinguishable from literary epiphany, which David Lodge describes as “[t]he term now [...] applied to any descriptive passage in which external reality is charged with a kind of transcendental significance for the perceiver” (147). Moments of being occur when external reality is disrupted, exposing an alternative structure which itself is transcendent. Lodge further notes that it is the “intensity of the [epiphanic] moment, not its consequences, that are important” (147), thus dividing the effects of epiphany from the significance of the moment. A moment of being is a disruptive force that destabilises the status quo, but the aftermath of such an instant can bring an alternative perspective on the forces that surround it and can engender a powerful realization. These sudden shocks contain within them the potential for spontaneous, transcendental awareness.

The implications of Woolf’s theory are such that an individual is not a self-contained unit; there is no division between self and other because the saturation of a private life and the public

community it exists within undermines distinct demarcations: “one’s life is not confined to one’s body and what one says and does” (“SP” 73). Woolf connects the inability to reduce a person to facts – what they said, where they went – as one of the difficulties of life-writing (73), in large part because these intense moments of being, when something unexpectedly disrupts the soft cotton wool of daily life, construct the real but elusive framework of one’s history.

The non-external reality of one’s life is thus as fluid as the interrelationship between the past and the present. She depicts life as having a “base that it stands upon,” and on this base is “a bowl that one fills and fills and fills” (64), a basin whose contents are being continuously adjusted as the life it represents endlessly experiences and transforms. The image of a basin whose contents are constantly shifting demonstrates the fluidity of the relationship between past and present: as the present is continuously negotiated in terms of recollections of past events, and the past likewise shaped by the happenings of the present, the individual identity is itself in constant motion, forming and reforming itself through the dialogue between what was and what is. Jeanne Schulkind succinctly articulates the dynamism of this relationship in her introduction to *Moments of Being: A Collection of Autobiographical Writings*, stating that Woolf “believed the individual identity to be always in flux, every moment changing its shape in response to the forces surrounding it: forces which were invisible emerge, others sink silently below the surface, and the past, on which the identity of the present moment rests, is never static, never fixed [...] but as subject to alteration as the consciousness that recalls it” (12). The continuous reformulation of identity is informed by the undulations of private recollections and the dynamic historic narratives they reside in.

Woolf’s representations of memory and its relationship to life writing are addressed in many biographies, but three of her biographers – Hermione Lee, Julia Briggs, and Louise DeSalvo –

stand out for their attention to the individual narration of memories – and in DeSalvo’s case, ones that are particularly tragic – in order to overcome loss and alienation. Lee’s biography, published in 1996, is a massive tome that chronologically traces the progression of Woolf’s life. Underlying Lee’s text is the question of the role of the biographer, and she opens *Virginia Woolf* with a section titled “Biography” in which she begins constructing Woolf’s theories on life-writing, pulling from multiple works by the subject herself. The biographer’s job is to appreciate the multitudinous nature of his or her subject, and Lee describes the role of the life-writer as one who is to “explore and understand the gap between outer self [...] and the secret self” (6). Furthermore, Lee declares that for Woolf the dynamic nature of the nuanced subject must be cast against the communal environment in which it is situated: “[t]here must be these sharp moments, caught from the context, the subject’s social world. But also there must be movement and change: generalisations, fixed attitudes, summings-up, are fatal” (10). Life-writing that is grounded in a static past is not desirable. This movement and change Lee identifies as an essential component of Woolf’s own theoretical musings on memory connects the private self to the public moment that surrounds it. Lee notes that in Woolf’s own writings, fictional and otherwise, the line between “history, biography and fiction” gets blurred (8). Within this convolution of narratives, the primacy of an externally factual truth is diluted; thus, as biography can give insight into the cloaked lives of individuals, the surrounding past which offers some modicum of historical contextualization can also be fuelled by imagined constructs. Memories must not be granted primacy for their factual recollections of the woman, however, and Lee is clear to reject, as Woolf did herself, a sketch of a biographical subject grounded purely in a subjective conception of external “facts.”

Rather than focussing on the external, outer life of Woolf that would be informed by a traditional, linear timeline, Julia Briggs's biography *Virginia Woolf: An Inner Life* situates Woolf's life in relation to the genesis and creative process of her writings. Briggs states that her "account is inspired by Woolf's own interest in the process of writing, as well as by a corresponding unease with accounts that (like Orlando's biographer) concentrate too narrowly on her social life, and so underestimate the centrality of her art" (x). Briggs identifies that for Woolf, the purpose of biography is a rendering of the nuances of interiority, and, as Lee also discusses, to convey these movements as situated amongst sharp moments that can be traced to a specific historical space. Memory becomes a necessary tool with which to interrogate one's life, a process that leads to the discovery of some "communal spirit," and that "[a]s an artist, her [Woolf's] task was to discover the 'pattern hid behind the cotton wool' through her writing" (354). Thus, the job of the biographer is to attempt to discover the same, yet a linear evolution of events reveals not this alternative order beyond the cotton wool, but merely the cotton wool itself. The past is fluid and flexible, continuously shifting and readjusting itself in relation to the continuous – and at times, faulty – process of recollection. Briggs rejects, as Woolf does, the idea of the past as a progression of irrefutable fact. Furthermore, to perceive the vagaries of one's life from a privileged, retrospective position is itself reductive, and Briggs argues that to read Woolf's life in terms of her suicide diminishes the woman to a singular facet (395). However, Briggs does grant that particular events do stack up to produce certain outcomes, and that Woolf's suicide, while not the defining feature of her life, most certainly is not a random or arbitrary action (395). To fix finitely what has happened inhibits the continuous progression of acts of remembering. Thus, the flexibility of the past, the disruption of traditional methods of organising biography, is necessary to the productive process of memory.

Louise DeSalvo's biography, *Virginia Woolf: The Impact of Childhood Sexual Abuse on Her Life and Works*, centralises the emotional and psychological abuse that Woolf experienced in the Stephen/Duckworth household as a primary force that both shaped her life, and influenced her writings. Although this biography stands in marked contrast to Woolf's own theoretical musings on life writing, as well as Lee's and Briggs's consideration of the woman, DeSalvo's examination of the relationship between trauma and memory is productive. DeSalvo introduces the specific abuses suffered by Woolf, contextualising them within a larger depiction of the suffering endured by her three older sisters, Laura, Stella, and Vanessa, and drawing strong connections between the behaviour within the Stephen household and traditional notions of family values perpetuated by Victorian ideals of gender roles. The analysis of Woolf's life through such a specific lens, however, reduces the multiplicity or essential aspects of the woman into a singular focus, casting Woolf primarily as a survivor of abuse. This is a minor glitch in DeSalvo's work, and she portrays Woolf's use of memories as an integral component that allows her to move on: "But her story, like that of so many other women, is also one of survival and achievement against all odds. Although she suffered, she also experienced great joy, and her life is one of monumental achievement" (13). DeSalvo sees the process of memory and the expulsion of traumatic events from the private into the public as a positive movement, one that acknowledges the trauma while allowing the victim to claim ownership upon it. DeSalvo notes that upon reading Freud, Woolf began to discuss her past more openly with people, thus linking the memories of abuse not only with pain, a physical fissure in Woolf's childhood and adolescence, but also with the possibility of providing relief and healing (129). Her extrapolation of the therapeutic aspects of memory presents a process of recollection that is a productive method for dealing with the past, present and the future.

Woolf's approach differs from that of her father, Leslie Stephen, who wrote the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and focused on the external and linear representation of notable men in the public sphere. His exclusionary process of capturing an individual is precisely the mode of biography that Woolf rejects, as she delves instead, through her own writings, into the complexities of what it is to remember. Woolf's rejection of this process is examined by Jane De Gay, who notes, upon discussing the impact that Stephen's *English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century* had on his own daughter's theories of writing, that his selective use of gender is parsed by Woolf in her mock biography, *Orlando: A Biography*. There, Stephen's portrayal of the continuous evolution of literature, demarcated by men who were well known in the public sphere, is parodied by the acceptance of Orlando's poem, "The Oak Tree," for publication (64). The awarding of a literary prize to a female writer centuries after the initial poem was written disrupts Stephen's conception of a literary progression, each evolutionary leap building upon what came before (64). Woolf's destabilisation of her father's model is pursued by Lee, Briggs, DeSalvo, and De Gay, and, through these women's divergent approaches to the subject, Woolf's theories of the remembered past and the productive means of refreshing it – and therefore the present moment – as a productive means of overcoming trauma become clear.

Memory is a process through which the past is recreated through the absorption and integration of new information in the present. In *Pillar of Salt: Gender, Memory, and the Perils of Looking Back*, Janice Haaken theorises the position of women as trauma victims within contemporary society, and locates a space between the polarising factual and created recollections of childhood sexual abuse that emphasises the import of storytelling in relationship to recovered memory. Rather than privileging the 'truth' of trauma narratives, Haaken notes that the *remembered* past "is reactivated and a new configuration arises [in the present] out of

previous recollections [...] what is key is the reorganization of the past from a newly acquired vantage point” (15). Haaken emphasises the dynamic exchange between the past and the present as a productive means of refreshing the moment in relation to the forces that surround it and the impulse of the past behind it: the past does not exist in static isolation but is involved in this continuous interchange, which allows for the potential to revive the present moment through this “new configuration” (15). Haaken also identifies the primacy in the Western tradition on the accuracy of recollection, an occurrence that is founded in the reverence toward what she terms “autobiographical memory” – that is, the idea that memory of the self is both “knowable and claimable” (110). Haaken problematizes this preoccupation with remembering correctly, claiming that privileging it “blunts the capacity to listen and comprehend” (110). Focussing on women’s recollections of trauma and the issues associated with casting one’s mind back to violent upheaval and alienation, Haaken suggests an alternative emphasis on the study of memory theory in relation to abuse victims: that the significance should shift from the accurate recollection of the event to a focus on the articulation of said event to an audience.

Annette Kuhn is another cultural theorist who deconstructs, in her text *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination*, images from her past as a means of delineating the process whereby individual acts of memory become communal gestures. Kuhn states that instances of self-representation are themselves “changeable. In each re-enactment, each re-staging [...] details get added and dropped, the story fleshes out, new connections are made, emotional tones [...] fluctuate” (17). Like Haaken, she destabilises perceived notions of truth-telling in relation to memory, and like Woolf in “A Sketch of the Past,” Kuhn delineates the continuous intersection of past and present moments, noting that the subsequent fluidity of the past thus offers “a constantly changing perspective [...]. Perhaps it is only when we look back that we make a



certain kind of sense of what we see” (128). By privileging a dialogue between past and present, Kuhn, along with Haaken, shifts the emphasis on acts of memory from a singular recollection lauded for its accuracy to a communal experience that favours dialogue. Kuhn discusses how her theoretical approach to acts of memory “involves an active staging of memory; it takes an inquiring attitude towards the past and its (re)construction through memory; it calls into question the transparency of what is remembered; and it takes what is remembered as material for interpretation” (157). She follows this listing of her approach with a concise statement of her focus that is weighted towards storytelling: “how we [...] make use of the stories they [memories] generate to give deeper meaning to, and if necessary to change, our lives today” (158). Communal acts of memory do not involve simply the articulation of personal experience to an audience; rather, Kuhn locates the import of the audience within the active engagement of the ensuing dialogue.

Storytelling is itself a communal activity, with both the deliverer of the story or memory and the recipients becoming active participants in the exchange. By modifying the focus of memory studies from the memory itself to the process of remembering, there is a simultaneous shift that occurs from the teller to the listener. Susan Brison argues that for survivors of trauma to regain agency over their self-narratives, they “need not only the words with which to tell [their] stories, but also an audience able and willing to hear [...] and to understand” (51) the narrative as intended. This movement between the narrator of memory and the recipient of recollections raises questions pertaining to the impact on the listener, and the ensuing dialogue. In considering the process of memory as one where the past is reconstructed in the present and in turn affects that present, the importance of memory becomes inherently bound up in the act of recounting remembered instances. As noted earlier, memory is itself not an individuated or isolated

occurrence, although each memory is an original recollection to a singular person. However, as Kuhn states, one's memories do not belong solely to oneself: "[a]ll memory texts – and that includes the essays in this book – constantly call to mind the collective nature of the activity of remembering" (6). The shift from the personal to the collective situates the recipient of recollections as an important force within memory work.

This shift naturally affects the notion of remembered accuracy. Although an individual memory is itself considered the true representation of an event to that singular person, the exactness of memory is elusive. The biographer – or autobiographer – might feel the need to justify his or her rendering of an event in the past, as Woolf does while depicting the abuse she suffered as a child at the hands of her half-brother Gerald, in "A Sketch of the Past." She describes it in her essay: "I can remember the feel of his hand going under my clothes; going firmly and steadily lower and lower. I remember how I hoped that he would stop; how I stiffened and wriggled as his hand approached my private parts [...]. I remember resenting it, disliking it – what is the word for so dumb and mixed a feeling? It must have been strong, since I recall it" ("SP" 69). Woolf locates these experiences as subjective, emphasised through the continuous repetition of "I remember." However, the contextualization for this essay – a verbal reading given to a localised community of peers, the Memoir Club – links individual acts of memory with a communal moment of storytelling.

Woolf's declaration "I recall" (69) is a subtle justification of the authenticity of her memory to her audience. Just as the past is always being negotiated through the continuous filling of the bowl that is life's base, so too are conceptions of the truth in relation to memory. The material of what is remembered becomes the object of an inquiring attitude "towards the past and its (re)construction through memory; it [memory studies] calls into question the transparency of

what is remembered as material for interpretation” (Kuhn 157). The emphasis, then, shifts from the correctness of a memory related to a specific external event towards the representation of remembering as a reconstructive process, moving the significance away from factual accuracy alters the focus from the memory, or story, to the storyteller herself (Haaken 52).

Woolf’s exploration of such issues in *Jacob’s Room* works on many levels, from the narrator’s acknowledgement of her own limitations as a storyteller, to the characters’ shared inability to possess a complete understanding of their friend, lover, or son. Jacob is not just the titular character of the novel, then, but also the central absence in the text. Because he is presented through these limited points of view, the reader also has an inhibited perspective of the man: there is an impermeable boundary that surrounds him. In her reading of the novel, Rachel Hollander emphasizes this sense of the character’s unknowability, noting the consequential frustration that comes with the realization that one cannot penetrate beyond the outer perception of another person; he or she is absolutely other (47). Hollander identifies *Jacob’s Room* as evocative of the extent to which all individuals are opaque, and how it “represents the inaccessibility of the truth of individual experience in the city, but without implying some alternative community where relations with others are transparent or communication complete” (49-50). Edward Bishop also identifies the difficulty in transcending the space between self and other as the underlying impulse that informs *Jacob’s Room*, stating that “with Jacob we rarely get such a sense of motive or reaction [...] only by inference do we get a sense of his horror. And we are denied a sense of how he might react in future situations” (50). The reader’s inability to identify with Jacob comes from a dearth of knowledge regarding Jacob’s inner consciousness – because his actions are retold through either another character or the narrator, they are constantly located one step removed from him. Thus, the recollections of Jacob, the memories of him that

inform the reader's relationship, become themselves a form of othering. Jacob, the young man, is the other; remembering him does not ease this distinction. The outcome of World War I for the Flanders family reinforces Jacob's alterity: he is not simply an other, a young man relayed to the reader through memories and impressions; he is also dead, the ultimate form of othering.

Despite this, Jacob still manages to be relatable as an individual, rather than as an anonymous soldier or a part of a homogeneous army, and Bishop notes that Woolf "allows us to know Jacob well enough that we credit his charm, and he is young, and thus [...] there is sadness of identification (rather than sympathy or empathy) with Jacob's plight" (159). Therefore, Jacob is read as more than simply a soldier – he is Bonamy's friend, he is a son, he is, amongst other identities, a young man in love – and this provides a contrast to the uniformity of wartime roles and hegemonic endorsements of nationhood. This sympathetic identification with Jacob as a multifaceted person therefore saves him from utter abjection.

At the same time, however, the distance between Jacob's inner thoughts and the reader's perspective on him is, Tammy Clewell argues, Woolf's deliberate attempt to refuse the traditional path of mourning (198). Woolf subverts this process of shifting from grief to consolatory reconciliation to acceptance by maintaining this distanced presentation of Jacob (198). Clewell further posits that Woolf's texts suggest that a deliberate refusal to mourn is "the only adequate response to death and wartime destruction" (199). She claims that normalised mourning practices of the time, which were informed by nineteenth-century notions of appropriately sanctioned public responses to loss, could not adequately represent the upheaval and trauma of the widespread death that occurred as a result of the First World War (200). Clewell relates this refusal to mourn to a gendered critique, by Woolf, of pre-War patriarchal practices that endorsed masculinity and, as she puts it, "prepared the way for intolerable loss"

(203). Woolf, however, does not reject traditional processes of bereavement in favour of total abjection, and her othering of Jacob is not, as Clewell claims, the only available reaction to the unfathomable decimation of almost an entire generation. If the loss of Jacob had proceeded along the traditional path towards eventual acceptance, then he would be returned to the social order that led to his death in the first place. Clewell is correct in assessing the alterity of Jacob as Woolf's rejection of systematised mourning practices, but Jacob's othering is more complex than simply a refusal to acquiesce. Woolf wants to challenge this thinking by using trauma and loss to engender a different method of grieving, not simply, as Clewell suggests, to display forcibly unmediated sorrow as the blatant alternative to appropriate expressions of distress. The dialogue between Bonamy and Mrs Flanders at the end of the text gestures towards the beginning of a mutual exchange, one that suggests a movement not only towards private reconciliation, but also to the sense of a new community between those affected most by his death.

Jacob is the absent presence about whom the text revolves, as the discerning reader notes from the outset of the novel that, by virtue of age, gender, and the historical moment into which he was born, Jacob is destined to become simply a memory to those around him. He is known through brief moments remembered from the other characters, flashes of memory that are conveyed primarily through the lens of the nameless female narrator, a figure that exists on the periphery of Jacob's life. The distance between the narrator and Jacob mirrors the removal of the reader from the thoughts of the young man as well, a position reinforced through his sudden death. Thus, the narrative structure of the text consistently emphasises Jacob's status as other.

Yet, through acts of memorialisation, the boundary between self and other can be bridged. The moments of Jacob's life that are revealed to the reader and comprise the trajectory of the text are themselves transient and ephemeral in nature. Although there may be, by the participants

involved, a desire for particular moments “to continue for ever [sic] precisely as [they are]” (*JR* 55), these moments, of course, do not. These instances— of youth and friendship – then gain added significance through thoughtful recollection; the memories Jacob makes with his peers during his time at Cambridge become a part of the base upon which his life stands, and those individuals will revisit the bowl that is continuously filled in order to rejuvenate themselves: “Talking, talking, talking – as if everything could be talked – the soul slipped through the lips in thin silver disks which dissolve in young men’s minds like silver, like moonlight. Oh, far away they’d remember it, and come to refresh themselves again” (30). Each of the young men who recalls this particular moment as one of personal consequence will elicit from it a divergent response to his separate recollections – it is the act of remembering and reconstructing that is of value, not only for the individual, but also for the remembered sense of communal belonging.

Memory then operates in dialogue, connecting representations of the past with moments in the present. Private recollections of Jacob, by his mother, his friends, and Sandra and Fanny, are the primary means by which the reader is informed about this young man. Factual accuracy has been dislocated as the imperative quality of remembering, and the multitudinous perspectives on Jacob ensure that in that moment when the present slips quickly into the past, and “the intimacy, a sort of spiritual suppleness, when mind prints upon mind” has taken hold, facticity is of little consequence: “[a]nd perhaps Jacob had only said ‘hum,’ or said nothing at all. True, the words were inaudible” (34). The privileging of the endurance of these moments implies that value is noted when they are viewed in retrospect. Because of the inaccuracy that attends the vagaries of memory, the recollections of Jacob’s life ensure that the young man can never be definitively known. Rather, he can only be known briefly, as observations of his external qualities are both limiting and reductive, and the perspectives themselves quite varied. To the elderly lady with

whom he shares a coach carriage, he is indifferent (22). The narrator describes him as “impressionable” (26), and Mrs Durrant notes that despite being “so distinguished-looking” he is in fact “extraordinarily awkward” (47). Taken separately, these external markers fragment the young man, and the “observer is choked with observations” (53). Taken in dialogue with one another, however, these recollections create a continuously evolving picture of the young man. By revealing components of Jacob through the combination of short flashes of his life, Woolf demonstrates the impossibility of fully illuminating another person. Perspectives on Jacob, or any individual, are distorted because “[n]obody sees any one as he is [...]. They see a whole – they see all sorts of things – they see themselves” (22). To become grounded in only the physical exterior of an individual – what is said, what is done – is to be unable to move beyond his or her designation as other, and, as Hollander notes, it is this inability to seek out the multitudinous components of the other that creates the necessary distance for one human to kill another, for the demise of Jacob to occur (44).

Because Jacob is a distanced other, and a dynamic and continuously shifting figure, the act of remembering him also becomes a means of breaking into and attempting to understand the masculine world he represents. The narrator destabilises gender constructions, penetrating Jacob’s room in London as a means to more clearly reveal not only the male occupant, but also the larger social forces that shape him. In his room, Jacob is alone, perusing his copy of the *Globe*, looking “set [...] and defiant” (*JR* 77). The newspaper records the pulse of the world, attempting to render its multitudinous nature into a singular “impression of the whole,” describing rupture and distress from all over the country: “strike, a murder, [...] bodies found” (77). Although the narrator’s intrusion reveals a private moment of Jacob alone, his room itself becomes simply another facet of his exteriority. Julia Briggs proposes that “[r]ooms carry

complex meanings as the space we occupy and shape around ourselves, metaphorically as well as literally, and, like physical appearance, they may be used to characterize their owner” (95).

Thus, despite this invasion Jacob is still distanced, as the social forces that shape him, the dominant patriarchal impulse of public politics discovered in the *Globe*, speak only to the most public facet of his identity.

Fanny and Sandra, two women in Jacob’s life, each attempt to recapture the essence of the elusive Jacob by recreating moments of special import. Fanny, a model who meets him by chance, attempts to maintain a connection to Jacob by moving herself into the social sphere and recreating the physical presence of Jacob through daily visits to the British Museum (*JR* 137). For an extended period of time her only form of communication with him is limited to the postcards that he sends her, and she begins to fuse her perception of the missing young man with the images of the Greek statues that decorate the cards: “Fanny’s idea of Jacob was more statuesque, noble, and eyeless than ever” (137). Gone, Jacob becomes more and more hidden to Fanny, and she must position herself near the image of Ulysses in order to shock her system by assaulting it suddenly with a remembered quality of Jacob’s presence, a method that cannot be continued effectively, however, and is beginning to wear thin (137). Fanny attempts to maintain a static connection with Jacob from a position of isolation rather than dialogic exchange, and she continually revisits the same statue to produce the same sensation. This isolating and mimetic process creates a fixed, and therefore stagnant, representation of Jacob. He continues to remain obtuse to Fanny, and the once violent shocks Ulysses engenders too wane.

Like Fanny, Sandra is a woman with whom Jacob falls in love when they meet in Athens, where Sandra is travelling with her husband. Jacob, who is touring alone, is initially drawn somewhat unwillingly into an acquaintanceship with Sandra and her husband. His sense of



being put out is undercut when they undertake a trip to the Acropolis together, however, and his affection for Sandra increases. Sandra, too, enjoys Jacob's company, and the intensity of sharing such an experience with him provokes in her a desire for this moment to be extended, for it to endure, and she implores Jacob to keep a remembrance of their time together: "[w]hen you get back to England you won't forget this" (127). Just as the arts of the Acropolis inspire Sandra's recognition of a momentary significance, art also plays a role in sustaining her recollections of Jacob and their time together. Before going their separate ways Jacob gives Sandra his copy of a book of poems by Donne, a physical offering that, much like the statues do for Fanny, generates and sustains remembered images for Sandra of the time she shared with this young man: "Strolling at dusk, Sandra would open the books and her eyes would brighten (but not at the print), and subsiding into the arm-chair she would suck back again the soul of the moment" (129). Her reverie cannot be maintained, however, as the ticking of the clock, the continuous reminder of the progression of time, calls her back, disrupting her reconstruction of past instances.

The ticking of passing time is a reminder of the public, masculine sphere in which Jacob resides, recalling the intonation of marked time that emanates from Big Ben in the London cityscape. This space is infused with images of conflict and reminders of past battles, and the excitement about the impending international war is palpable:

The omnibus stopped outside Charing Cross, and behind it were clogged omnibuses, vans, motor-cars, for a procession with banners was passing down Whitehall, and elderly people were stiffly descending from between the paws of the slippery lions, where they had been testifying to their faith, singing lustily, raising their eyes from their music to look into the sky, and still their eyes were on the sky as they marched behind the gold letters of their

creed. (138)

The Norton edition of *Jacob's Room* identifies this paragraph as a reconstruction of the day Britain declared war on Germany, August 4, 1914, when a pro-war procession disrupted downtown London with its displays of nationalism (Raitt 138). In juxtaposition to the disrupted, individual remembrances of Jacob that Fanny and Sandra both have, this communal creation of national memory seems timeless and suggests that citizens participate in a stable image of a proud and fierce England. However, although it is a construction by the community, this celebration is deemed appropriate only in that it supports the status quo. There is no space for alterity within the procession, and indeed the only demarcation recorded for the reader is that some of the participants are elderly. The privileging of homogeneity by the old patriarchal order is emphasised in this image of a mass of people all singing, all raising their eyes, all marching for their creed – all uniform in appearance and action alike (*JR* 138).

This national space that idolises crown, country, and war also values the uniformity that helps maintain the integrity of that space. The narrator challenges such a perspective through assurances that the multiplicity of an individual accredits a dynamic and continuously refreshing creation that transcends the distance between self and other – a division that patriarchal and patriotic systems reassert. Women, the narrator notes, are relegated to the private spaces in which “character-drawing is a frivolous fireside art [...] flourishes, and mere scrawls” (124-125). This interior domain is set against the exteriority of the masculine experience, a space into which the narrator clearly locates the institutionalisation of war. She asks the reader to consider “what the other side means – the men in clubs and Cabinets” (124) when they disparage the “character-drawing” that so many of the individuals in *Jacob's Room* engage in in their quest to delineate the essence of Jacob.

Against the interior position of women, the narrator aligns the public space of men more directly with the actions of war, rather than simply a celebration of it. She describes the “battleships [that] ray out over the North Sea” (125), disintegrating a target into flames. As easily as those guns are directed towards the target, “[w]ith equal nonchalance a dozen young men in the prime of life descend with composed faces into the depths of the sea; and there impassively (though with perfect mastery of machinery) suffocate uncomplainingly together” (125). The narrator implicitly generates a trajectory that traces the steady thrum of the social sphere – the “incessant commerce of banks, laboratories, chancellories, and houses of business, [that] are the strokes which oar the world forward” (125) – as a path that culminates in the slaughter of those young men. Trauma, destruction, and death are associated with the patriarchal order, and it is into this sphere that Jacob, by virtue of sex, is placed. Amongst those destructive forces Jacob inevitably meets his end and, in the name of his country, dies ingloriously abroad.

In opposition to this realm of impending destruction, Woolf creates an interior, localised space in which the possibility of communal exchange can exist. The death of Jacob finds both his friend, Bonamy, and his mother sorting through his personal effects in his room (143). As they sift their way through the insignificant external details of Jacob – a paid bill for a hunting-crop, Sandra’s letters – Mrs Flanders proffers a pair of Jacob’s shoes to his friend, asking him “What am I to do with these, Mr. Bonamy?” (143). The question invites an answer, and thus the possibility for dialogue, and the location of Jacob’s room shifts the emphasis away from communal declarations of celebrated war towards private narratives of grief and loss. What the narrative will be, the reader is not made aware of, yet in this simplest of gestures, in the final portrayal of a mother working through the loss of a child in the company of his friend, Woolf

permits the productive use of a language that connects and unifies, but does not silence the other's voice.

Jacob becomes the central force about whom the other characters coalesce, each providing his or her own unique perspectives on him. The process of recalling Jacob through a compilation of divergent perspectives shifts the emphasis from the accuracy of recollection to the dialogic effect of such remembering. This process transcends the fragmentation of the self and other, and the pattern behind the cotton wool – the work of art through which all humanity is connected – emerges as acts of remembering such moments collapse the distinctions that exist superficially between the self and other: as Jinny Carslake notes, if you look steadily at her “little jeweller’s box containing ordinary pebbles [...] multiplicity becomes unity, which is somehow the secret of life” (105). Memories of Jacob become the bridging force that drives the text, and the unity that has the potential to arise through the communal act of remembering Jacob mitigates the violence of his demise. Recalling the varied facets of his character – an act that, as argued, revolves around brief and dynamic representations of Jacob – places the productive use of memory within the local and private sphere. This status positions the unifying act of individual remembrance in contrast to the uniformity of performed masculinity endorsed within the public sphere.

## Chapter Two

“The future lies in the hands of young men”<sup>3</sup>: Connecting Private and Public in *Mrs Dalloway*

Woolf’s claim that the “past is much affected by the present moment” (“SP” 75) indicates that the interaction or dialogue between these temporal spaces enables a reformulation of one’s perception of the present moment. Dialogism is examined at length in Mikhail Bakhtin’s extensive analysis of the novel, and the trajectory of his argument coalesces into four essays in his seminal text, *The Dialogic Imagination*. Bakhtin posits that language “is revealed in all its distinctiveness only when it is brought into relationship with other languages” (411), that is, only when it exists within a dynamic and dialogic relationship, and as part of a continuous and active interaction between various segments of a whole. In applying this term in relation to memory theory, I extrapolate in particular these characteristics of Bakhtin’s use of dialogue, emphasising the continuously dynamic interplay that exists between the present, one’s recollection of the past, and the projected impact this exchange has upon the future. This is a constant process of negotiation, as the narrative of identity is grounded neither in an accurate representation of a past self, nor in a teleological outcome that will become actualized in the future. Dialogic memory is the term I use to describe this process of recreating a representation of the past, and the subsequent readjustment of present perspectives that result from the act. Dialogic memory can therefore be both individual and communal, as an event which has happened can be recollected individually, or created reciprocally.

Dialogic memory is used by both Septimus and Clarissa in *Mrs Dalloway*, although for the former it is corrupted, and therefore its potential for the future cannot be successfully realised. The traumatic nature of Septimus’s memories of war disturbs his reference of what “is” and what “was”; unable to distinguish between the two he is alienated, which thus ensures the rupture of

---

<sup>3</sup> Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, 57.

his narration. He is unable to convey his experiences, and therefore unable to receive validation for them. His ravings cause him to be labelled a lunatic, and his death is the only control he can assert. Septimus's suicide introduces the tragic figure of the missing male into Clarissa's narrative, linking *Mrs Dalloway* with *Jacob's Room*. The news of Septimus's death provides her with a space in which she can negotiate her own conflicted relationship between the past and the present. Through the void left by Septimus's absence Clarissa reconciles the disparity between her present identity and her past choices, and she imaginatively appropriates the narrative of the missing male, which then generates her epiphany and leads to a sense of reconnection in the future.

As has been discussed in the preceding chapter, Woolf has a vested interest in the relationship between the past and the present, and the individual and the community. In particular, the figure of the missing male represents both the literal, traumatic absence of a young man as well as the system according to which these men come to represent lack, where men such as Jacob and Septimus embody the ideals of the patriarchal, patriotic status quo that, ironically, leads to their death. The trauma generated by this absence exposes the need for a dialogic relationship between both individual and communal expressions of grief, and provides in the text a moment at which Woolf presents the problems that arise when prescribed displays of bereavement conflict with the realities of post-war trauma. Like many of her Modernist counterparts, Woolf was deeply affected by the traumatic upheaval caused by the First World War, and through both her political essays and her fiction she critiques the exalted valour of the heroism of war, emphasising the negative impact that nationalism and patriotism has on a local or individual scale. Her desire to "make clear the connections between private and public violence, between the domestic and the civic effects of patriarchal society, between male supremacy and the

absence of peace, and between ethics and aesthetics” (Hussey 3) permeates her fiction, exposing the interconnectedness of public and private politics. In *Mrs Dalloway* Woolf deliberately juxtaposes particular images of approved public mourning – images that perpetuate notions of patriotism and heroism – with representations of bereavement and loss that are deemed invalid by the dominant social system. Through Septimus and Clarissa she connects the process of mourning with the process of remembering, illustrating how the communal nature of public bereavement, informed by a socially approved public memory, is at odds with the many depictions of private grief that are fuelled by violent or traumatic recollections. Mourning practices become the embodied reflection of dialogic memory: images from the past, and their impact and reconstitution in the present, are enacted through public and private manifestations of grief.

In *Mrs Dalloway*, the convoluted relationship between public mourning and private grief becomes the key issue, since the tragic realities of the First World War continue to permeate the present moment. Reminders of the war are everywhere, scripted “round the base of a statue praising duty, gratitude, fidelity, love of England” (57), and in the marble stares of “Nelson, Gordon, Havelock, the black, the spectacular images of great soldiers [...] looking ahead of them” (58). Survivors are silenced from sharing the more gruesome details of their experiences; indeed Rezia is informed by Septimus’s doctor that “there was nothing the matter” (26) with him. In the aftermath of the tragedy of the war, the coalescing national identity promotes the celebration of heroic virtue, of the ability to, as it were, soldier on through hardship. In short, the reality of the past is effectively truncated from the present in the world experienced and depicted by Woolf – there is no room for the grievous realities of war in the post-war world.

Modernist writers struggled to articulate through their art not only the physical casualties of war, but also the psychological and emotional toll. The knowledge of Jacob's death at the end of *Jacob's Room* captures Mrs Flanders at the moment of her awareness of loss. In other texts, Woolf extends her examination of the trauma experienced by those left behind, such as when Mrs Flanders gestures with Jacob's shoes, and through *Mrs Dalloway* delineates the refusal of Modernists to, as Patricia Rae states, "accept the acceptance of loss" (16). Woolf portrays a mother at a moment of traumatic recognition in the culmination of *Jacob's Room*; rather than providing an avenue of reconciliation and closure in *Mrs Dalloway*, she probes deeper into disparity between individual experiences and communal narratives in an attempt to render that sense of extreme and sudden loss.

Through Septimus, Woolf illustrates another tension between private and public mourning – not of a mother left behind, but of a man who cannot reintegrate himself into civilian post-War life, who is unable to distinguish his life as a soldier from his life as a citizen. For Septimus, the horror is not left on the battlefield, for his active duty in the First World War has been extraordinarily traumatizing. His experiences – of injury, loss, hidden grief, and delayed and protracted stress – typify what Woolf saw as common to soldiers and civilians alike. The death of Septimus's comrade Evans, which happens in front of Septimus, fragments his processing of the past, inhibiting him from reconciling his military experiences with his civic present in order to move into the future with Rezia. Five years after the fact, Septimus is unable to apprehend the death of Evans as a past event. Rather, his hallucinatory episodes conflate his past and present and he perceives the battlefield around him, seeing dead or damaged soldiers who turn out to be Peter Walsh, merely strolling through Regent's Park (78). Septimus's representation of the past becomes indistinguishable, to him, from representations of the present. Any potential, temporary



unity between the past and present is achieved through a narrative engagement with the vagaries of dialogic memory, thereby validating the experiences of the trauma victim. For Septimus, however, this unity is not attainable.

Septimus's suicide arises from his inability to integrate his previous experiences into his current life; time loses all meaning for him, and his past and present coalesce into a rather difficult "gradual drawing together of everything" (18). For many trauma survivors, everything before the distressing event becomes distinctly separate from everything after, and there is great difficulty in reintegrating linear and chronological memory (Brison 68). Septimus struggles in discerning the difference between the two temporal spaces, and the potential of dialogic memory – a constant refreshing of the present moment through the continuous reconstruction of the past, both being altered through each recollection – is corrupted, for his continued visual hallucinations unexpectedly insert Evans into his contemporary civilian life.

Septimus's reactions to his involuntary recollections of trauma marginalise him and, ironically, the efforts of Drs. Holmes and Bradshaw ensure his continued estrangement from society because their emphasis on social rehabilitation is at odds with Septimus's methods of surviving in society itself. The impact of involuntary traumatic memories on Septimus's struggle to live in post-War London brings into particular focus the need for the narration of past events, as such narration and the sharing of these recollections articulate particular details of the personal experience of mourning. Memories of traumatic events can negatively intrude upon the present moment by continuously reformulating painful, violent or aggressive past events; as Freud notes in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" the symptoms of war neuroses can come about unexpectedly, without provocation (11). Despite the involuntary symptomatic nature of those neuroses, reactions to traumatic events are dictated by societal impressions of voluntary and appropriate

expressions of bereavement. Madelyn Detloff delineates a three-tiered system of culturally permissible expressions of grief: “publicly mourned loss, publicly recognized but privately mourned loss, and disavowed loss” (“Toward Survivable Public Mourning” 52). She notes that while the first two instances, regardless of the mourning ritual, affirm the loss of the individual, “[t]he third category [...] remains virtually invisible in mainstream public discourse” (52). In *Mrs Dalloway*, however, disavowed loss and the inability to mourn outside the cultural norm is the problem; Septimus’s continuous statements that he will kill himself are perceived as threatening to the post-war ordering of society, and as such he must be contained, controlled, and separated through a rest cure prescribed by Sir William (107). After the First World War, the dominant culture endorsed specific forms of national mourning, bringing together individual recollections of war into approved, communal manifestations of grief. These expressions drew the private experiences of trauma survivors into the public domain so that they coalesced into a singular, public event through a societal embrace of appropriate expressions of sorrow. Any derivations from this pattern were perceived as alarming. This is Septimus’s dilemma: his struggle is “aggravated by a culturally sanctioned process of postwar reintegration that silences and marginalizes war veterans” (DeMeester 77). His experience of and his reactions to trauma are not viewed as valid, and as Karen DeMeester argues, this silencing proves fatal for Septimus: he is unable to convey, and therefore give meaning to, his experiences (77). Indeed, when Septimus returns from the War his boss, the paternalistic Mr Brewster “advanced him to a post of considerable responsibility. They were proud of him; he had won crosses” (*MD* 98). This is a move that rewards the result of Septimus’s time overseas – primarily that he came back alive – without considering the realities of what that experience was like.

The opening scene of *Mrs Dalloway* depicts a complacent middle class that, five years after the Armistice, is oblivious to the problems of the labouring class and returning soldiers. Some people linger in a leisurely way, contemplating frivolous decisions such as the selection of a pair of gloves: “– should they be to the elbow or above it, lemon or pale grey” (21). However, although the environment is a cityscape of individual interest, these multitudinous distinctive experiences quickly become a singular, communal one, fused by the backfiring of the car. There is fluidity present in this shift from individual to communal experiences, as “strangers looked at each other and thought of the dead; of the flag; of Empire” (21). The attitude of individual consumption is abruptly discarded; the silence is rent by the sudden noise of the vehicle, and the disparate perspectives move together in the solidarity found in national identity, plunging individual thought immediately into recollections of war and nationhood. Septimus, however, is unable to engage in this moment of communal nationhood; he is “unable to pass” (17), for “this gradual drawing together of everything to one centre before his eyes, as if some horror had come almost to the surface and was about to burst into flames, terrified him” (18). He is frozen not just in place but in a cycle whereby the present moment and memories of past atrocities intermingle ceaselessly: he is unable to communicate, and therefore validate, his experiences.

He is also horrified by the humanity in community, by the relentless prowl of human nature, that “repulsive brute, with the blood-red nostrils” (102). For Septimus, human nature maintains the status quo; it circles the weak or the alienated, and “[o]nce you stumble [...] human nature is on you” (102). Susan Brison identifies such attitudes as a symptom associated with victims of a specific kind of trauma: one of human origin. She notes that when the purveyor of distress is human and the action itself intentionally inflicted – such as soldiers’ jobs in wartime – “it not only shatters one’s fundamental assumptions about the world and one’s safety in it, but it also

severs the sustaining connection between the self and the rest of humanity” (40). Thus, it endorses self-abjection: Septimus is not only alienated by the community, he also deliberately alienates himself from it. He is appalled by the stench of humanity which disables particular responses to grief, invalidating them as legitimate experiences.

As importantly, Septimus is estranged by the dominant discourse of patriarchy, which stands in as human nature. He cannot escape his past through language because he cannot articulate his experiences in a way that is meaningful to him; the narratives of stoicism and patriotism do not align with, and therefore cannot make sense of, his real emotional experience. The culture of war inhibits displays of emotion; thus, when Septimus witnesses Evans’s death, “far from showing any emotion or recognising that here was the end of a friendship, he congratulated himself upon feeling very little and very reasonably. The War had taught him” (96). However, Septimus’s war efforts combined with his suppression of emotion produce a delayed traumatic reaction that manifests itself in auditory and visual hallucinations. This alienates him further; now not only is he a soldier living a civilian life, he is also experiencing reactions that do not accord with any socially endorsed expressions of grief. Furthermore, although the trauma is acknowledged by his wife – “[Evans] had seemed a nice quiet man; a great friend of Septimus’s, and he had been killed in the War” (73-74) – the widespread culture of death on the battlefield dilutes the impact on a case-by-case basis: “But such things happen to every one. Every one has friends who were killed in the War” (74). Thus, both his grief and the loss itself become subsumed into the communal event of public mourning. The general population appropriates death as a shared experience, denying the horrific individual realities of those who were there to witness them and reinforcing a pre-war ideology.

Brison notes in her theoretical memoir *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self*, that the victim of aggressive trauma is faced with the difficult task of reintegrating himself or herself into a world that is at once vaguely familiar, in that the victim had existed in it before, and yet also unspeakably alien (9). For the trauma victim, everything within his or her frame of reference has been so irreparably altered that it can be near impossible to go back to “how things were.” Rather, a new experience of the self in the world, a public self, must be adopted (9). As DeMeester succinctly articulates,

Meaningful recovery from the ‘madness’ suffered by a trauma survivor requires an escape from the private, self-reflexive view of the traumatic event because the traumatic event and the shards of emotionally charged images and sensations associated with it retain their power when they remain encapsulated and dissociated from the social discourse of the time, the reality of experience, and the social function the suffering may serve. To recover, the survivor must escape the debilitating repetition and the isolation of his own consciousness and reestablish a connection between his pre- and post-traumatic worlds. (80)

This reconnection that must take place between the distinctive pre- and post-traumatic worlds parallels the process of dialogic memory. Extrication from the continuous cycle of trauma is achieved through a reconciliation of the past and the present through engagement with the process of dialogic remembering, where the individual must discover a new relationship between “is” and “was” through narration and sympathetic exchange. Thus, the conveyance of his or her traumatic experiences is a necessary part of reintegrating the trauma survivor into society; as Elicia Clements notes, “[t]he willingness of an amenable listener is vital to this relationship of human interchange” (59). Denying a trauma victim the validity of his or her encounter can

prolong the experience, thereby intensifying the feelings associated with it (Brison 9). The need for empathetic listening is crucial, both for the victim to authenticate his or her experience, and for the listener to acknowledge the existence of said experience. However, the narration of Septimus's memories is aborted before he can even attempt to give voice to it; his experiences and reactions to these memories are denied, and the chorus of "there was nothing the matter with him" condemns him to his death (75). Holmes insists that Septimus's symptoms are nothing more than nerves, and asserts that "health is largely a matter in our own control" (101), thereby locating the cause of Septimus's distress within the realm of Septimus's own agency. Holmes disregards the legitimacy of Septimus's illness, recommending hearty practices of eating porridge and reading Shakespeare as appropriate outside interests that will cure Septimus of his "funk" (101, 102). Sir William Bradshaw also refuses the possibility of language to give credence to Septimus's experiences, claiming that "he [would] never [speak] of 'madness'" (107). He then dismantles the possibility that his patient is truly experiencing mental crisis, choosing instead to refer to Septimus as "not having a sense of proportion" (107). He is silenced and marginalised, and his suicide becomes his defiant, communicative gesture.

Septimus's choice to enact an element of control over his trauma is indeed a private one, yet the execution of his suicide shifts the emphasis to the communal realm, both physically and metaphorically. This differs from the communities explored through the earlier street scene, through the decoration of public memorials, and through Holmes' and Bradshaw's enforcement of "normal" behaviours. There is tension between the private and the public within the text that is further complicated through Septimus's position as a soldier, an image that also represents both the individual and the community. In the role of a soldier, he is both a single identity – one man – and a member of a larger, military community. Septimus's suicide addresses this tension

by shifting what it means to bring private and public together, therefore positioning his act within a much more localised community. His death combines elements of both the personal and the social, as his action can be perceived as both an individual exploit, in that he commits suicide by himself, but also a communal one, in terms of its effects on the immediate environment.

Septimus leaves a physical void within the narration as he moves from the interior of his room to the exterior, public street. The shift is sudden, and the corporal space he occupies is marked, just moments later, by his absence. The physical trajectory of Septimus's death also disrupts the distinction between the private and the public. Septimus himself conveys the personal nature of his death into an open forum by hurling himself from the seclusion of his flat into the shared space outside. The choice to die is his personal decision, yet circumstances transport Septimus's demise into the public realm: his suicide, although isolated from the perspective within the flat, is not so from outside, for his death is witnessed by a man across the street: "[c]oming down the staircase opposite an old man stopped and stared at him. Holmes was at the door. 'I'll give it you!' he cried, and flung himself vigorously, violently down on to Mrs. Filmer's area railings" (164). For a moment Septimus is suspended at the crux between the public and the private; the view out from his apartment emphasises the singular, personal perspective of being physically alone in this moment, yet the arresting gaze of the old man marks the impossibility of this being an entirely isolated event. Septimus's suicide transcends the boundary between both these two spaces, as he lands, literally, on the fence between perspectives.

Septimus commits suicide approximately two-thirds of the way through the narrative, rendering himself as yet another victim, although a belated one, of the First World War. Septimus is now an additional missing male figure, and like Jacob, a reminder of the cost of war. At one time, however, he himself was also a witness to the brutal atrocity of death in the

trenches. Septimus's death is not a narration only of himself as the tragic, missing male; it is a reflection of Evans's story as well. Just as Septimus is hindered from finding an empathetic audience to witness the narration of his traumatic experiences, the cultural practices in post-War England disallow Septimus's kind of witnessing of Evans's demise. The abyss left in Septimus's wake reflects back the void he experienced through Evans's death; indeed, Susan Cole argues that this becomes the foundational, and therefore problematic, quality of the war veteran: "the figure of the bereaved male friend – whose very being is constituted by the loss of war mates – becomes the war's representative *par excellence*, and that post-war disconnection and disillusion will thus be articulated specifically in terms of the creation and loss of powerful male friendships" (470). Septimus's identity becomes bound up with the tragic loss of Evans; his relation to the absent male figure, due to the horrific nature of his memories, is undermined through the refusal of the community to validate his reactions to Evans's death, and by extension, Evans's death itself. The abyss left by Septimus's death is not simply Woolf's use of the absent, male character; it is also her depiction of how his story, and thus the possibility of a larger dialogue, is dissolved. We are left to relate to Septimus solely through his public relations to other people, primarily Clarissa, although it is through the absence of this figure that his narrative is validated.

The missing male figure embodies, through the very nature of his disembodiment, one of the primary sources of tension within the text. The space left in the wake of Septimus's suicide is both private and public in nature, as he is grieved on an individual level by his family, but also on a communal level, for his story can be every soldier's story. Thus, he becomes absorbed into a narrative that extends beyond the private boundaries of his flat, both a patriotic one, as Sir William and his wife retell Septimus's story at Clarissa's party through their own biases, and an



alternative one involving a different vision of how public and private might intersect, through Clarissa's interaction with the sudden news of his death.

The eventual intersection of Clarissa's story with Septimus's demonstrates Woolf's alternative representation of public and private narration. As much as Septimus struggles to negotiate his memories of the past with his present existence, so too does Clarissa struggle with the relationship between her past and present. She is very much a figure unanchored in her contemporary life, identifying herself as her husband's wife, "not even Clarissa anymore" (13) and acknowledging her incapacity to maintain a concrete existence in the present moment. She has become ephemeral in her current role: "[b]ut often now this body she wore [...] this body, with all its capacities, seemed nothing, nothing at all. She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown" (13). In the immediate moment, all she can do is to perceive herself in relation to Richard; the individual Clarissa, with past experiences and individual recollections, exists in her memories of adolescence, and separate from her current self. The disjointed and fragmented nature of Clarissa illuminates a disconnect between herself as an individual, and her larger, contemporary community. She is now only costumed by her existing body, and her difficulty in being identified by it, or through it, is linked to a sense of betrayal at its failures to stay healthy. She is aware, now more so than before, of the fleeting nature of life, sensing that "[n]arrower and narrower would her bed be" (35). Her difficulty in wearing her body, in being identified by it rather than identifying herself, complicates her relationship to the community at large; withdrawing into the privacy of her house she feels beatified, "purified" (33), and the intrusion of the community, in the form of a phone message stating Richard's lunch plans with Lady Bruton, causes a pang.

Clarissa's struggle to relate to her identity in the present is linked with her inability to integrate her past self with her current self, and emphasizes the disjointed nature of her experience of public and private faces. Like Septimus, Clarissa constantly returns to her past, and she reviews the formative years of her young adulthood and assesses the consequences of significant decisions she had made in her youth. However, the party puts the two characters on different footings: "[t]he appearances of her old friends validate Clarissa's sense of connectedness with the past, but no such validation is possible for Septimus" (Smith 317). The novel moves along by the circling of these two, private narratives; they draw closer and closer together until they converge in a very public moment during Clarissa's party, when Clarissa is drawn into a conversation with Sir William's wife, who explains to her that "[a] young man (that is what Sir William is telling Mr. Dalloway) had killed himself. He had been in the army.' Oh! thought Clarissa, in the middle of my party, here's death, she thought'" (201).

The involuntary eruption of death that breaks into the party overwhelms Clarissa and she withdraws into a private alcove, only to be struck by the peculiarity of being suddenly alone, and by the oddness of the naked angles a room takes on when it has been divested of its occupants: "The party's splendour fell to the floor, so strange it was to come in alone in her finery" (202). Clarissa's flitting about the party, never resting with one group for any length of time, and her continual reassurance of Peter and Sally that "I shall come back" (199) are physical reflections of her ruptured dialogic memory. Her past is not refreshing her present moment, and the presence of Peter only establishes more firmly the insecurities Clarissa feels in her role as Mrs Richard Dalloway: "She could see Peter out of the tail of her eye, criticising her, there, in that corner. Why, after all, did she do these things [...]. He made her see herself; exaggerate [...] [t]here he was wandering off, and she must speak to him. But she would not get the chance. Life was that

– humiliation, renunciation” (184). The fragmentation Clarissa is experiencing is put at bay when the news of Septimus’s death suddenly forces her from her performed role as hostess, and ushers her into a sudden and unexpected contemplation of loss and identification with this absent figure. Clarissa connects herself to this figure of the missing male in some capacity, although she is uncertain of the precise nature of her relation to Septimus, noting only that “[s]omehow it was her disaster – her disgrace. It was her punishment to see sink and disappear here a man, there a woman, in this profound darkness, and she forced to stand here in her evening dress” (203). Clarissa casts herself into the passive role of observer, noting that her inactivity makes her complicit, somehow, in this young man’s desperate act of communication.

Clarissa’s relationship to death is complex, stemming from the accidental death of her sister when they were young. This memory manifests itself in her extremely visceral reactions whenever she is confronted by unexpected loss: “Always her body went through it, when she was told, first, suddenly, of an accident; her dress flamed, her body burnt” (202). Her reaction to the shock of death is intense, but reflection upon the subject engenders an entirely different reaction. She contemplates the nature of people after they die, and with Peter Walsh creates a theory on death that permits the investiture of an eternal quality to a person, an intangible essence that can become absorbed into the communal experience of life when the individual experience has ended. On the top of a bus going up Shaftesbury Avenue, a young Clarissa and Peter co-create a theory that accounts for an eternal quality to a person, one that challenges the transient nature of “the part of us which appears [...] so momentary” (168) with “the other, the unseen part of us, which spreads wide, the unseen might survive, be recovered somehow attached to this person or that” (168). For Clarissa, this unnamed permanence that can be attached to the missing figure of Septimus grants her the ability to overcome the disparity

between her past and her present, and leads to the “transcendental significance” that David Lodge attaches to narrative epiphany (147). She absorbs the tragic loss of a young man in order to remind herself of the fleeting nature of life: “Odd, incredible; she had never been so happy. Nothing could be slow enough; nothing last too long” (*MD* 203). The figure of the tragic, missing male moves Clarissa towards the crystallizing epiphanic moment when she is able to move herself back into the communal present, back out to the party, but also when she is finally able to approach Sally and Peter within this context. Clarissa’s attraction to the past is validated through the presence of these two figures with whom she shares more of her past than she does with Richard (200). If her parties are a gift to life, then this party, like Septimus’s suicide, becomes a defiant gesture against the vision of the present that is enforced by figures such as Bradshaw or the Prime Minister.

Clarissa’s consideration of life moves from her individual, private contemplation out into the public space, which mirrors the physical trajectory of Septimus’s suicide. Clarissa connects herself to this larger, communal expanse when she glances through her windows and into the old woman’s bedroom directly opposite (203). She is arrested in her contemplation at the surprise of seeing the woman staring back at her, and this visual connection generates a stream of consciousness that results in Clarissa’s identification with the figure of Septimus. Clarissa is physically situated in an individual space that is stretched between these two communal spaces, and she acknowledges that “[i]t was fascinating, with people still laughing and shouting in the drawing-room, to watch that old woman, quite quietly, going to bed alone” (204). Clarissa’s contemplation of the old woman is mirrored a few lines later in her reflection of the absent Septimus, and she expresses gladness that he “had done it; thrown it away while they went on living” (204). Withdrawing from the action of her party allows Clarissa to meditate on the

impact of Septimus's death. She can then appropriate the story of the missing male figure, using it to move herself towards her crystalline epiphany at the party. Clarissa orients herself around Septimus's absence, and the striking nature both of his death and the expression such a loss conveys allows her to integrate her past with her present self. Clarissa is able to recognize that the gift of her party is one that acknowledges the past and her adolescence with Sally and Peter, while celebrating the present and her marriage to Richard and their daughter, and this recognition, this successful engagement with dialogic memory, becomes a productive gesture towards the future and the possibilities it holds. Clarissa successfully integrates both her past and her present, signified by her ability to move back into the communal experience of the party. Clarissa steps into the space left by Septimus's absence, drawing together the disparate, individual narratives into a communal expression, but one that is different from the official precepts of Bradshaw's Proportion-Conversion society. Proportion, or the measured sense of 'normal' behaviour as determined by Bradshaw, is linked not just to an ideal of Britishness but also to British hegemony through its twin, Conversion. It is the will to impose such norms and such uniformity at home and throughout the Empire that Clarissa resists, both through her attitudes to Bradshaw – "Why did the sight of him, talking to Richard, curl her up?" (200) – and through her party. The community that she creates is much more localized, and she brings into her party different segments of the society that remain distinct. The Prime Minister, Ellie Henderson – whom Clarissa did not want to invite – Sally Seton, who shows up uninvited, and Peter, who is invited at the last moment: these almost arbitrary guests are given an opportunity to connect without any pressure to do so. This type of interaction is not hegemonically enforced, and thereby dismantles the top-down authority of the Proportion-Conversion society, enabling, instead, the possibility of lateral and spontaneous association.

One must consider the ethics of Clarissa's absorption of Septimus's story. Although she appropriates and uses it for her individual purposes, it is subsumed and employed in a productive manner. Clarissa's use of Septimus's narrative permits the element of communication inherent in Septimus's death finally to find an audience and an empathetic listener. The mutual exchange of benefits between Septimus and Clarissa neutralizes any reading of the text that suggests she is the sole beneficiary in this exchange, and therefore exploiting the traumatic figure of the missing male. The capacity Clarissa has as an empathetic audience to Septimus's narrative is not displaced by the fact that Septimus himself does not experience validation; the presence of a compassionate listener does not suggest that rehabilitation is therefore imminent. Septimus himself cannot be saved by a communal understanding of his narrative; the nature of his trauma is so severe that he may well have ended his life regardless. His potential for redemption is inhibited by the disjuncture that resides between public and approved representations of mourning and his actual, emotional reactions to trauma. Any possibility of Septimus being able to use dialogic memory appropriately has been stripped away from him through Holmes's and Bradshaw's evocation of the Proportion-Conversion society. Rather, what Woolf explores through *Mrs Dalloway* is the possibility for connection that exists in epiphany, of a sudden shock that does not provide an answer but rather changes perspective. This does not, however, diminish the emphasis on the listener to bear witness to a tragedy. As Detloff notes, "it might be more fruitful to focus on the potential listener's ability to hear, to see, and to recognize trauma when its effects are articulated by others" (*Persistence* 14). There is a need on the part of the potential audience to empathetically "hear [...] see [and] recognize" (14) the other, rather than to force, promote, or expect recollections that reinforce existing social assumptions. Clarissa's

response validates Septimus's experience, and validates his anti-social choices regardless of their cost.

The figure of the tragic, missing male becomes a crux around which various narratives and expressions of dialogic memory coalesce in *Mrs Dalloway*. The space occupied by such an individual becomes charged through his disappearance, as women like Clarissa and Betty Flanders must resituate themselves in relation to the status quo. It is thus the young man's embodiment of patriarchy, patriotism, and Empire that becomes the issue for those left behind. Therefore, while the void left in the wake of Septimus's death speaks to the ineffective, normalizing attempts to reintegrate war veterans into society, the appropriation of his memory within the private, domestic realms provides others with an opportunity to establish a different vision of what community means.

## Chapter Three

“we are for ever mixing ourselves with unknown quantities”<sup>4</sup>:

Communal Discourses in *The Waves*.

In her essay “A Sketch of the Past,” Virginia Woolf distinguishes moments of being from moments of non-being, noting that the revelation that occurs through moments of being – or what James Joyce terms “epiphanies” (Beja 14) – comes from a sudden unveiling of an interconnecting larger design that emerges out of the obfuscating cotton wool of daily experience (72). This unanticipated insight “come[s] to the surface unexpectedly” (71) and illuminates the threads of connection that gather everyone into a “hidden pattern” (72). The emphasis here is that one is much more than his or her corporeal restraints. As Clarissa Dalloway expresses in her theory on death, although the transient nature of the human experience dominates daily existence, for death will come and our life is brief, there is something more that persists beyond this brief flash of light; there is “the unseen part of us, which spreads wide, ... [which] might survive, be uncovered somehow attached to this person or that” (*MD* 168). This thread, which is interwoven into the hidden design, connects one person to another and also to the community, and can be retrieved through the act of remembering. Thus, the threads of connection that bind self to other, and ultimately to Woolf’s conceived, encompassing artistic work, do not dissipate upon death but continue to exist beyond the ties of physical life.

The search for this unseen connection is suggested through the final scene of *Jacob’s Room*, as Mrs Flanders, at a loss over the death of her son and the absence left in his wake, gestures helplessly towards Bonamy with a pair of Jacob’s old shoes (143). Her movements here suggest an unwillingness to accept the finalization of the death of her son, that these shoes cannot be all that remains. The ending of *Jacob’s Room* takes the reader to the moment of utter disruption that

---

<sup>4</sup> Woolf, *The Waves*, 85.



is precipitated by unexpected death, to the instant of abjection when the trauma of loss prefigured in the absence of this young man is fully realised. This disturbs the “cotton wool” for those left behind – it defamiliarises the shoes – and makes alien the present moment for the individual who remains. The void left in Jacob’s wake represents the precipice of an epiphany – the moment when the familiarity of a life that contains this individual is irrevocably altered, the tear in the cotton wool has been noted, and the possibility for revelation exists but has yet to be experienced.

The potential for revelation that is presented in *Jacob’s Room* is realised further through *Mrs Dalloway*, in which the state experienced in the wake of unexpected loss permits, through its defamiliarising capacities, an alternative perspective, a glimpse of the pattern that lies behind the cotton wool. Clarissa, upon learning of Septimus’s suicide, experiences a momentary epiphany in which the unexpected loss causes her to perceive, briefly, the threads that connect an individual to the community in such a way that challenges the top-down hierarchy of the status quo. Furthermore, she perceives the link that exists between the self in the present moment and the self in the past. She then reorients herself in relation to her past through dialogic memory – that is, Clarissa refreshes the present moment by restructuring herself in relation to past perceived conceptions of herself. However, the epiphany that engenders Clarissa’s reconciliation of self also reveals the structural fissures in the hegemonic order and provides an opportunity for Clarissa to establish a new sense of her social identity. Clarissa is able to mediate the disparate fragments of her identity – her own perceptions of herself as a young girl with the idea of herself as Mrs. Richard Dalloway – and shore them about her, imaginatively subsuming the loss of Septimus’s death within her own narrative, and thereby enacting connection, linking both the self with the self, as well as the self with the community, or other.

In *The Waves* the loss of Percival is much like the loss of Jacob and Septimus: sudden, in service to God and country, and a further example of the failures of war and of patriarchy to protect their active representatives. The traumatic death of this young man shatters the identities of Bernard, Rhoda, Neville, Louis, Susan, and Jinny, as their constructed selves are bound into the existence of one another, and are formed around the heroic figure of Percival. His demise, like Jacob's and Septimus's, reveals the abyss of death, and the space he once occupied is now called more sharply into focus. In other words, his loss of life enacts a moment of being, and *The Waves* moves into an examination of the possibility that is alluded to in *Mrs Dalloway* when Clarissa reenters her party and moves towards both her husband and her friends. In *The Waves*, the defamiliarising trauma of loss alienates the six individuals, crumbling their identities as they struggle to reorient themselves about a structure whose centre has collapsed. By turning to their memories of friends, the six seek to reconstruct themselves in relation to one another, revisiting and grounding themselves upon recollections of their shared childhood. Through this dialogic process of engaging with the past and the present, and the individual and the community, Bernard, Jinny, Louis, Neville, Rhoda, and Susan turn to memories of the private interactions between intimates. They rupture public discourses constructed through patriarchal endorsements of country and empire, and emphasise the failure of a society that could both create and endorse the loss of an entire generation of young men.

The figure of Percival occupies a unique position within *The Waves*. Like Jacob in *Jacob's Room*, he is a silent character whose identity is distilled through the other six characters' perspectives. Although the reader does not receive any intimations of Percival's individual thoughts or perspectives, Percival is nevertheless intimately connected to the structural integrity of the text. He is the central figure about whom the six children coalesce in their childhood, and

the confident and heroic young man they gather to celebrate during the first dinner scene at a restaurant in London. Indeed, even Percival's death is central: it occurs during the fourth section, midway through both the nine-sectioned text, and thus, in the structural metaphor of the novel, the trajectory of the sun's daily course. His loss undermines the integrity of the six individuals' relations to him, as well as to each other, and Bernard, Jinny, Susan, Louis, Neville and Rhoda struggle to reconfigure themselves around his absence.

Percival is first noticed by Neville, who, during the children's church service at school, leans sideways so as to draw Percival into his line of sight (*TW* 24). Neville identifies Percival as inherently different from those around him, noting that he sits "upright among the smaller fry" (24). Percival's commanding physicality is tempered by his "blue [...] and oddly inexpressive eyes" that stare with "indifference" (24), grounding Percival's seductiveness in his corporeal magnificence; Louis notes that, although Percival's gait is rough and clumsy, others are not deterred from willingly flowing after him. But it is not only Percival's physical presence that is emphasised; when Louis observes that "[h]is magnificence is that of some mediaeval commander" (25), Percival is intimately and immediately connected to representations of military prowess and accomplishment, as well as the precepts of nationalism associated with destruction. Percival is a magnetic figure that inspires, and a commanding presence that effortlessly aligns the schoolyard community about him.

Percival is also the grounding centre in the structure that connects the six friends' constructions of personal identity in relation to one another. The magnitude of his figure, as noted by the children during their time together at school, draws them to him in youth, and again as young adults in their early twenties. The six convene at a restaurant in London to celebrate Percival's impending move to India, and await the arrival of this unifying young man. Upon the

initial meeting at the restaurant, which occurs a few years since the last time all were together, Rhoda, Jinny, Susan, Neville, Bernard and Louis find it difficult to mix one with the other again as they each come to the table from their divergent lives. Time, along with the diversity of individual experiences, has thrust demarcations between the six friends, as change has inevitably occurred since last they identified themselves as one unit. The best they can do is preen and shuffle as they anticipate the final, integral centre about which they constitute themselves. Neville tempers his nervousness by being the first to arrive at the restaurant, subsuming himself in the anticipation of again seeing Percival (85). Louis' arrival is infused with his continuous negotiation of his foreigner status, and he takes pains to carefully manage his external appearance (86). Susan and Rhoda approach the table emanating both displeasure and fear: Susan's scornful attitude towards London is revealed as she steps into the light of the restaurant, illuminating her disgust of "the futility" (86) of the city, while Rhoda, having survived the tortuous path to the table, but not yet the pain of reintroduction and communion, slips unnoticed into her seat (86-87). The arrival of Jinny momentarily draws the disparate friends into a semblance of unity, as her presence demands those in attendance focus only on her physicality, yet this sense of singularity is ephemeral and fleeting, grounded only in the bodily reaction her intense sensuality garners (87).

The impossibility of orienting themselves without Percival renders them fluid, lacking unity, merely "silhouettes, hollow phantoms moving mistily without a background" (88). Lucio Ruotolo argues that the six need a leader to protect them from the tyranny of life which pushes them into "postures of dependence"; in Percival they find an ideal "who far surpasses their own capacity to emulate him" (153). This inability to come together as a cohesive unit without Percival represents the necessary function he performs for each of them – each of the six

individuals respond to his initial absence differently, but all of them are demonstrating, in their own way, the necessity of his presence. It is Percival's presence that is needed to give form to these "hollow phantoms" (*TW* 88), drawing them firmly to one another; moreover, he is the man whose presence will revitalize them, and "replenish [their] dreams"(87). Thus, Percival's bearing stems not simply from the consideration his physical demeanour commands; it is also from the sense of rejuvenation he provides the six, a rejuvenation Christine Froula casts as the embodiment of their desires "for wholeness, for death, for the 'perfect vessel' whose fragments they are" (206). Isolated at the table, each of the six friends exists at the periphery of a potential, communal whole.

The potential for unity is realised upon the much-anticipated arrival of Percival, and each of the six individuals moves from isolation into a temporary community found in the shared pleasure at his presence. The unsettling air of Neville's nervousness is quieted as his "tree flowers [and his] heart rises" (88), and order is once again imposed. There is a sense of calm that accompanies this new arrival, and, although the seven individuals have had varied experiences since they were "separated by [their] youth," Bernard notes that "sitting together now we love each other and believe in our own endurance" (89). The moment retrieves them from "the darkness of solitude" (89) and engenders a flurry of individual recollections of shared experiences of childhood. Bernard recalls the awareness of sensation that accompanies being bathed, while Susan remembers that the "boot boy made love to the scullery-maid in the kitchen garden" (89). Rhoda's and Neville's memories are unsettling, as Rhoda reminisces about her anxiety and Neville upon hearing of the man's murder under "the immitigable apple-tree" (89). Louis recalls their growth, how they all "changed [...] became unrecognizable" (90), and Susan remembers how the daily routine of school could be assuaged by the private view from one attic

window (90). As the six speaking figures return to memories of their times in childhood and at Elvedon, they close the distance that demarcates one from the other, drawing themselves slowly back to the present moment, into which they reemerge “here and [...] together” (91). The arrival of Percival brings together these six disparate perspectives into a distinct entity that is both singular and multi-faceted, much as the “single flower [is...] now a seven-sided flower, many petalled [...] a whole flower to which every eye brings its own contributions” (91-92). The presence of Percival unifies disparities, in individual memories of a shared childhood. As Bernard thinks, the seven individuals have come together “to make one thing [...] seen by many eyes simultaneously” (91), and the power of this gathering is encapsulated within the divergence of perspective.

Within *The Waves*, Percival symbolizes regimented, patriarchal order. Similar to Jacob and Septimus before him, Percival is linked intimately to the governing structures of society. In particular, he represents an imperialist ideal, plucking from obscure chaos the uneducated non-European, and improving him or her through the instillation of regimented order. Indeed, this is one of the many qualities about Percival that Bernard admires, and he imagines that Percival will enact his role in faraway India with adeptness and authority:

I see a pair of bullocks who drag a low cart [...]. The cart sways incompetently from side to side. Now one wheel sticks in the rut, and at once innumerable natives in loin-cloths swarm round it, chattering excitedly. But they do nothing [...]. Over all broods a sense of the uselessness of human exertion [...]. But now, behold, Percival advances [...]. By applying the standards of the West, by using the violent language that is natural to him, the bullock-cart is righted in less than five minutes. The Oriental problem is solved. (98)

The local setting is portrayed as inferior and “incompetent”; the “innumerable natives” are perceived as animalistic in their inability to apply rational thought to solve the crisis of the cart, choosing instead to chatter excitedly round it like monkeys. Despite the inglorious mode of transporting himself aboard a “flea-bitten mare” (98), in Bernard’s vision Percival’s dominating stature commands as much attention in India as it did in England, and it is Percival’s instinctive use of “the violent language that is natural to him” (98) that retrieves the imagined moment from chaos.

This imperial command that is inherent in Percival’s character renders the suddenness of his passing that much more traumatic. The realization of Jacob’s death is just as surprising, as the reader discovers he has indeed perished overseas. Septimus’s death is equally as sudden: in his haste he dashes about his room, eyeing “Mrs. Filmer’s nice clean bread-knife” (*MD* 64), as well as the gas fire and razors. It is not until he lights upon the window that the reader becomes aware he is searching out a means to commit suicide: “There remained only the window, the large Bloomsbury lodging-house window; the tiresome, the troublesome, and rather melodramatic business of opening the window and throwing himself out” (164), an action he pursues mere moments after articulating this desire. The expeditiousness of both Jacob’s and Septimus’s deaths mirror Percival’s; as Percival’s presence moves the image of the entrenched cart from disorder to order, his accidental death, which occurs when his horse trips reverses this flow, plunges the six individuals’ construction of identity into chaos (*TW* 109). Through accident as much as agency, Jacob, Septimus, and Percival challenge socially endorsed perceptions of the infallibility of youth, the glory of dying for one’s country, and the inability of a patriarchal society to forestall such incidents. They illustrate the divergence of idealised heroism from the realities of war, destruction, and foreign, colonial policy.

As Jacob's demise did for Bonamy and Mrs Flanders, and Septimus's suicide did for Rezia and Clarissa, so too does the unexpected nature of Percival's death generate a dissolution of all that has been familiar for the six friends, and in particular for Neville, Rhoda, and Bernard. This defamiliarising trauma creates a sudden sense of disorder, and results in feelings of alienation and an annihilation of self as the six characters' co-constructed identities are shattered.

For Neville, Percival's death is not simply about the loss of a friend; it destabilises all that was, moments earlier, structured and familiar, and plunges him into chaos. The effect of this loss is enormous, and the catastrophic event itself becomes apocalyptic, submerging the lights of the world in darkness: "[a]ll is over" (109). Like this ominous darkness that renders all foreign to Neville, Percival's death also disrupts Neville's own connections to his past self: "Barns and summer days in the country rooms where we sat – all now lies in the unreal world which is gone. My past is cut from me" (109). Neville's sense of identity is, as for the other individuals in the text, based upon recollections of himself as an individual as well as a member of a communal experience, and is constructed in a continuous dialogic process between the past and present. Thus, Neville's reordering of himself in relation to this past is no longer possible. Because his recollected self is not isolated or individual – because it depends upon others – the loss of Percival decimates the structure upon which it depends. He is no longer able to orient his present in relation to his past – Percival's death rends that past from Neville, disrupting the constant interchange between these points. Neville articulates this sense of destruction, professing that "[f]rom this moment I am solitary," immediately connecting this isolation to the fragmentation of his identity: "No one will know me now" (109). Struggling to reformulate himself with a past rendered alien and a present made unfamiliar and isolating, Neville resists the ties to community that have threaded together his identity from childhood. Suzette Henke states that Neville



“embraces melancholic isolation [...]. Like Septimus Smith, he has lost the ability to feel and succumbs to symptoms of emotional constriction” (137). However, it is not that Neville has lost the ability to feel; rather, it is that he feels too much, having immersed himself in his pain upon hearing of Percival’s death. Neville refuses to move outside of his agony, choosing not to climb the stair and to “stand for one moment beneath the immitigable tree” (*TW* 110), the transcendent image for Neville that is associated with destruction, horror, and loss.

Similar to Neville, Rhoda experiences momentary stasis when, upon hearing of Percival’s death, she is unable to cross the puddle, just as Neville is unable to pass the apple tree (114). However, whereas Neville experiences the death of Percival as a death of his self – it cuts his past from him, as though history were a limb, and therefore undercuts his means of ordering his identity – Rhoda experiences the loss of Percival as a deprivation of something stable to which she anchored herself. Rhoda, who struggles to maintain a firm grasp on her reality, for “[o]ne moment does not lead to another” (9), needs something solid in order to maintain a tenuous connection and cohesion to the world. Rhoda is also overwhelmed by Percival’s demise, feeling alienated and ungrounded “[u]nless I can stretch and touch something hard, I shall be blown down the eternal corridors for ever [sic]” (115). Percival’s death rends Rhoda from her corporeal connections, and she is unable to draw herself “across the enormous gulf into my body” (115). Alone, Rhoda struggles to process not just the loss but also the disruption of connection between her selves and herself and the larger community.

Bernard is the third figure given voice in the section detailing the immediate reactions of the friends following news of Percival’s death, and like Neville and Rhoda, he too is devastated to learn of Percival’s sudden and tragic ending. However, unlike the previous two, Bernard experiences the tragedy of the loss of his friend in tandem with the joy of fatherhood, emotions

that are intimately connected in the continuous cycle of life and death. Indeed, they are confusing, and Bernard chronicles his descent downstairs – opposed to Neville’s stalled ascent – as bewildering: “I do not know which is sorrow, which joy [...]. I am upheld by pillars, shored up on either side by stark emotions; but which is sorrow, which is joy” (110). Because of this fusion of loss with new life, the sudden loss of Percival neither annihilates Bernard’s identity, as it does for Neville, nor disrupts his own connections to himself, as it does for Rhoda. Rather, although grief leads to his desire for isolation – “I need silence, and to be alone and to go out” (110) – the conflation of this grief with joy ensures that there is a thread of connection to draw him back.

Rather than the apocalyptic visions of chaos that both Neville and Rhoda experience, Bernard perceives the world from an alternative vantage point, one where he can “note the rhythm, the throb, but as a thing in which [he has] no part” (110). Bernard, therefore, assumes a voyeuristic role, observing the world as it moves on beyond the loss of Percival. He is still isolated, but watching “two old men stumble along the pavement” he becomes aware that Percival’s death has not utterly decimated his reality, for despite the tragic loss, “[t]he machine still works” (110). Bernard’s sense of isolation is fuelled by the unfamiliarity that death brings to one’s world – all must now be filtered through this new way of ordering reality and experience, where the central figure’s death exposes a lack in the structure. However, the structure still exists for Bernard, and although his sense of his past and present selves has been disrupted, he is oriented towards the future through his son.

The loss of Percival is significant for Neville, Rhoda and Bernard because it is a personal one – a friendship lost, and memories and identity compromised and refigured. However, the trauma of this event also stems from the fact that such loss can never be only personal; it is always

public as well: the defamiliarising ripple that emanates from the figure of the missing male is therefore also ideological in nature. The loss of Percival disrupts individual notions and constructions of identity, but it also gestures, as do the losses of Jacob and Septimus, to a rupture in the public, and therefore patriarchal, sphere. As Bernard notes, Percival's death is not solely an individual loss. Rather, Bernard informs the members of the world from which he is momentarily apart that you "have lost a leader, whom you would have followed" (111). The irony is that Percival, along with Jacob and Septimus, represents a social system that ultimately is responsible for his death, and this incongruity illuminates the hypocrisy and the falsity of patriarchal constructs. The inglorious nature of Percival's death undermines the heroism with which he is associated; the loss of such a man irreparably tears the social fabric, and leaves a rent in the "cotton wool" that is unable to be fixed.

The loss of Percival and the patriarchal disorder that his death represents leads to a moment of being, in which the possibility of an alternative social structure can be glimpsed. For example, the sudden shock Rhoda experiences at learning of Percival's death results in a revelation. She sees the destruction of what was once beautiful and whole: "lightning has gashed the tree and the flowering branch has fallen" (118). The unexpected severing of the branch from the tree lets Rhoda see the "thing that lies beneath the semblance of the thing," and for her "[t]he structure is now visible" (118). The suddenness of Percival's death, like the suddenness of the lightning strike, has the potential to destroy what was once apparently whole and organic. However, it is through this act of destruction that an alternative order is exposed; the "thing" that is masked beyond the cotton wool, much like the other mode of connection that is veiled beyond the patriarchal modes of connection, is suddenly revealed.

After learning about Percival's death Rhoda takes herself to the opera, where she watches the players on stage constructing "a perfect dwelling-place," of which "[v]ery little is left outside" (118). This she associates this with the configuration of the alternative order, and is able to do so because "Percival, by his death, has made me this gift" (118) – an opening up of her perspective so that she can apprehend what usually remains hidden. With the formation now complete, "what is inchoate is here stated; we are not so various or so mean" (118). The conjoining nature of it highlights similarity over difference, unity over divergence; this is both "our triumph" and "our consolation" (118). For Rhoda, such an arrangement represents the possibility of connection that lies in the pattern beyond the "cotton wool," and the other structural order, temporarily perceived through a moment of being, thus symbolises recourse to the dominant, hegemonic, and uniform tenets of the patriarchal order.

This continual turning to one another is a ceaseless process of construction that negotiates the relationship of the self to that of the community. The death of Percival shatters these previous bonds, and in the wake of the dissolution of identity and the alienation of self the friends seek to reconstruct themselves in relation to one another, both Rhoda and Bernard turning to memories of their friends in order to ground themselves in recollections of their shared past. As Percival's death sweeps back the curtain that has worked to veil the indecency of humanity, it reveals for Rhoda the hideousness of a life where "the cars race and roar and hunt us to death like bloodhounds," and the people that inhabit it defile everything, "leaving even our love impure, now touched by their dirty fingers" (115). Into this image of apocalyptic chaos, where humanity is exposed as slovenly and disgusting, and masking its base desires behind "prettiness [...] and privacy" (115), Rhoda attempts to ground herself through her constructions of her friends' initial expressions of grief upon learning of Percival's death:

I think of Louis, reading the sporting column of an evening newspaper, afraid of ridicule; a snob. He says, looking at the people passing, he will shepherd us if we will follow [...]. Thus he will smooth out the death of Percival to his satisfaction [...]. Bernard, meanwhile, flops red-eyed into some arm-chair. He will have out his notebook; under D, he will enter 'Phrases to be used on the deaths of friends.' Jinny, pirouetting across the room, will perch on the arm of his chair and ask, 'Did he love me?' 'More than he loved Susan?' Susan, engaged to her farmer in the country, will stand for a second with the telegram before her, holding a plate; and then, with a kick of her heel, slam to the oven door. Neville, after staring at the window through his tears will see through his tears, and ask, 'Who passes this window?' (116)

By envisioning the varied reactions of her five friends, informed by her memories of their mannerisms and personal nuances, Rhoda connects herself to these images of Louis, Bernard, Jinny, Susan and Neville, and thus to their local community, beginning the tenuous process of reconnecting herself, thread by thread, to the altered structure of the now six-sided flower.

Bernard also strives for connection with his friends in the immediate vacuum surrounding the loss of Percival, and, like Rhoda, he turns to images of the other five, desiring a connection with someone who also knew this poor young man: "I want some one with whom [...] to remember how he scratched his head; some one he was at ease with and liked" (114). Bernard's necessity to engage in a dialogic memory with those who knew Percival is generated from his desire to reformulate the present moment in terms of this loss. Bernard is pulled back into the structured, everyday order he momentarily drifts away from, and is able to attempt to reconnect himself, as Rhoda does, to this newly formulated six-sided image.

Several years after Percival's death, the six friends meet up for a dinner that recalls the earlier evening at Hampton Court. However, whereas in the first dinner the presence of Percival was required to provide structural integrity and create a sense of community, in the second dinner the six friends must reconstitute themselves in relation to one another without the previously centralising structural component. No longer is the coming together solely an exercise in reclaiming identity, of emerging from the surrounding darkness, such as the process was in their youth. Rather, the entire structure must be reenvisioned to allow for the absence of Percival. The initial meeting of friends, awkward at the first dinner, becomes uncomfortable and painful at Hampton Court as the six go about "joining ragged edges, raw edges; [for] only gradually [...] does meeting become agreeable" (154). The estrangement precipitated by the missing male figure, and compounded by the passing of the years, requires a reformulation of one to the others as the six struggle to centre themselves and recapture an element of togetherness around Percival's absence. Bernard notes the effects of the passage of time and how "we are all swept on by the torrent of things grown so familiar" (158), yet mixed in with this onward rush, during "[t]his moment of reconciliation, when we meet together united" comes "youth" (160). Coming together solely in the immediate instant proves impossible, as the unfamiliar barriers between them are insurmountable through only the present moment. Thus, all retreat to a common grounding touchstone – their collective past – as a means of reordering themselves in relation to the others, and therefore reformulating a new community that takes into account the passing of time.

Neville recalls nascent images of their time at school: "[w]e stand a yellow tin bath in the middle of the room" (156), an image that complements Bernard's memory of standing as a child under Mrs Constable's sponge, and feeling rivulets of bathwater drip down his spine, causing

“[b]right arrows of sensation [to] shoot on either side” (17). Susan recalls hiding in the bushes in the grounds of Elvedon, with “[t]he changing travelling lights” (157) of the passing sun wandering over her, and Louis turns back to his memory of Jinny kissing him in the garden (160). By shifting their focus from the present to connections forged in the past, the six individuals are able to overcome the discomfort of meeting for the first time in years and to conceive of this moment as the culmination of their shared pasts, communal present, and collective future: all is just this moment. In this suspended instant, their “separate drops are dissolved,” and each consciousness, as an individual, is “extinct, lost in the abysses of time, in the darkness” (165). Joined as they are to one another, little by little they are called back together to the present moment, and Bernard begs the others to hear how “the world has hailed us back to it. I heard for one moment the howling winds of darkness as we passed beyond life” (165). Time, and the noises of the everyday – “hoot, hoot (the cars)” (165) – calls them back, and Bernard announces, triumphantly, “[w]e are landed; we are on shore; we are sitting, six of us, at a table” (165-66). By recalling moments of shared community from their past, the six individuals are able to overcome the boundaries that a lifetime of personal experience has placed between them. The present moment is now continuously refreshed as Bernard, Louis, Jinny, Neville, Rhoda, and Susan turn and return to images of the past. Neville articulates how, as they engage in a perpetual process of dialogic memory, they find that “time comes back” (167), and Louis notes that “it is difficult not to weep, calling ourselves little children” (167). Through this dialogic exchange between the individual and the collective, past and present, the six friends are able to position themselves in an alternative construction that notes the absence of Percival without letting this tragic loss undermine the integrity of their joined structure.

This ability to overcome the barriers between individual and remembered communities mirrors particular aspects of Clarissa's party at the culmination of *Mrs Dalloway*. Clarissa struggles to negotiate a relationship with her past, embodied in the presence of Sally and Peter, with representations of herself as Richard's wife and the perfect hostess. Clarissa's exposure to the suddenness of traumatic loss through Septimus's suicide, and her withdrawal into the empty adjacent room, mirrors the difficulty the six friends experience in coming together at Hampton Court. Clarissa's removal from her party leads to her subsequent epiphany, the "transcendental significance" (Lodge 147) that arises from her recognition that she is linked by threads to others; that those threads can "be recovered somehow attached to this person or that" (*MD* 168). Her sense of connection rests upon a more individuated relationship to her past, and allows her to return not only to the present collective of her party and her guests, but also the past collective as well. Clarissa's movement towards Sally and Peter offers the possibility of a rejuvenation of their mutual present, just as Bernard's, Neville's, Susan's, Jinny's, Rhoda's and Louis' co-construction of the six-sided flower suggests such a renewal.

Throughout *The Waves* the six individuals engage in a continuous process of dialogic remembering primarily as a means of situating themselves comfortably in the present after mutual experiences of trauma and loss. However, this unremitting impulse to recall a sense of continuity between past selves and present communities also reflects the desire to recapture the sudden sense of revelation that is induced by a moment of being, to glimpse the sense of order that lies beneath. Rhoda notes, as she has immediately after Percival's death when she was first able to comprehend the formation that lies "beneath the semblance of the thing" (118), that "[a] square is stood upon the oblong" (168). Such construction allows her to recognise that "[t]he structure is now visible. Very little is left outside" (168). This exposure is what permits "the red



carnation that stood in the vase on the table of the restaurant when [they] all dined together with Percival [to] become a six-sided flower; made of six lives” (168). For a fleeting moment the six individuals become not just connected but one: “[l]et it blaze against the yew trees. One life. There. It is over. Gone out” (168). Just as the moment of being is ephemeral, so too is the superimposition of oneself onto the six-sided carnation, and the image dies amongst the yew trees. By continuously turning to recollections of one another, the six friends attempt not only to recapture a sense of cohesion by reconstituting their presents in relation to shared memories of the past, they are also, willingly or not, engaging in the pursuit of a moment of being. Interactive remembering, such as dialogic memory, refreshes through its ability briefly to part the cotton wool of everyday existence and expose the alternative pattern of connection.

Thus, the process of dialogic memory provides temporary unity and stasis. It is these moments of cohesion that ground Bernard’s famous summing up in the final section of the text, as he critiques the ability of reductive, single-faceted narratives to encapsulate and nail down the fluidity of an individual, of a life. These moments of connection, which are instances of extreme duress for Rhoda, are attainable for Bernard. He understands that they cannot endure, but are, rather, ephemeral: “[b]ut we – against the brick, against the branches, we six, out of how many million millions, for one moment of out what measureless abundance of past time and time to come, burnt there triumphant. The moment was all; the moment was enough” (206). In recalling this transitory instant of collective identity on the evening of the Hampton Court dinner, Bernard shares his sense with his nameless dinner companion that, despite its brevity, this coming together is integral for its ability to refresh that shared present moment. Only temporary attachments are possible, however; a complete and enduring connection simply cannot be achieved.

The fleeting unity that is attained occurs through a lateral relationship with others, emphasising a non-hierarchical, localized narrative that is a brief, yet powerful, alternative to the structured order of the dominant patriarchal ideology. The vagaries of memory are such that the narrative produced will be constantly changing – thus, there is no uniformity in the ensuing dialogue, only glimpses of fragments that need to be constantly put back together. Through this dialogic process, Woolf ensures that what is preferred is not only the local narrative, but rather the constant rejuvenation its existence entails and the constant recreation of the self it causes. Stagnation is not an alternative; to succumb to the abyss of death or acquiesce to traumatic loss is to permit the waves to break upon you, and to slip, without struggling, into death.

The epiphanic realization brought about through unanticipated trauma speaks to the intertwining connections between all humans that exist beyond the “cotton wool,” the revelation that “the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work of art” (“SP” 72). An epiphany, or “sudden spiritual manifestation” (Beja 18), will often serve as “a unifying or integrating device, instantaneously bringing together many of the main threads of a novel” (22-23). Although Beja here is depicting the literary use of epiphany, a comparison can be drawn between this working definition and Woolf’s own discussion of moments of being. Just as Bernard details his efforts to comprehend the multitudinous nature of his life, going to “each of my friends in turn, trying with fumbling fingers to prise open their locked caskets” (*TW* 197), the subsequent unification of these individuals as they situate themselves in opposition to all they are not positions them within such a moment. Woolf argues that such a connection “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 certain background rods or conceptions” (“SP” 73), or, as Bernard professes, “[w]e are for ever [sic] mixing ourselves with unknown quantities” (*TW* 85). The temporary affiliation

experienced within a moment of being therefore requires constant re-narration and dialogue between the self and the other, the past and the present, and the individual and the community in order to be, however briefly, grasped again.

Bernard perceives this connection between himself and the others as the construction of a multifaceted identity that blazes against a cedar tree (206). By returning to this image of connected identity Bernard momentarily refreshes himself, yet it is just that – a moment – and its fleeting nature dissolves as soon as it is recognized: “I could not collect myself; I could not distinguish myself; I could not help letting fall the things that had made me a minute ago eager [...] I could not recover myself from that endless throwing away [...] I could not recover myself from that dissipation” (207). Bernard’s memories of the physical dispersal of the six friends after the Hampton Court dinner is a traumatic loss of self that echoes the actual loss of self he experiences in this final section of the text. Leaning over the gate to a field, “the rhythm stopped [and...] I saw through the thick leaves of habit” (210). Bernard’s revelation is overwhelming and he is unsure of how to continue forward. However, just as day turns to night and back to day again, and one wave follows another breaking upon the shore, Bernard is able to reconstitute himself slowly, carefully shoring about himself his collective narrative, just as “light return[s] to the world after the eclipse of the sun [...]. Miraculously. Frailly. In thin stripes” (212). Bernard refuses to be obliterated in the face of unmitigated loss; he resists, as John Hulcoop states, “the temptation to acquiesce, to end tragically with Percival’s death” (483). Once Bernard has reemerged from this loss of self, he notes that the connections that seemed so impossible to maintain before are now perceptible: “Am I one and distinct? I do not know. We sat here together. But now Percival is dead, and Rhoda is dead; we are divided; we are not here. Yet I cannot find any obstacle separating us. There is no division between me and them. As I talked I

felt, 'I am you.' This difference we make so much of, this identity we so feverishly cherish, was overcome" (TW 214). Having experienced a transitory moment of being, Bernard's perspective is altered – he glimpses the tear in the cotton wool and peers beyond it to the interconnecting design that lies beneath. Although this epiphany is ephemeral in nature, the tear can never be seamlessly stitched back together. The alternative order is exposed, and Bernard's perspective will never be precisely as it once was.

The sudden and tragic death of Percival, like the losses of both Jacob and Septimus, highlights Woolf's elaborate critique of the patriarchal order, the uniformity of performed masculinity that it endorses, and the senseless and multitudinous deaths its policies generate. It is not enough simply to note the hypocrisy of the dominant ideology, however; what must also be considered is how to expose and implement the alternative order that is behind the cotton wool of the status quo, without making it a replacement for the preexisting hegemony. In *Between the Acts*, Woolf examines the potential for a community's artistic co-creation to disrupt the homogenising narratives of the patriarchal order, while simultaneously enacting the potential of the alternative.

## Chapter Four

“we are members, one of another”<sup>5</sup>: Communal Dialogues in *Between the Acts*

As the deaths of Percival, Septimus, and Jacob demonstrate, the sudden and tragic loss of a male figure engenders a moment of crisis for those left in their wake, a trauma that ruptures the cotton wool of everyday life and exposes the fissures within the patriarchal order. Characters use memory to reconstitute their pasts in relation to this discombobulating and foreign present and thus to reestablish a sense of self within the context of the alternative order that flashes up, suddenly, in the moment of being. In *Between the Acts*, Woolf exposes this moment of crisis on a communal scale, rather than through a single individual’s relationship to the collective. Woolf’s final novel depicts a village pageant that draws the disparate segments of local society together into a temporary community, through which the pageant’s mysterious director, Miss La Trobe, conjures up an alternative representation of history, one that is not located in the hegemonic discourses of the day. Set in a moment of international trauma and crisis on a summer’s afternoon in 1939, the village pageant itself becomes traumatic, challenging previously held memories of English history, and imbuing the audience with a sense of discomfiture and anxiety. Thus, historic memory is unsettled, and as audience members struggle to reorient their perspectives around La Trobe’s representation of history, the pageant troubles both individual and communal memory. No longer is it the individual, tragic young man that engenders a moment of crisis; rather, Woolf has identified the larger catastrophe that his death has symbolized: the dismantling of the accepted portrayal of the patriarchal order, an order that manifests itself in a linear and progressive representation of historical events. As the villagers engage with La Trobe’s unsettling display, they negotiate her representation of history – and through it her critique of the patriarchal order – as well as their individual recollections of self

---

<sup>5</sup> Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 119.

and community, finally locating the possibility for a different view of society within dialogue and engagement with the other. At a time of momentous crisis and international anxiety over an impending war, when “[t]he future [is] disturbing our present” (BA 51), Woolf attempts to expose, in a non-dogmatic fashion, the possibility for an alternative means of ordering society. In *Between the Acts* she flashes up before us and the audience the pattern that lies beneath the cotton wool and unifies disparate experiences of past and present, and which has the potential to overcome conflict, alienation, and the patriarchal politics of “othering.”

Pointz Hall, the locale of the pageant, is the Oliver family’s sprawling estate as well as the annual setting for the town’s production. The 1930s saw a revitalized interest in the pageant, a genre of public art whose tradition reaches back to both Edwardian and Elizabethan times (Esty 56). Jed Esty locates this resurgence as resulting in part from anxiety over perceptions of national identity; such staged productions were “likely to promote and express just enough collective spirit to bind citizens together,” uniting them in a common vision of “Merrie Englande” (55), and indeed, those are the expectations of the Oliver household. Each person has a role he or she anticipates to play – “Our part,” said Bartholomew, ‘is to be the audience. And a very important part too” (BA 36) – and if all present act as they ought, the disparate segments will coalesce into the anticipated production. It is into this uncertain culture that Woolf deposits her capable director, a woman who has captained the annual production for the past seven years.

Miss La Trobe is an enigmatic character, at once the director of her representation of history, while at the same time not entirely in control of the forces acting upon her artistic contribution. As both the creative overseer of the village pageant who controls the action onstage, as well as a slave to the forces of nature that also act their part, La Trobe occupies a space that is not clearly demarcated, and thus transgresses certain boundaries: she is both a foreigner to the town, yet

responsible for its annual summer exposition, a tradition in the village that unites the upper and lower classes, and brings all segments of society into a temporarily unified moment of creativity for one afternoon each summer. Further, along with William Dodge, she is a sexual outsider, having “bought a four-roomed cottage and shared it with an actress” (35). The villagers are curious about her and her affiliations, and in a text where history, family lineage, and the place from which one comes is both scrutinized and challenged, the creative power exerted by La Trobe undermines the importance of origins: “[b]ut where did she spring from? With that name she wasn’t presumably pure English. From the Channel Island Perhaps? Only her eyes and something about her always made Mrs. Bingham suspect she had Russian blood in her. ‘Those deep-set eyes; that very square jaw’ reminded her – not that she had been to Russia – of the Tartars” (35). La Trobe is an object both of curiosity and critique for the villagers. The initial focus on her physical characteristics, combined with speculation on the purity – or lack thereof – of her bloodline is eerily reminiscent of the stereotyping by the Nazis of all aspects of the German population. Such an echo takes on added significance given La Trobe’s final, bodiless speech to her audience. Her voice is divorced from her body, the locus of her physical difference, and her oration stresses the monstrous actions of segregation and disenfranchisement that occurs not only across the Channel, but in the heart of England as well.

Miss La Trobe is both an outsider and an insider, striving to impart to her audience a vision (61). She is enraged that her players squabble for parts and costumes, lamenting that their near-sightedness is caused by the blindness of being “[s]wathed in conventions,” for “they couldn’t see, as she could” (40). La Trobe, as the figure of the artist, can perceive things differently from the others, and she endeavours, in part, to make the villagers aware of what exists beyond the routine of daily life (61).

For this reason Christine Froula differentiates La Trobe from Woolf's previous representations of the female artist, and notes that La Trobe "thinks not back through her mothers but forward with the community toward the future" (297). Just as Bernard, through his summing up in the final section of *The Waves*, attempts to comprehend and convey to his dinner companion a view of the pattern beyond the cotton wool, so too does Miss La Trobe. By doing so La Trobe is aligned with the characters who share Woolf's philosophy of the importance of such an order. Like Clarissa Dalloway and Bernard, she represents a productive and forward-moving impulse that challenges the status quo not simply by exposing faults or briefly unveiling the alternative, but by creating a creative space for communal dialogue.

Miss La Trobe's annual pageant creates such opportunities for conversation, and in doing so, summarizes through its contrast to established views of history Woolf's critique of the patriarchal order. Just as the sudden loss of Jacob, Septimus, and Percival reveals the flaws of hegemonic male identity, so too does Miss La Trobe's pageant, although the lack is less of a direct revelation – as it is in the case of the missing male figure – than it is an artistic representation. Jacob's death reveals the pain that attends the sudden and unexpected loss of millions of young men sent to their ends in World War I, just as the loss of Septimus exposes the failings of both the medical practice, and society as a whole, to provide the appropriate support for those returning from war. The death of Percival echoes these losses, especially given this Empire-builder's ignoble end. The configuration of La Trobe's pageant functions just as the deaths of these young men do, to expose the failings of the patriarchal culture. Indeed, the communal act of a public pageant undermines the social hierarchy: the audience members seat themselves where they please, all perceiving the action on stage from the same level, although from substantially divergent perspectives. It is an event that physically unites the disparate



segments of village life into a communal experience, drawing all from their individuated lives into a temporary state of unity. As an alternative form of history, the pageant skewers the expectations by the audience of a presentation of something linear and Empire-driven: “Scenes from English History,’ Mrs. Manresa explained [...]. It would take till midnight unless they skipped. Early Briton; Plantagenets; Tudors; Stuarts” (BA 51). La Trobe’s representation of history rests on parody and critique and chronologically it is fragmented; thus, its very structure undermines, as Detloff explains, the patriarchal narrative of masculine national identity (“Thinking Peace” 403-407). In this sense, it is not just an alternative perspective on history, but an alternative form of representation that Miss La Trobe provides the village.

Miss La Trobe’s rejoinder to received visions of the past intersects with Walter Benjamin’s approach to articulating history. As Sanja Bahun argues in her use of Benjamin to describe Woolf’s work: “to avoid the subjugation of the past to the present, memoration has to be spontaneous. Thus a ‘true historian’ should articulate history through the discursive appropriation of an involuntary memory as it ‘flashes up’ to the present and onward into the future ‘in a moment of danger’” (107). This representation of historical articulation is similar to Woolf’s expression of moments of being: sudden and involuntary flashes that stem from a violent eruption, thereby disturbing the cotton wool and exposing the alternate order that exists beneath (“SP” 71-72). Miss La Trobe’s somewhat erratic representation of England’s history through her pageant is thus not without grander purpose: her conceived artistic gesture is a manifestation of this spontaneous and involuntary portrayal of history, and the progression of the pageant is traumatic for the audience, in that expectations of national heroism and linear progression are continuously dismantled; through the process, so too are audience assumptions of gender and social norms undermined.

Miss La Trobe offers a competing vision of both literature and life through her treatment of history through gender. For example, one of the plays within the play, “Where There’s a Will, There’s a Way,” exemplifies the masculine control of property and the feeble grasp women have on their own assets (*BA* 79-83). In the second act of the picnic play the ideal of “home sweet home” is satirised when Budge, dressed in the authoritative garb of a police officer, illustrates that the performed roles of domesticated women are simply that: a performance, whereby the children must quickly get out their toys, and “Mama, [her] knitting, quick. For here [...] comes the bread-winner, home from the city” (106). By displaying this typically idealised domestic scene as scripted and performed, La Trobe and her players expose the falsity that is inherent within the nuclear family unit, one of the fundamental building blocks of the patriarchal order.

Miss La Trobe addresses not just domestic power structures, but also how those scripts are played out on the world stage. The issues of imperial control and foreign interests, exemplified by Percival’s presence in India, are also explored through the pageant, and the figure of Budge – whose role Briggs refers to as the culmination of “the progressive loss of community and the growth of the state” (385) – acts as the public mouthpiece of the dominant order. La Trobe ruptures the facade of benevolent imperialism through Budge’s twinned chorus of “[t]o convert the heathen” and “[t]o help our fellow men” (*BA* 106). The juxtaposition of these two statements indicates the dressing up, through discourse, of England’s homogenising foreign policy. This foreshadows the themes La Trobe articulates in her final soliloquy, where she emphasises the importance the patriarchal sphere places on maintaining an ideal of Englishness in order to moderate dissent: “[t]he ruler of an Empire must keep his eye on the cot; spy too in the kitchen; drawing-room; library; wherever one or two, me and you, come together. Purity our watchword” (101). For a country at war, the policing of the people by the people can be a powerful form of

control, whether at home or abroad, and the implication, not subtly hidden, is that the afternoon's pageant itself embodies a form of communal dissent.

The pageant not only represents a dissenting voice, however; it encourages dissent even within its own view of history. In its selective and fragmented structure, as well as in its exposure of gender inequality and authoritarian control, the pageant challenges the spectators to react and respond. On one level, these reactions indicate the sheer weight of the status quo on the audience members. Despite the action onstage, the action offstage reemphasises the pre-eminence of the existing order: for example, at tea during the first interval, Mrs Sands gives precedence to the gentry over other members of the village (64). Interjections of dialogue between the pageant attendees also suggest the insidious ability of the dominant ideology to impose itself, such as when talk turns to the King and Queen's impending trip to some corner of their empire, be it India or Canada (64-65). After the play, the pageant attendees discuss the intrusion of the planes that have flown overhead during Reverend Streatfield's speech, and the looming possibility of invasion on England's soil (123). The forces that have caused trauma and loss in *Jacob's Room*, *Mrs Dalloway*, and *The Waves*, such as war or imperial aspirations, all appear along the periphery of the pageant, providing a powerful sense of the context, and indeed urgency, for Miss La Trobe's work.

Nevertheless, the pageant represents a space of possibility for diverse reactions. The audience that converges on the Oliver property on a summer's afternoon in 1939 to witness the annual play is, initially, a disparate and fragmented mass. As they assemble on the lawn of the estate house, individuals come together from a multiplicity of personal experiences and form an eclectic conglomerate: "[s]ome were old; some were in the prime of life. There were children among them [...]. Some had been there for centuries [...]. On the other hand there were new-

comers” (46). This disparate group arrives to witness La Trobe’s representation of English history, though many believe they will see a predictable and linear portrayal of events that celebrates Englishness. By dismantling this assumption, Miss La Trobe challenges the audience’s expectations, and prompts it to feel irritation, resistance, and confusion.

The audience as a whole obediently follows certain conventions, such as assembling after the first intermission upon hearing the music, and respecting the customs of not traversing the privacy of behind stage and the dressing rooms (74, 93). However, throughout La Trobe’s creative endeavours, particular members of the audience experience crisis – trauma, even – as the players and setting challenge hegemonically endorsed ideals of national identity. Colonel Mayhew is baffled at the exemption of the military from the pageant, asking his wife “Why leave out the British Army? What’s history without the Army, eh,” and he is consoled when Mrs Mayhew appeases him by supposing the director is saving such an honourable acknowledgement for some sort of “Grand Ensemble, round the Union Jack” (98) to end the pageant. Budge’s dogmatic authority leads both Mrs Lynn Jones and Etty Springett to feel at times alienated and singled out: Mrs Jones believes a sort of sneer has been aimed at her father, and Etty because she feels marked out by Budge himself, although she isn’t quite sure why (101, 107). Furthermore, Etty feels discomfited by the class disparity that is being portrayed on stage, and desires the play to hurry past this uncomfortable spot because “[s]he liked to leave a theatre knowing exactly what was meant” (102), not leaving any grey areas for subjective interpretation (101, 107).

Although the audience as a complete entity obeys certain conventions, it also, as a group, undergoes distress and confusion. When La Trobe, in the final act of the play, exposes those watching to the present moment, they experience irritation at the ten minutes of silence that they assume is due to a delay backstage, for, as Colonel Mayhew points out, being set in the present

time the actors should not be hindered by elaborate costuming (111). The final cumulative moment when La Trobe flashes the audience members with their own reflections is also a moment of collective discomfiture: “[a]ll evaded or shaded themselves – save Mrs. Manresa who, facing herself in the glass, used it as a glass; had out her mirror; powdered her nose; and moved one curl, disturbed by the breeze, to its place [...]. Alone she preserved unashamed her identity” (115). The reflectors are deemed “malicious [... and] expository” (115), turning back on the audience an image of fragmented unity that is a spontaneous representation of the mass caught unawares, exposed, without time to consciously present themselves in a particular and socially sanctioned manner. When La Trobe culminates the pageant with musical cacophony, including the waltz and jazz, the collective is overwhelmed by this resistance to closure, and as a unit contemplates the director’s motives: “What is her game? To disrupt? Jog and trot?” (113). These varied responses, from confusion to irritation to alienation and distress, illuminate the difficulties of the audience to negotiate the disparity between its own perspectives of history and La Trobe’s alternative representation of it. This loss of an Englishness that they can grasp as a method of self-recognition and use to mark out alterity or otherness echoes the distress experienced in the wake of the respective deaths of Jacob, Septimus, or Percival, the literal representations of the dominant order La Trobe’s pageant dismantles.

If Miss La Trobe’s suggested conceptualisation of history creates a moment of crisis for the members of the audience, then their subsequent negotiation of her representations of the past and present, as well as her portrayal of the patriarchal order and its illusory coherence, triggers a form of dialogic remembering. The community’s interactions with these divergent narratives are – as are Benjamin’s historical memory and Woolf’s moments of being – spontaneous and involuntary. The members of the collective do not anticipate nor seek out the discomfiture they

experience upon witnessing the pageant. Rather, in light of this discombobulating and foreign portrayal, both of themselves and also of the order to which they adhere, the audience members revisit history through their own interactions with it. This manifests itself in moments of interior contemplation and attempts at communal interaction and collectivity, whereby dialogic memory gives way to dialogue.

As the players dissolve the final scene of the second act, and Reason steps down from her platform, the audience is bewildered by the representation of love and courtship as posed by the “Where there’s a Will there’s a Way” play. The audience “felt – how could one put it – a little not quite here or there. As if the play had jerked the ball out of the cup; as if what I call myself was still floating, unattached, and didn’t settle. Not quite themselves, they felt” (93). For those watching the action onstage, La Trobe’s process of defamiliarization manages effectively to represent English history, but as yet they are still resistant to dialogic encounters with one another. The conflict arising between the various representations of history has a disconcerting effect upon the villagers, and the conglomerate fractures during this intermission, moving about in smaller groups over the grounds still fragmented, still not unified (93). Those in attendance are unable to communicate this discomfiture, and, although Lucy breaks through the barrier between the audience and the players in an effort to convey to Miss La Trobe her experience of watching the pageant, the two women fail as a whole in bringing “a common meaning to birth” (95). Because they cannot engage in a dialogic exchange, communication is truncated. Lucy attempts to cast her mind back in her effort to impart her message to La Trobe, but although she flits back to childhood she gives up, forgoing interior dialogic memory in an abortive effort to engage in dialogue. Lucy is left burbling out a fraction of her meaning, and La Trobe extrapolates from

that whatever she chooses (95). Hers is a failed attempt, but it is an attempt nonetheless, and suggests the potential for La Trobe's work.

La Trobe's bodiless and faceless monologue at the culmination of her grand pageant is arguably the most disconcerting portion of the action, dissolving the boundaries between self and other, while pointing out the "other" that is "self" – a confusing, even frightening notion to the pageant-goers. La Trobe warns of relying too heavily upon an idealised Englishness worth fighting for, and cautions against the perception that the other out there, across the channel, is more dangerous than the other at home: "Liars most of us. Thieves too [...]. Consider the gun slayers, bomb droppers here or there. They do openly what we do slyly" (116). Having broken down the audience's preconceived notions of English patriotism, and having physically broken them into "scraps, orts and fragments" (116) through her mosaic mirror, La Trobe turns to the gramophone, and, regardless of tune, the music draws the audience together into a more cohesive unit: "[l]ike quicksilver sliding, filings magnetized, the distracted united" (117). The physical melody and harmony of the music mirrors the audience's unified – but not uniform – attempts to reconcile themselves to the radical display of the pageant: "[o]n different levels they [the musical notes] diverged. On different levels ourselves went forward; flower gathering some on the surface; others descending to wrestle with the meaning; but all comprehending; all enlisted" (117). This tableau embodies the alternative order that exists beyond the cotton wool. The interaction between the audience and La Trobe is spontaneous and sudden, dissolves previously held and honoured representations of English identity, and shifts the pageant into a moment of crisis. The audience engages with the music in divergent ways, each member wrestling with meaning differently, and from "chaos and cacophony" comes "measure" (117). Woolf is careful

to emphasise that it is not simply one line of music that is noted, but rather the contrapuntal effort of the whole.

At the very end of the pageant, after Reverend Streatfield's address, the audience dissolves to the gramophone's wail of "[d]ispersed are we; who have come together" (122). The momentarily unified conglomerate is dismissed, yet this transient coming together, this brief exposure of the embodiment of this alternative order remains snagged on one person or the other: "[b]ut" the gramophone cries, "let us retain whatever made that harmony" (122). Drawing everyone from his or her disparate and fragmented lives into a communal experience of crisis followed by dialogue enacts the possibility of dialogic memory on a larger scale: recalling history as is, as the pageant-goers anticipate in their expectations of the play's trajectory, is dangerous. A critical mind, an alternative consideration, must be embraced; communities must come together in order to challenge the illuminated shortcoming of the dominant order. Its failings expounded, the dominant ideology stands challenged within the local and within the temporarily communal.

When considered in more than a purely individual experience, moments of being – as arising from a sudden moment of crisis – shift from individuated dialogic memory to simply dialogue. The members of the audience, disparate and fragmented at first, situate themselves between the two narratives – the one they have initially subscribed to and the one presented by La Trobe – and are in a state of flux, characterized by audience members' open-ended dialogue with one another. Although the reactions of the villagers as located between these two narratives are all different, they are interacting with the communal as they negotiate nationalistic memory with their own experiences, resulting in a collective of disparate fragments, a motley group brought together of their own accord. This local interaction, which is simultaneously part of the larger



pattern that is ephemerally exposed behind the cotton wool, also dismantles the primacy of the dominant public collective that thrives upon homogeneity: England, nationhood, military. By turning to local and creative scripts of identity and alterity, the pageant's audience, players, and director fracture the hegemonic dominance of the patriarchal order but they do not then embrace another dogmatic system or exchange one set of regulations for another. Instead, the casual chatter and fragmented conversations of the villagers departing hold together, for the briefest of moments, the possibility of a larger pattern that is exposed, fleetingly, behind the cotton wool.

In *Between the Acts*, the Reverend Streatfield can be perceived as an alternative to the representations of masculinity seen previously in the figures of Jacob, Septimus, and Percival. Similar to those men, Streatfield is associated with authority, arriving at the pageant juggling props for the play “with the air of a person [...] who is awaited, expected, and now comes” (46). However, despite this initial comparison Streatfield is far from being a dogmatic and authoritarian mouthpiece for the patriarchal social sphere. As the duality in the pronunciation of his name suggests, of both “street” and “field,” man-made and natural, he occupies a liminal space that traverses boundaries: he is both a player on stage and a member of the audience, a speechifier and a submissive listener – he is representative of the patriarchal order, yet not himself patriarchal.

When the Reverend Streatfield takes to the stage at the end of the pageant, as the music rolls back and the audience members begins adjusting themselves to the totality of what has been presented on stage with their own preconceived perceptions of English history, the audience hails his presence as an absurdity, and the adjectives associated with the supposed trajectory of his “summing up” – “intolerable constriction, contraction, [...] reduction” (117) – allude to the anticipated homogenizing effect of the patriarchal order to present an all-encompassing answer

to the play, to conflate all happenings into a singular experience. The Reverend inserts himself into the progression of the pageant, appearing onstage unannounced and uninvited. He is in a position of authority, physically elevated above the audience and raising his finger in an imperious and dominating fashion (117). However, Woolf undercuts this image of controlling masculine power by noting that “[o]ne fact mitigated the horror” (117) of his presence: the end of his extended forefinger is stained with tobacco (118). Immediately the authoritative stature of the good Reverend is tempered – he is familiar, perhaps relatable, a comfortable fixture of the community.

The Reverend’s speech that he imparts upon the audience further distinguishes him from the authoritarian nature of the patriarchal order. He does not impose any sort of finalized statement about the pageant; rather, the first words he utters that are not overpowered by natural forces take the form of a question: “What message,’ it seemed he was asking, ‘was our pageant meant to convey?’” (118). Even here, his words are not dominating: it only seems as if he is posing this challenge to the audience, but he is far from the most powerful force. Furthermore, the Reverend himself dismantles any pretence to power and authority he may still have: by using the pronoun “our” he identifies himself as equal to every participant in the pageant, drawing together the different segments, from audience and players to director, into a conglomeration that is unified in their participation in the play, but not invariable in their individual experiences of it.

As his speech progresses, the Reverend further establishes himself as a member of the audience, a title that aligns him with the recipients of La Trobe’s vision, the audience, rather than the imparters on stage, and although he places himself in a position of authoritative control by addressing the crowd, his summing up is not a finalised explanation of the events, but a thoughtful consideration that invites dialogue and conversation. His continuous posing of

questions is, instead, a more direct engagement with his audience, and although he engages with the history the pageant presents, he lets his reading remain open, unfinished, a mere possibility.

The topic of the Reverend's speech speaks to the manner in which it is imparted to the audience. He notes that "it was indicated that we are members one of another. Each is part of the whole," although he prefaces this statement with: "[t]o me at least it was indicated" (119). He undercuts the primacy generally awarded to the public oration of men in positions of power. Streatfield's perspective, like all the perspectives of the pageant, is subjective, and therefore divergent. He notes that "[w]e act different parts; but are the same" (119) before opening the dialogue to encompass not just the human forces controlling the action, but nature's efforts as well. His well-meaning endeavours are sheared, however, by the imposition of "[t]welve aeroplanes in perfect formation like a flight of wild duck" (119), truncating Streatfield's speech in a physical, indeed phallic, reminder of the war.

Christine Froula notes that, in Streatfield's address to the audience, he is performing "spectatorship as thinking in freedom and community with others" (321). Along with La Trobe, he creates a rejuvenation of history in concert with the members of the audience and the actors on stage. The presentation of the past throughout the pageant, combined with Streatfield's open and dialogic consideration of the portrayed action, leads to a productive sense of community that does not segment and close itself off to possibilities, but rather opens up and forces the exposure of the alternative order – one that must not be founded in dogmatic statements – to stay for just moments longer. The Reverend Streatfield bumbles in ways the dominant ideology would not: despite the physical prominence of standing on stage, he falters, stumbles, catches himself, loses both his thread of thought and command of language before attempting, and failing, to draw La Trobe into sight in order to offer his thanks (120). A loquacious and domineering speaker

Streatfield is not, yet his sentiment is genuine, and in the end he dismisses words, no longer having any use for them, and becomes a “natural man” (120) who must awkwardly draw to a close his oratory endeavours.

Streatfield’s counterpoint to the traditional narratives of English nationhood and the patriarchal influence in the public sphere successfully encourages an opening to discourse amongst the villagers, and after his stuttered enunciation the departing conversation is a litter of “scraps, orts, fragments” of dialogue, reflecting the collective’s divergent and multifaceted experience with art. Streatfield’s summing up – if indeed it can be called that; perhaps opening up is more apt – and the reactions it garners permit the rupture of the cotton wool to remain, for a little while, unsutured. He does not gloss over the events of the day in a reductive fashion, nor stand himself up as any kind of leader. Rather, he promotes openness and discussion in such a way that dismantles social hierarchy, a necessary step for the pattern to be exposed beyond the cotton wool.

Reverend Streatfield can be perceived as a counterpoint, in this alternative order, to the figure of the tragic male, yet he alone is not enough. He spontaneously and inadvertently acts in concert with Miss La Trobe, who, when Streatfield cannot “make an end” (120), puts a record on the gramophone. The nationalistic tune “God Save the King” draws the entire disparate group into a momentary cohesion, as “they all rose to their feet” (121). However, this is ultimately not the concluding moment – when the actors, reluctant to go, mingle and converse on stage they strike a tableau, and as once more the audience applauds, the “actors joined hand and bowed” (121). The actors and audience, along with Streatfield and La Trobe, participate in the unscripted and spontaneous closing of the pageant, and as a unit variously comprised, stand, however briefly, in alterity to the preexisting hegemony.

La Trobe's pageant encourages dialogue amongst the villagers, and just as she is consistently rejuvenating the artistic narrative, creating a new pageant as the previous one finishes, her ephemeral conjuration illuminates the possibility for dialogue on a much more localised scale. After the events of the day La Trobe takes herself to the pub, where she envisions a grouping of two figures, and lets herself sink into the primordial mud in which all things are conceived: "[w]ords rose [...]. Words without meaning – wonderful words" (131). This imagined scene mirrors the culmination of the book, where Isa and Giles move towards a direct interchange with one another, the first spoken dialogue between the two of them in the text. As the house's shelter recedes, and "[i]t was night before roads were made, or houses" (136), Isa and Giles are transported to a scene of conception, before the markings of history had etched themselves across the land. They face one another on a night "that dwellers in caves had watched from some high place among rocks" (136), two figures, grouped, and possibly obscured from view. The outcome of this essential exchange is the possibility of rejuvenation and renewal: "[b]efore they slept, they must fight; after they had fought, they would embrace. From that embrace another life might be born" (136). This moment becomes a gesture to the future that is located within the past: it is an indication of faith for engaging with previous narratives, through La Trobe's pageant, as well as an interaction with the other, as Giles and Isa are brought together within this moment. It then becomes a signal towards the communal, as this temporary union contains within it the possibility for future commonalities. Lucio Ruotolo articulates that "for Woolf, Isa's future – allegorically the future of the race – must emerge through some new accommodation with Giles. The old structure of hierarchical attachments no longer suffices" (216). Rather, what is privileged is a lateral, highly localised narrative based upon dialogue. The emphasis of the future and its continuance in the face of a shifting and uncertain present is,

as Helen Southworth describes, a means to conceive, literally but also figuratively, England anew (211). This emphasis on continuance through a new relationship between self and other is gestured to early in the story, when Lucy tours an obliging William Dodge about the Oliver estate. Peering into one of the rooms and seeing the disarray left in the wake of the children, Lucy announces that this is the nursery, although the “[w]ords raised themselves and became symbolical. ‘The cradle of our race,’ she seemed to say” (*BA* 44). There is a glimmer of possibility, a gesture of faith, in the pre-eminence placed upon the future generations. There is discord, too, between the existing order and the next, but although Bart interrupts and startles his young grandson, it is in both the figure of that child as well as in the possibility of another that Woolf locates the potentiality for a narrative union, for absolving the space between self and other, and for situating the individual, in relation to the communal, into the state of flux that engenders human interchange.

## Conclusion

The early half of the twentieth century was disrupted by two enormously significant events: the Great War and World War II. The effect of such unmitigated loss and disaster deeply impacted those who witnessed such devastation, and responses to these upheavals permit glimpses into the various means by which suffering was both experienced and conveyed. This project examines Woolf's critiques of the social and political environment that enabled such disasters to take place. It examines the figure of the missing male, a youthful representative of the public and patriarchal sphere whose politics Woolf identifies as being directly responsible for the onset of such unprecedented destruction, and also addresses the means by which memory operates, both individually and communally, to reflect upon and communicate the loss of this tragic figure. Thus, this examination of some of Woolf's texts enters into a conversation in Modernist studies that is currently taking place – a discussion that interrogates both the means by which writers of this period responded to such widespread and unprecedented disaster, and the deliberate ways in which those writers resisted public scripts of approved expressions of grief.

The process of narrating memory in light of the unanticipated demise of a young man – a process I call dialogic remembering – is a useful and productive means of overcoming both loss and alienation. The unexpected suddenness of the deaths of Jacob, Septimus, and Percival stands out as a moment of being, because the present moment is utterly defamiliarised; engagement with dialogic remembering can ease the tension between the pre- and post-traumatic worlds. Simultaneously, these moments of being can engender an epiphany; as such, these instances of duress expose the facade of the patriarchal order, thus undermining its authority. In opposition to the dogmatic narrative of the status quo, Woolf locates the possibility for faith within a much more localised space. An engagement with dialogic memory not only rejuvenates the present

moment, it also is the unconscious attempt to recapture a moment of being. Therefore, by exposing a different structure that is cloaked beneath the cotton wool of daily existence, Woolf seeks to challenge the dominance of the patriarchal ideology. This alternative order must not be imposed in a dogmatic fashion, however, but rather revealed spontaneously through a moment of shock, and thus presenting itself ephemerally, if it is to truly counter the existing order.

Woolf establishes the possibility for such alterity to expose itself within a contained community, an enclosed sphere that stands in opposition to the public realm. She challenges the patriarchal order's embodiment of power and authority in the figure of the public male through a productive gesture of faith found in the grief of the mother, the compassion of the hostess, the sadness of a friend, the heartfelt speech of a reverend, or the possibility of life anew. The unscripted exchange between Reverend Streatfield and Miss La Trobe at the culmination of the village pageant demonstrates Woolf's revisioning of Jacob, Septimus, and Percival as representatives of the dominant sphere; what this local and private space privileges instead of the young, missing male is the spontaneous dialogue that occurs between all participants of La Trobe's creative endeavour, an exchange that does not close itself off, but rather opens up to allow for individual responses and reactions.

More than simply an exposition of this alternative order, Woolf locates us, the reader, within the audience of the pageant, and as much as she is displaying the importance of the self to engage with the other, so too is she making that gesture to us. Remembering privately is not enough; communal interchange is privileged, and if this alternative order flashes suddenly, then it must be a continuous exchange that necessitates a turning and returning to the other in order to refresh and rejuvenate the narrative. Thus, the emphasis shifts once again, not simply to the



reaching out, but to being the person to whom the reaching extends: the sympathetic audience member, Clarissa's neighbour across the alleyway, the silent dinner companion of Bernard's. Clements argues that "Woolf believed [...] listening to others, perhaps even because of differences, is indispensable for a new understanding and method of communal interaction" (59). The problem, then, arises in the responsibility, the ethical implications of being the reader. To whom do we turn? And if Woolf's texts are read as a call to action, then what are we, as her readers, obligated to do?

## Works Cited

- Bajun, Sanja. "The Burden of the Past, the Dialectics of the Present: Notes on Virginia Woolf's and Walter Benjamin's Philosophies of History." *Modernist Cultures*. 3.2(2008): 100-115. Path: *MLA Database*, Google Scholar, "The Burden of the Past, the Dialectics of the Present: Notes on Virginia Woolf's and Walter Benjamin's Philosophies of History." Web. 20 April 2010.
- Bakhtin, M. "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics." *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: U of Texas P, 1981. 84-258. Print.
- Beja, Morris. *Epiphany in the Modern Novel*. Seattle: U of Washington P, 1971. Print.
- Bishop, Edward L. "The Subject in *Jacob's Room*." *Modern Fiction Studies*. 38.1(Spring 1992):147-175. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 18 June 2009.
- Briggs, Julia. *Virginia Woolf: An Inner Life*. London: Harcourt, 2005. Print.
- Brison, Susan J. *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2002. Print.
- Clements, Elicia. "Virginia Woolf, Ethel Smyth, and Music: Listening as a Productive Mode of Social Interaction." *College Literature*. 32.3(Summer 2005): 51-71. *MLA Database*. Web. 3 May 2010.
- Clewell, Tammy. "Consolation Refused: Virginia Woolf, The Great War, and Modernist Mourning." *Modern Fiction Studies*. 50.1(Spring 2004): 197-223. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 18 June 2009.
- Cole, Sarah. "Modernism, Male Intimacy, and the Great War." *ELH*. 68.2(Summer 2001): 469-500. *JSTOR*. Web. 3 Jan. 2010.

- Dahl, Christopher C. "Virginia Woolf's *Moments of Being* and the Autobiographical Tradition in the Stephen Family." *Journal of Modern Literature* 10.2(June 1983): 175-196. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 21 June 2010.
- De Gay, Jane. "Virginia Woolf's Feminist Historiography." *Critical Survey*. 19.1(2007): 62-72. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 3 June 2010.
- DeMeester, Karen. "Trauma, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and Obstacles to Postwar Recovery in *Mrs. Dalloway*." *Virginia Woolf and Trauma: Embodied Texts*. Ed. Suzette Henke and David Eberly New York: Pace UP, 2007. 77-94. Print.
- DeSalvo, Louise. *Virginia Woolf: The Impact of Childhood Sexual Abuse on her Life Work*. Boston: Beacon Press. 1989. Print.
- Detloff, Madelyn. *The Persistence of Modernism: Loss and Mourning in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009. Print.
- . "Thinking Peace into Existence: The Spectacle of History in Between the Acts." *Women's Studies*. 28.4(September 1999): 403-433. Web. 21 May 2010.
- . "'Tis Not my Nature to Join in Hating, But in Loving': Toward Survivable Public Mourning." *Modernism and Mourning*. Ed. Pat Rae. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2007. 50-68. Print.
- Esty, Jed. *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2004. Print.
- Freud, Sigmund. "Beyond the Pleasure Principle." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVIII (1920-1922): Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Group Psychology and Other Works*. (1920): 1-64. *PEP-Web*. Web. 16 Sept. 2009.

- Froula, Christine. *Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Avant-Garde*. New York: Columbia UP, 2005. Print.
- Haaken, Janice. *Pillar of Salt: Gender, Memory and the Perils of Looking Back*. London: Rutgers UP, 1998. Print.
- Henke, Suzette. "The Waves as Ontological Trauma Narrative: The Anxiety of a Death (Un)forseen." *Virginia Woolf and Trauma: Embodied Texts*. Ed. Suzette Henke and David Eberly New York: Pace UP, 2007. 124-145. Print.
- Hollander, Rachel. "Novel Ethics: Alterity and Form in *Jacob's Room*. *Twentieth Century Literature*. 53.1(Spring 2007): 40-66. *MLA International Bibliography*. Web. 18 June 2009.
- Hulcoop, John F. "Percival and the Porpoise: Woolf's Heroic Theme in *The Waves*." *Twentieth Century Literature*. 34.4(Spring-Summer 1995): 468-488. *JStor*. Web. 18 Feb 2010.
- Hussey, Mark, ed. *Virginia Woolf and War: Fiction, Reality, and Myth*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse UP, 1991. Print.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1982. Print.
- Kuhn, Annette. *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination*. London: Verso, 1995. Print.
- Lee, Hermione. *Virginia Woolf*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1996. Print.
- . *Virginia Woolf's Nose: Essays on Biography*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2005.
- Lodge, David. *The Art of Fiction*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1992. Print.
- Rae, Pat, ed. *Modernism and Mourning*. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2007. Print.
- Raitt, Suzette, ed. *Jacob's Room: A Norton Critical Edition*. Virginia Woolf. New York: Norton, 2007. Print.
- Ruotolo, Lucio P. *The Interrupted Moment: A View of Virginia Woolf's Novels*. Stanford,

California: Stanford UP, 1986. Print.

Schulkind, Jeanne, ed. "Introduction." *Moments of Being: A Collection of Autobiographical Writing*. By Virginia Woolf. New York: Harcourt, 1985. 11-24. Print.

Smith, Susan Bennett. "Reinventing Grief Work: Virginia Woolf's Feminist Representations of Mourning in *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*." *Twentieth Century Literature*. 41.4(Winter 1995): 310-327. *JSTOR*. Web. 8 Dec. 2009.

Southworth, Helen. "Virginia Woolf's 'Wild England': George Borrow, Autoethnography, and *Between the Acts*." *Studies in the Novel*. 39.2(Summer 2007): 196-215. *MLA Database*. Web. 24 April 2010.

Woolf, Virginia. *Between the Acts*. London: The Hogarth Press, 1990. Print.

---. *Jacob's Room*. Ed. Suzanne Raitt. New York & London: Norton, 2007. Print.

---. *Mrs. Dalloway*. 1925. London: Harcourt, 2001. Print.

---. "A Sketch of the Past." *Moments of Being: A Collection of Autobiographical Writing*. Ed. Jeanne Schulkind. New York: Harcourt, 1985. 61-159. Print.

---. *The Waves*. 1931. London: Penguin, 2000. Print.