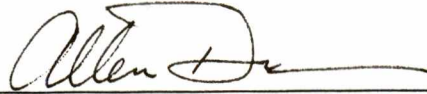


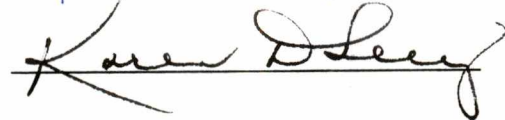
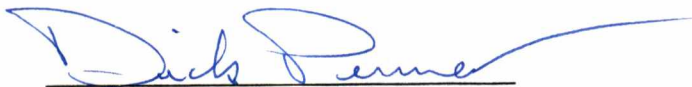
To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Linda C. Bullock entitled "The Waves: Virginia Woolf's Mirror of Consciousness." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in English.



Allen Dunn, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation  
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Vice Provost  
and Dean of The Graduate School

THE WAVES: VIRGINIA WOOLF'S  
MIRROR OF CONSCIOUSNESS

A Dissertation  
Presented for the  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Degree  
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Linda C. Bullock

May 1989

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## ABSTRACT

Virginia Woolf wanted to portray reality from a subjective point of view, unlike her nineteenth-century predecessors who presented an objective view of experience. Her narrative method was to use rhythm and metaphor to create not an incomprehensible text of subjective thoughts, but to suggest another, more elemental way of perceiving experience. The Waves is a perfect illustration of her narrative theory because the perspectives of both subject and object (self and other) are manifested through rhythm and graphically demonstrated through repetition and metaphor. The psychoanalytic theories of Jacques Lacan and the linguistic theories of Julia Kristeva best elucidate the interaction of these perspectives and the effect this interaction has on the author, the characters, and the reader. Woolf's dilemma of self-objectification, to record "the soliloquy in solitude," becomes the textual dilemma with which the characters and the narrator must struggle and attempt to resolve. The Waves demonstrates the dilemma of the individual subject as he or she tries to objectify the self in language. Because this is a struggle of the consciousness, the reader can, in many ways, identify with the dilemma facing the six characters through the episodes which they describe. However, even more significantly, the reader participates in this dilemma on an unconscious level through the rhythm and metaphor which dominate the discourse. The reader's consciousness which fluctuates, like that of the author and the characters, within the perspectives of subject and object, is thus rhetorically mirrored in the text.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

| CHAPTER                                                                       | PAGE |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| INTRODUCTION . . . . .                                                        | 1    |
| I. A DELICATE BALANCE: VIRGINIA WOOLF'S MODERNISM . . . . .                   | 10   |
| II. THE "SOLILOQUY IN SOLITUDE": THE RHETORIC OF<br>SELF-REFLECTION . . . . . | 44   |
| III. "I AM THE DAWN": THE METAPHOR OF IDENTITY . . . . .                      | 74   |
| IV. WAVES IN "DARK POOLS": THE TEXTUAL MIRROR OF THE SELF . . . .             | 91   |
| V. "THE UNCIRCUMSCRIBED SPIRIT": THE READER IN <u>THE WAVES</u> . . . .       | 119  |
| VI. CONCLUSION . . . . .                                                      | 139  |
| WORKS CITED . . . . .                                                         | 145  |
| VITA . . . . .                                                                | 154  |

## INTRODUCTION

Many twentieth-century critics, such as George Lukács, have described the novel's task as a reconciliation between subjective and objective reality. Lukács in particular sees the characters in fiction as inseparable from their social, objective reality, yet alienated from this reality and in need of reconciliation. Therefore, the individual subject and his or her "social and historical environment" (19) must be unified in the novel. For Lukács, reconciliation involves an objectification of the individual subject, creating for him or her a validated place in the external world. Thus, in the nineteenth-century novel which Lukács so admired, the subject is firmly established in history. Much to his displeasure the twentieth-century novel, on the other hand, has tried to reassert the priority of the individual's perception of reality as a stream of subjective consciousness, rather than reveal consciousness as an object in the world, separate from the individual. The most famous practitioners of this interior narrative, such as Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, have shown how the subject interacts and engages with the objective world, and have made a paradoxically objective study of subjectivity.

Woolf's particular approach to this dilemma was to attempt to represent what she called "non-being" which consisted of mental reality, not the things people do without thinking (Moments of Being 70). Woolf contended that the state of non-being was dominant in our relation to ourselves and to the world, and it is this that she attempted to communicate in her fiction. The Waves illustrates her

narrative philosophy by representing the world as seen through the eyes of six individuals (the subjective point of view) seemingly unified by a single perspective (the objective point of view), technically and rhetorically represented by rhythm and metaphor. Most critics have noted that Woolf and her peers attempted to reverse the traditional hierarchy which placed objective perceptions of reality over subjective ones. However, because this criticism is biased in favor of a formal, static view of the novel, it does not capture the drama of subjectivity which Woolf presents. I will read The Waves precisely as a drama of subjectivity which focuses specifically on the way in which self and other struggle towards an equilibrium, a stasis, or a resolution which is not, and essentially cannot, be achieved. Woolf's theory of androgyny, the interaction and combination of male and female, most succinctly illustrates this self-and-other dialectic because, like the relationship between the self and the other, male and female are alienated, yet interdependent. In the text of The Waves, this same struggle is manifested not only on a linguistic level, in the rhythm of the language, but also on the level of characterization, as the six individuals interact among themselves and with the world (the other). Furthermore, this dynamic interaction between self and other takes the form of the reader-author relationship within the text; the reader engages with the author in an attempt to resolve the alienation of the text. The gap that exists between self and other (subject/object; male/female; reader/author) remains open despite Woolf's attempt, through rhythmic language, to close it. This is the space which

constitutes what Julia Kristeva calls the pre-linguistic chora. Kristeva argues that this rhythmic chora disrupts language and opens this gap of no meaning, even as it takes its place in the structure of language. Within this gap, the perspectives of self and other (subject and object) fluctuate, causing the language of the text (its meaning and identity) to be unstable. In the following chapters, I will describe Woolf's novel in terms of the split between subjective and objective perspectives (self and other) and how the language of the text both resolves and reveals the tension that exists between them.

Like many of her contemporaries, Woolf was not only aware of the interior reality beneath outward appearances, but she also wanted to express this interiority in her fiction. Unlike her nineteenth-century predecessors (i.e., Jane Austen), she did not want to reflect the outside world, or write what David Lodge characterizes as "slice of life" novels (109). Woolf and others would have designated this kind of writing as traditionally realistic. As she says in her diary, novels should not reflect merely the external, nor should they be relegated to merely the internal. Rather, a healthy balance of these perspectives is the most preferable approach ("Phases of Fiction" 143). However, in The Waves, the reader is presented with a dynamic of two perspectives that seem to negate each other within an oddly atemporal narrative. Woolf's solution to the dilemma of presenting subjective reality was to present what she called "the moment" which exists outside of linear temporality. In this moment, Woolf believed that subjective and objective perspectives could come together in a kind of epiphany:

The idea has come to me that what I want now to do is to saturate every atom. I mean to eliminate all waste, deadness, superfluity: to give the moment whole; whatever it includes. Say that the moment is a combination of thought; sensation; the voice of the sea. Waste, deadness, come from the inclusion of things that don't belong to the moment; this appalling narrative business of the realist: getting on from lunch to dinner: it is false, unreal, merely conventional.  
(WD 136)

Woolf's idea was to record only what was most essential, most basic to life. Her passion for writing every detail of her life enabled her to sift through the superfluous elements and focus on only the most basic details. Writing served as Woolf's escape from the burden of outward, temporal reality. More importantly, writing was a way for Woolf to know how she perceived that reality, a way for her to know herself. Before Woolf wrote The Waves, she wondered how to represent her thoughts: "Now about this book, The Moths. How am I to begin it? . . . I am not trying to tell a story. Yet perhaps it might be done in that way. A mind thinking" (WD 139-140). The story of The Waves, then, is Woolf's story of the processes of consciousness. Specifically, it is the story of six characters, which Woolf called "islands of light," thinking about themselves, about "life itself going on" (140). "Life" in this sense is the non-being which Woolf described in "A Sketch of the Past." Her initial ideas contain all of the basic elements of the finished novel--the rhythm, the "unreality," the detached perspective: "The unreal world must be round all this--the phantom waves. . . . Could one not get the waves to be heard all through? . . . there must be great freedom from 'reality'" (WD 141). In other words, Woolf wanted to detach the self from its direct

involvement with the other in order to imaginatively recreate and master this dialectic. Consequently, she could not include aspects of material reality which would interfere with this dynamic. David Lodge notes that Woolf's writing "does not so much imitate experience as question it" (177). The Waves does not imitate any one view of reality, but questions the validity of either the subjective or the objective perspectives. Can the essence of life be purely objective and impersonal, is it subjective and personal, or is it an interaction between them? The Waves is essentially Woolf's exploration of the individual perspective and the boundaries of the self.

Peter Brooks says that narrative, or more specifically plot, is a way of defining the boundaries or limitations of the self:

From the organized space, plot becomes the organizing line, demarcating and diagramming that which was previously undifferentiated. We might think here of the geometrical expression, plotting points, or curves, on a graph by means of coordinates, as a way of locating something, perhaps oneself. (12)

This description of what a plot accomplishes in a narrative seems especially applicable to Woolf, whose image of life was a "silver globe" that she could turn over in her hands. This globe provides a way in which she could objectify her perceptions and thereby gain an understanding which alluded her. However, in the text of The Waves, this neat package of reality does not succeed in the way that Woolf had hoped. Her "plot" does not locate for the reader any definitive patterns of meaning, nor a temporal space in which she may find her self. In The Waves, the plot, or "organizing line," is rhythm, as she tells Ethel Smyth. This rhythm, particularly the metaphorical rhythm

of the waves, pushes forward, but also pulls back and away simultaneously. The author, who wishes to locate herself in this plot is, then simultaneously recovering and losing the self. The reader, too, is trapped in a similar dilemma--where can one locate the self in such an ambiguous text? To again turn to Peter Brooks, plot also means "scheme," a meaning, he says, that is derived from the French word "complot" (12). As applied to narrative, he says that:

the organizing line of plot is more often than not some scheme or machination, a concerted plan for the accomplishment of some purpose which goes against the ostensible and dominant legalities of the fictional world, the realization of a blocked and resisted desire. Plots are not simply organizing structures, they are also intentional structures, goal-oriented and forward-moving. (12)

Woolf sought a scheme by which to organize The Waves, although she resisted the idea that it was a narrative "trick," because she needed a unique approach in order to present the dialectical relationship between self and other: "Who thinks it? And am I outside the thinker? One wants some device which is not a trick" (WD 143). The dilemma of presenting dual perspectives was a concern of Woolf's from the beginning. Rhythm seemed to allow her to include both perspectives without having to switch mechanistically from one to the other, thereby avoiding what Brooks calls the obvious scheme. Rhythm could, it seemed, envelop and develop both points of view. However, this same rhythm is what creates a problem of interpretation for the reader. If rhythm is the plot, then what is the story behind the plot, and from whose point of view is the story told? Woolf experimented with the story and plot of The Waves in a short sketch called "The Death of the Moth."

Essentially, in this short story, Woolf found the skeletal outline of what would later become The Waves. The moth's struggle against death is analogous to the story of the six characters in the later novel. The energy that infuses the world outside the window-pane world of the moth is similar to the rhythmic energy that surrounds and indwells the outside world of the interludes and the subjective world of the soliloquies. As the story begins, the moth flies around inside the window-pane from one side to the other (4). Even though the moth's life is limited, however, he lives as best he can, absorbing all of life that he can. "Watching him," says the narrator, "it seemed as if a fibre, very thin but pure, of the enormous energy of the world had been thrust into his frail and diminutive body. As often as he crossed the pane, I could fancy that a thread of vital light became visible. He was little or nothing but life" (4), life at its most essential level. The narrator becomes aware of the life that is obscured by the burden of material reality. "It was as if someone had taken a tiny bead of pure life and decking it as lightly as possible with down and feathers, had set it dancing and zigzagging to show us the true nature of life" (4). The moth slowly begins to die, but, like the characters in The Waves, he struggles and fights, as with an unseen enemy:

The legs agitated themselves once more. I look as if for the enemy against which he struggled. . . . The power [of the world outside] was there all the same, massed outside indifferent, impersonal, not attending to anything in particular. Somehow it was opposed to the little hay-coloured moth (5-6).

Like the moth who is life, lightly covered with features, the characters represent life, lightly covered with names and faces. They,

too, are portrayed in opposition to the outside world. In The Waves, the objectivity of the outside world interacts and intertwines more with the subjective world of the characters, but it is, nonetheless, opposed to these characters in a subtle way. The metaphors and the repetition of phrases in The Waves create an ambiguous relationship between subjectivity and objectivity; the characters, as a result, never seem "at home" in the world around them. The desires of the world clash with their own, which causes them to feel not only alienated from it, but also from each other. Though the moth struggles valiantly against its enemy, death eventually triumphs. In The Waves, the characters' struggle with death is parallel to their struggles to find meaning in their lives. If, as Freud says, death is the ultimate end to desire, the characters' continuing struggle with death may be described in terms of their ambiguous positions in relation to life. Only Rhoda seeks death; the others fight against it in one way or another. The lack of an ending in The Waves is analogous to this situation. The ending to a novel brings the reader a feeling of satisfaction and fulfillment, whereas the lack of an ending suspends the action and creates tension. Because the ending of The Waves is really not an ending but another beginning, the tension is not resolved, but suspended and continued past the boundaries of the text. The ambiguity this causes further illustrates the way in which the objective and subjective perspectives overlap and obscure the tension between, leaving open the gap in meaning.

The purpose of this analysis is to discover the ways in which Woolf dealt with, or failed to deal with, the dilemma of the dual perspectives. The reader is confronted with a text that demands participation; she must read The Waves with both perspectives in mind, for to lose one is to misunderstand the other, and thus to miss the entire picture of reality that Woolf was trying to create. In her earlier novels, it is clear that Woolf believed in a possible unity between mind and world. However, by the time she wrote The Waves, she had become skeptical of such a possibility; the fluctuating points of view in The Waves seem to open up doubts about the nature of this unity. Is it a unified vision of the world, or is it a vision of chaos, lightly covered over by a harmonious rhythm? The way in which the novel is structured around rhythm, the types of metaphoric language Woolf used, and the general poetic quality of the language, illustrated by repetitive phrases, are all elements indicative of how she chose to represent the problem of subjective reality in her fiction. This study will describe how the rhythm and metaphors in the novel establish a dialectical relationship between the external, or objective point of view, represented by the interludes, and the internal, or subjective point of view, represented by the soliloquies. These "voices" are not limited to their own sections in the narrative, but they overlap and interfere with each other. It is this interference, or interruption, that enhances the reader's perception of the duality of the discourse and the unresolved tension inherent within it. However, it is also this interference that denies the reader a stable position in the text.

## CHAPTER I

## A DELICATE BALANCE: VIRGINIA WOOLF'S MODERNISM

Critics of the novel have classified The Waves as a part of the continuing dialogue between Modernists and their nineteenth-century predecessors with regard to the position of the subject in fiction. The Waves in particular represents one of the more creative approaches to the problem of the subject since Woolf's use of rhythm as a means of re-positioning the subject in the text stretches the genre to its limits. Her unique approach, therefore, can only be understood as a response to the nineteenth-century representation of reality which neatly distinguishes the subject from the object. As one of the primary participants in the high-modernist experiment, Woolf was engaging in a well-established argument with nineteenth-century aesthetic theories and philosophies. Early critics like William Troy (1932) placed Woolf alongside other writers who shared the same metaphysical view of reality: "What is so often regarded as unique in her fiction is actually less the result of an individual attitude than of the dominant metaphysical bias of a whole generation" (324). The writers and philosophers who made up this generation believed that reality was not a purely objective element, already in place like a stage setting; rather "reality" consisted of a dynamic interplay between the individual subject and his or her surrounding environment and stimuli. What they perceived to be lacking for the most part in nineteenth-century fiction was this dynamic, dramatic relationship

between subject and object. Inevitably in a nineteenth-century novel, such as Dickens' David Copperfield and Bleak House or Hardy's Mayor of Casterbridge, the characters are distinctly defined in their surroundings and described either by themselves or by an objective narrator. The reader has no problem recognizing and accepting the worlds created by these authors and their respective narrators. Public and private aspects of character are divided into subjective thoughts and objective actions. In nineteenth century fiction, novelistic lyricism would have been suspect because subjectivity was associated with lyric effusion and, therefore, looked upon by both readers and critics as too author-directed and psychological. The plots, the settings, and the narrative discourses of the nineteenth-century novel were marked by the conventional division between what is subject (or subjective) and what is object (or objective).

Even though the High Modernist novel is in many ways complicit with this "realistic" aesthetic theory, it departs from convention by exploring radically different rhetorical strategies as ways of representing the individual's view of and participation in reality. As David Lodge points out, modern literature is characteristically inner-directed, "concerned with consciousness, and also with the subconscious and unconscious workings of the human mind" (45). The elements of the traditional novel are all but ignored in favor of those aspects which would emphasize "introspection, analysis and reflection" (45). This introspection is already a paradoxical concept; in order to represent consciousness in fiction, the writer must use language, a medium which

transforms the subjective experience into an objective, or public, medium. Nevertheless, Woolf, along with other experimental writers, undertook to assert subjectivity over objectivity by disrupting the public aspect of language. This inherently problematic goal was often achieved at the expense of the objective descriptions of material reality, such as in Joyce's Ulysses in which the reader must piece together the outside world from the spare tidbits given her by the narrator. Joyce's success in presenting the views of individual subjects impressed Woolf, as she reluctantly admitted, but it also irritated her finely tuned sensibilities. Although she perceived the genius of Joyce's work, she also suspected the extreme egotism of such a project and wanted to avoid it in her own work (WD 22, 48). On a first and admittedly shallow reading, Woolf judged Ulysses to be a "misfire" and "pretentious" (WD 48): "I feel that myriads of tiny bullets pepper one and spatter one; but one does not get one deadly wound straight in the face--as from Tolstoy, for instance" (48). Even though Woolf shares Joyce's desire to re-create the subjective point of view in fiction, she is distinguished from Joyce specifically in her use of rhythm as a structural pattern, as a recurring metaphoric motif which blurs the boundaries between subject and object and asserts the unity she finds lacking in Joyce. In short, Woolf wanted to achieve a direct hit, to create an imminent coherence of consciousness and, in so doing, to avoid the chaos of perceptions which she perceived in Joyce's work.

I contend that Woolf's particular use of rhythm to achieve this unity and reconciliation between subjective and objective perspectives sets her apart from other writers, such as Joyce and Proust, because it operates within a paradox of consciousness which is characteristic of language. Julia Kristeva's linguistic theory addresses this issue of the text precisely as a paradox of language and identity. Kristeva explains that the crisis of the subject is her inability to find expression for what is beyond the limits of expression within herself, or what Kristeva calls the semiotic chora. The only way the unconscious desires are given expression is through the chora, which is only seen in language as pulsations (rhythm) and disruptions in syntax. The paradox is that once the chora is identified in language (a symbolic process) it is no longer semiotic but is a part of the symbolic and is described by the symbolic. The rhythm of which The Waves is constructed is best described in terms of Kristeva's theory because the crisis of identity and the paradox of language are central to Woolf's text. Even though Woolf uses some traditional novelistic elements, her discourse departs from tradition in its use of rhythmic, poetic prose which is characterized by syntax reversal and disruption, repetition, metaphor, and rhythmic patterns which envelop the entire text. Kristeva's theory can reveal that the poetic language of The Waves indicates not only the presence of the semiotic, but also, more importantly, the way in which the fluctuation within language is characteristic of the dilemma of consciousness. The reader's role in this rhythmical, paradoxical discourse is complicated and problematic,

therefore, because the position of the characters and the narrator is unstable. In addition, Kristeva can help to explain the ambiguity of the reader's position to the text with regard to the paradox inherent in its language. Woolf's attempt to objectify the subjective shows the limits of language because, as Kristeva demonstrates, language only exists as an interaction between the semiotic and the symbolic in a "signifying process." Specifically, Kristeva's theory can show how the interaction of the interludes and the soliloquies illustrates the way language exists as a continuing process of consciousness. This particular chapter will provide a background for this central argument by comparing Woolf's use of rhythmic form as a rhetorical device with the form of modern aesthetics used by Pound, Eliot, Joyce, and Proust as they constitute the different responses to the same perception of consciousness inherent in nineteenth-century culture and philosophy.

In her attempt to represent subjectivity, as opposed to the efforts of her peers, Woolf confronts a paradox of writing in which language seems to deny the dynamic of consciousness it is supposed to capture. Language betrays her because it is the utterance of a subject who is trapped in subjectivity and who is, therefore, incapable of seeing herself as other, of objectifying her thoughts. The reader is implicitly betrayed by the discourse in The Waves because even though it is situated in objectivity, it claims to represent subjectivity. The rhythm of the language may seem to resolve this problem, but actually reveals the dilemma of consciousness and of language. As indicated earlier, Kristeva designates the rhythm underlying all

language as the chora, felt only through the syntactical disturbances in discourse. This rhythmic phenomenon in the text of The Waves reveals the dialectical relationship of subject and object, reflecting the consciousness of the author and her characters to the reader who subsequently recognizes this dilemma of consciousness to be like her own. The problematic subject-object relationship was resolved, so to speak, in the nineteenth century by the public-private division of the individual. However, Woolf, as well as writers like Pound, Eliot, Joyce, and Proust, found this division to be stifling and limiting. They each wanted to find a way to portray a more inclusive, and thus more unified, individual by representing the subjective point of view. They could not escape, however, the paradox of consciousness, the unavoidable (yet necessary) split and dynamic interaction between subjective and objective perceptions.

A large part of the shared philosophical context of the dilemma of language and identity to which writers like Woolf, Pound and the others are responding is the teachings of Henri Bergson.<sup>1</sup> Bergson, for instance, states that in everyday life, the individual lives on only one level of consciousness, blocking out anything that would interfere with daily activities. Underlying this surface is an area of unorganized sensations that was all but ignored by the individual in favor of more practical daily needs. The modern novelist's dilemma of how to represent subjective reality in language is clearly anchored in

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<sup>1</sup>See, for instance, Shiv K. Kumar, Bergson and the Stream of Consciousness Novel (New York: New York University Press, 1963).

the philosophical-scientific debate between relativism and those who feared the consequences of such a theory. The relativists, such as Bergson, Bradley, and Nietzsche, argued that there was no absolute way in which to perceive the world, that conscious awareness of life is operative on different, yet interdependent, levels. As these levels intersect and interact, the previously well-defined boundaries between the objective and the subjective shift and merge. The loss of certainty of what is object and what is subject opened up new possibilities in the literary arena, but it also created new dilemmas. For instance, the idea of an absolute time that ruled over relative time of the individual was now called into question. How might a writer like Woolf portray the constant flux of the mind and still retain a sense of "real" time or narrative sequence? Again, Bergson's idea of the "*durée réelle*" is central to understanding new concepts of time, particularly in Woolf's fiction. Bergson said that in a moment of "real duration" the individual perceived an object as it had changed in psychic time. In other words, the physical object had not changed, but the perception of it had altered. Unfortunately for the writer, the only way to represent real duration is in language which, unlike the sensory flux underlying experience, is very much situated in sequential time, as noted above. Virginia Woolf used rhythm and repetition to interrupt, or disrupt, the sequential element of language in order to represent her concept of "the moment." Language in any form, however, is still an objective, temporal element constantly influenced by subjectivity, so that representing subjective reality in

language remains a paradoxical dilemma for Woolf. In Bergson's theory, the object as perceived and the observing subject interact in a dynamic relationship. In other words, the object shares in the dynamic nature of the subject as the one who observes. For Woolf, the role of the writer is to restore one's essential self, to "get back to pure duration" (Time and Free Will 232). Getting back to pure duration is analogous to getting back to the golden age, to a purer state of being where time has no absolute status. This philosophy presents a problem to the writer like Woolf who wanted to capture the temporal flux of consciousness in language.

For Woolf, as well as for her fellow writers, words seemed to be a barrier to the representation of perceived reality. Bergson said that the

word with well-defined outlines, the rough and ready word, which stores up the stable, common, and consequently impersonal element in the impressions of mankind, overwhelms or at least covers over the delicate and fugitive impressions of our individual consciousness. (Time and Free Will 131-132)

As our primary means of communication, language is limited and mechanistic by nature, essentially incapable of expressing the sensory flux of the consciousness which is unhindered by such artificial boundaries. Of course, post-structuralists today argue that the very essence of language is instability and that words, instead of being "rough and ready" contain various meanings which shift with every use. This view of language further demonstrates the problematic issue facing the writer who wishes to represent reality which is, according to Bergson, only clear when we lay aside the mechanisms by which we

organize our experience. He asserts that recovery of the self is only possible when objective reality is subjectified and personalized at the loss of the public self which is oddly depersonalized and alienated. Subjective perception should return the self to its purest state in which one is free of the encumbrances of life's minute details. Many critics have noted Proust's use of Bergson's philosophy in his fiction. For instance, in Swann's Way, the narrator's flashback experience with the madelaine cake and tea very literally enables him to recover a self which he had thought lost and forever forgotten. This experience disrupts the natural sequence of time; like a symbol, this memory is static, yet it has the power to alter the narrator's present experience. Woolf shares in Proust's effort to capture the essence of the recovery experience, yet her methods are vastly different. In The Waves, recovery of the essential self is accomplished through the rhythmic repetition of phrases, repetitions which span the entire narrative. To say that her characters "flashback" on their past is to misread the rhythmic plot. These characters seem to inhabit a timeframe which encompasses past, present, and future all at once. Their memory flashbacks are essentially perpetual, captured in the overall rhythm of the discourse. The repetitions represent their attempt to retain the essential aspect of their identities. Only the most intense moments are remembered, moments in which the characters have uncovered and recovered what is basic to themselves. Woolf used rhythm and repetition in order to demonstrate the fluctuation of the consciousness, both the recovery and potential loss of identity.

Significantly, Bergson comments of the importance of rhythm in language, an idea shared by his peers and by experimental writers like Woolf:

The words may then have been well chosen, they will not convey the whole of what we wish to make them say if we do not succeed by the rhythm, by the punctuation, by the relative lengths of the sentences and parts of the sentences, by a particular dancing of the sentence, in making the reader's mind, continually guided by a series of nascent movements, describe a curve of thought and feeling analogous to that we ourselves describe . . . the words, taken individually, no longer count: there is nothing left but the flow of meaning which runs through the words, nothing but two minds, which, without intermediary, seem to vibrate directly in unison with one another. (Schwartz 55-56)

Virginia Woolf certainly recognized the power of the rhythmic patterns and pulsations of language in conveying the subjective/objective dialectic. In The Waves, this rhythm is fully utilized to create an overall effect of fluctuation and movement: as the characters fluctuate between the objective and subjective, the reader's perception fluctuates as well. The temporal narrative structure is interrupted by rhythm in order to represent the significance of the moment in time. Both the movement of time and the halting of time, which constitute this moment, are the focal points of The Waves. The characters and the reader are caught between the moment, the object subjectively perceived, and the constant fluctuation of perception as the moment dramatically changes.

Like Woolf, other Modernist writers like Pound and Eliot also struggle with the debased subjectivity of Romanticism on the one hand, and the debased objectivity of neo-classicism on the other. They seem

uncertain as to where to situate "authentic" literary experience.<sup>2</sup> For certain philosophers, like Bradley and Nietzsche, the division between subject and object is non-existent. Like Bergson, they knew that only everyday interests and preoccupations define the line between the individual subject and the objective world. Thus, the boundaries between subjective and objective perspectives are not clear cut, making the attempt to represent experience a dilemma which Woolf shares with writers like Pound and Eliot. However, her proposed solution to this dilemma is unique in that she uses rhythm as a way to represent an unmediated perspective of experience. In other words, while Pound and Eliot both use historical constructs to resolve the objective/subjective dichotomy, Woolf uses a more exclusively formal rhythmic structure which does not resolve the dilemma, but rather deepens the dilemma even as it attempts to resolve it. While Woolf's reader has no mediating element such as history on which to rely, Pound's reader is presented with facts, with tradition as a background. As William Cookson indicates in the introduction to Selected Prose, Pound's work on economy, history, and religion is part and parcel of his literary work. His interests in classical history, literature, or even Oriental culture finds its way into his poetry, particularly the Cantos. "On its simplest level," says Cookson, "Pound's work records the fight to preserve the individual human spirit and 'to keep the value of a local and particular character' against all forms of oppression and blurring

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<sup>2</sup>See Sanford Schwartz, The Matrix of Modernism (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).

of distinctions, throughout history" (8-9). Pound bases his ideas, in both prose and poetry, in historical tradition, yet he presents history in a non-traditional way. What he offers his readers is an alternative, more vital history, made new by the perspective of the present. Furthermore, even though he says that the artist, or writer, should be an objective observer, he also believes that art is the expression of personal experience. These terms may seem contradictory, but Pound was attempting to make boundaries between the subjective and the objective less distinct.<sup>3</sup>

Modernism itself seems to be a strange mixture of the subjective, or Romantic view, and objective, or Classical view. Up until the late 1950's, Modernists had staunchly insisted that their literature and criticism represented a sharp break with the nineteenth century. However, as has been briefly described, many of their aesthetic ideas originated in the fiction and philosophy of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, the Modernists were as preoccupied with the dilemma of representing emotional experience in language as their Romantic and Victorian predecessors. While they try to resolve the tension between the two by using various mediating elements, they cannot succeed; the tension is instead dramatically demonstrated. Pound, for instance, is torn between the objective method of organizing experience through

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<sup>3</sup>See David Lodge, The Modes of Modern Writing (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), and Sanford Schwartz, The Matrix of Modernism (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), for a more in-depth analysis of these issues (i.e., Pound and Eliot are moving poetic rhetoric towards the prosaic, while Woolf is moving novelistic rhetoric towards the poetic).

history and the subjective nature of sensory experience. While he did not want to hinder subjectivity in his poetry, he attempted to renew the past in the experience of the present. For instance, he often calls upon figures of the past to aid him in writing his poetry and to revitalize poetry in general. In his early poetry, such as "Homage to Sextus Propertius," the speaker asks the classical poets to pass on to him the inspirations for their poetry, but also asks for a wreath "which will not crush my head" (217). He wants to capture the magic of Classical Greek poetry, but knows the quality of his work will never be equal: "I shall have, doubtless, a boom after my funeral,/ Seeing that long standing increases all things regardless of quality" (217). Essentially, the speaker asks that his poetry outlive his death as did the poetry of poets like Homer, even though he knows it to be unequal to that of his Greek predecessors. The past can reinform the present and give it new vitality, says Pound, but the impression of subjective experience can be lost in the process. As the speaker says in "Hugh Selwyn Mauberly:" "The age demanded an image/ Of its accelerated grimace,/ Something for the modern stage,/ Not, at any rate, an Attic grace"; or "the obscure reveries/ Of the inward gaze" (173). Neither the objectivity of Classicism nor the subjectivity of Romanticism should be the exclusive subjects or approaches to poetry. Rather the poet should blend his subjective perception with the objects he perceives: "Poetry, her border of ideas,/ The edge, uncertain, but a means of blending/ With other strata/ Where the lower and higher have ended" (180). Woolf, too, advocates a merging of object and subject;

however, in The Waves at least, she accomplishes this not by relying on tradition like Pound or by representing a fragmented perspective like Joyce, but by using rhythm to formulate a unified vision of reality. Furthermore, unlike Pound, Woolf does not invoke history as an authority for her narrative. Rather, rhythm gives authority to her text through its attempt to unify experience. In Woolf's text, however, rhythmic unity is not achieved. The two perspectives of self and other remain unbridged even as the characters and the narrator fluctuate between them. Specifically, rhythm acts as a dramatic catalyst by which the characters may both gain and lose their identities. In other words, in the soliloquies, as well as in the interludes, rhythm acts both to recuperate the identity and to demonstrate how the repetition diminishes the identity. For instance, the characters blend in with objects around them as they lose their ego boundaries: Louis is standing in the garden among the flowers and perceives that he is a flower stalk; his identity (his subjective perception) has merged with the other (the object he perceives). Each of the characters has a repetition compulsion--they must continually repeat the elements of their identities to themselves and to each other. However, the identity that they gain through repetition is simultaneously lost as the repetition continues.

Like Woolf, Eliot grappled with the problem of how to present the dilemma of these perspectives. He states, for example, that immediate, subjective experience is unstable and, like Bradley and Nietzsche, believes that subjective and objective are distinguished arbitrarily.

Eliot recognized that the boundaries between these positions were determined by the interests and preoccupations of the individual. Any attempt to judge between them is not possible because subjective and objective are relative to and dependent on each other. He shares this philosophy with Woolf, as well as with other contemporary writers, a philosophy that Woolf demonstrates in The Waves. Even though Woolf gives names to her characters, designed to create certain boundaries between them, the relationships in the novel are relative, not absolute. There are no clear-cut boundaries between characters, between characters and narrator, or between the characters, narrator and reader. It is evident in The Waves that neither subject nor object should be emphasized because they are dependent on each other. Eliot insists that boundaries between subjective and objective are "more fluid than we ordinarily assume" (Schwartz 161). Woolf, too, perceived that fluidity of this boundary, demonstrated in the language and patterns of The Waves.

Woolf and Eliot also share criticism of the tendency of nineteenth century artists to be either extremely subjective or extremely objective. Eliot detested the vague language that nineteenth-century poets used to describe experience. As a solution, Eliot proposed the use of the "objective correlative," a

set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked. (Selected Essays 125-126)

The goal of the objective correlative is to unify the abstract and the concrete by bringing them together in a balanced structure. This gives

the reader a more concrete visualization of the poem's subject. Woolf maintains a similar position in her theories, advocating the representation of inner subjectivity through objectivity. She proposes that fiction should not merely mirror external reality, but represent a particular, individual view, a balance between subjective and objective. Likewise, Eliot said that the poet should recreate the world, not simply reflect objective reality. The objective correlative was Eliot's way of delineating the function of subjectivity and objectivity in poetry. Woolf would not see the definitive function of these positions in this way, however. She uses rhythm to represent the dialectical relationship between objective and subjective experience, but she recognizes that rhythm is also subjectively dependent on personal perception. Her use of rhythm creates not a coherent new world, as Eliot's objective correlative might, but a world in which the characters seek coherence and stability in vain.

Woolf and Eliot both struggled with the possibility and implication of using social settings as another way of mediating between the subjective and objective perceptives and thus unifying them. In Eliot's poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," for example, the reader is painfully aware of Prufrock's alienation from his surroundings and his sense of loss. Prufrock becomes a "half-object" as he attempts to perceive himself the way others see him, from an external point of view.<sup>4</sup> He is aware, as is the reader, of the

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<sup>4</sup>Again, see Sanford Schwartz, The Matrix of Modernism (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), for a more in-depth discussion.

subject/object split within himself (i.e., "Let us go then, you and I") and of his need to identify with others in order to unify this split. Identification with others is an essential step in ego development, but as both Woolf and Eliot knew and demonstrated in their work, it is a painful process. Woolf's characters often express the pain of meeting, the conflict of personalities and perceptions. Communion and unity are not often pleasant experiences in Woolf's narrative. The desire for unity is uppermost in the minds of the characters, but the realization of this desire is both painful and unfulfilling. For example, when the six characters gather for the last time at Hampton Court after long years of separation, each of them wants to impress the other with his or her accomplishments. Neville tries to impress Susan, but finds her unwilling to cooperate: "There is always somebody, when we come together, and the edges of meeting are still sharp, who refuses to be submerged; whose identity therefore one wishes to make crouch beneath one's own" (212). Susan, too, acknowledges the necessary pain which accompanies meeting and merging one's identity with another: "Now we have clashed our antlers. This is the necessary prelude; the salute of old friends" (215). These necessary social situations, however, force the loss of the individual's perspectives as he or she merges with the perspective of generally accepted reality. The structural rhythm of the discourse also envelops the characters and levels out any distinctive features that one might find in a conventional novel. This rhythm leaves no room for difference: the syntactical styles of all of the characters' soliloquies are strikingly similar, indicating the loss

of particular identities in the general rhythm. The characters' shared repetition of phrases and the cross repetition between interludes and soliloquies erase individual differences, creating a fictional unity and community. Paradoxically the rhythmic structure Woolf uses to objectify experience creates both a subjective and an objective vision of the world; the characters, narrator and reader fluctuate between the two poles, and, like Eliot's Prufrock, remain trapped in the painful oscillation of recovery and loss.

Many of Eliot's and Woolf's characters are uncertain of themselves and their surroundings. Woolf's characters are caught in this dilemma time after time. Rhoda, for instance, wants to participate in the society of her peers, but retreats into herself. As a result, her life is a series of one crisis after another. She cannot participate because she is indecisive and incapable of becoming involved. She perceives herself as others see her, and is paralyzed by their gaze. Eliot's "Prufrock" presents a similar picture of a character who sees himself as he believes others see him and therefore cannot act. Prufrock is paralyzed because he sees himself simultaneously as both subject and object. Prufrock's dilemma, like that of the characters in The Waves, is the classic dilemma of consciousness, the split between thinking and acting. Prufrock, like Rhoda, longs to belong to the society from which he is alienated, but the gaze of the other, "The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase," prevents any action on his part. Thus, the boundaries between his perception and the perceptions of others are not clearly defined. His denial that he is like Hamlet

is ironic. In The Waves, another version of this blurring of boundaries occurs in the soliloquies of Bernard. He notes the fluidity of the boundaries between himself and those around him. At the end of the novel, there is a scene in which Bernard seems to address an unknown dinner partner. However, in this scene, the reader cannot be certain whether Bernard is speaking, in fact, to another person or to himself. In either case, he is trying to recover and re-establish the self he feels he has lost. In observing the other, Bernard places himself in the position of the other. This, in turn, allows him to perceive his own thoughts as an outside observer would. The reader sees Bernard, as well as the other characters, attempting to step outside of himself repeatedly. However, he finds this process unsuccessful and painful, although enlightening and even refreshing for a fleeting moment. Life demands, however, that he remains within what he calls "the machine," the giant clock spring which rhythmically expands in and out. Furthermore, each character places himself or herself in the position of actor and observer. They each perceive their actions from the position of the other.

As I have indicated, the dialectical relationship between objective and subjective perspectives is pervasive throughout Modernism; in fact, it informs the very basis for Modernist poetics. Pound and Eliot are only two examples of high-modernist writers besides Woolf who struggled with this dynamic relationship in themes and in language. As I have argued, Pound utilized history as a mediating element in his poetry in order to prevent the kind of unending

oscillation between subject and object which occurs in The Waves, and while Eliot utilized such elements as religion to prevent a lack of mediation, his perception of subject/object relationship most closely approaches Woolf's narrative strategies. While Pound and Eliot use narrative techniques, Woolf's use of poetic strategies in The Waves demonstrates the way in which the dilemma of consciousness is represented in fiction. Furthermore, Woolf's reader is unsure, because of the dual viewpoints of subject and object, whether the object is being subjectified or the subject objectified and consequently does not know which of these perspectives is dominant. More specifically, are the characters an attempt by the author to objectify the subjective thoughts of the narrator, or are the interludes, the narrator's soliloquy, the objectification of the subjective viewpoints of the characters? The objective form of The Waves overlies a subjective content, but the overall rhythmic pattern, which erases the mediating element, makes it difficult to distinguish between objective and subjective. Unlike a traditional nineteenth century novel, such as a Bennett novel which Woolf strongly criticized for its adherence to conventional, external reality, The Waves presents a world in which the characters have no anchor and float unattached. As Bernard says, "I also am too complex. In my case something remains floating, unattached" (77). Woolf perceives that in a Bennett-type novel, reality is presented as existing somewhere between objective and subjective; the narrator has complete control over the reader, guiding him or her carefully between the two poles of perceived reality. The

narrator does not abandon his reader; he steps in and leads the way through a socially contextualized world. However, in The Waves, this social mediation is completely erased. All that remains is the back and forth oscillation between the objective and subjective, the interludes and soliloquies. This oscillation is the rhythm of The Waves; it is what creates the ambiguity and undecidability of the discourse. The reader is faced with extremes, opposing poles of perception, yet these poles simultaneously interact and separate, further complicating her position to the text. Like the characters, she is left "floating, unattached."

In a novel like The Waves in which the characters and the reader float between the purely objective and purely subjective, a totalized vision does not seem possible. It seems that the rhythmic envelope of consciousness which surrounds the characters gives to the novel at least a gesture towards unity, because the use of repetition implies a totality which is perpetually deferred. This rhythm is characterized by a fluctuation in which the characters are pushed and pulled between intimacy and alienation, between the safety of their internal perspective and the danger of external action. This rhythmic movement is both life-giving and life-denying; it is both objective/impersonal and subjective/personal, yet it is neither. Woolf wanted to "write to a rhythm and not to a plot," as she told Ethyl Smyth in 1930. She believed that this rhythm would allow her to expose the process of thinking, to prioritize the subjectivity of thinking over the objectivity of the thing perceived (or over action). The external

world in The Waves would become the internal landscape where events happen not in a simple sequence but are presented rhythmically and metaphorically.

Woolf once told a young poet that one who wished to describe internal experience faced a dilemma. Woolf said that the problem was "to find the right relationship . . . between the self that you know and the world outside . . ." ("Letter to a Young Poet" 219). "The self that you know" is at once a description of both the internal and the external. Woolf says a writer must be able to perceive himself (or herself) as an object; then he (or she) may know how to position oneself in relation to the world outside, clearly external in nature. However, a problem immediately appears. How can one perceive oneself objectively without a certain compliance with the world? Sovereignty, or knowability, of the self, seems to be a given for Woolf, not something to be questioned. The "right" relationship between this sovereign self and the "world outside" is established through contemplation of the "landscape and emotions within"; once the poet (or novelist) has contemplated his or her inner thoughts, he or she must "render [them] visible" to the outside world (219-220). In other words, the internal must be made external. As indicated earlier, the paradox inherent in this philosophy is that once the internal is made external it is no longer purely representational of that internal landscape. It is now an external object to be observed and examined. According to Woolf, the writer must go through a three-step process in objectifying the subjective: perception of self as object and world as

self; contemplation of the world and the self; and finally representation of these perceptions in language. Far from trivializing the thoughts, or perceptions, of the writer, this representation of his or her subjective thoughts merely alters the hierarchy of objective/external over subjective/internal.

Woolf states that the "new novel" will not be concerned with triviality, which she assigns to external, materialistic reality characteristic of the nineteenth century. Like her contemporaries, Woolf perceived that nineteenth century novelists like Bennett and Wells who insisted on presenting an exact duplication of external reality were misled; their view of realism, that it is material and objective, was shallow and trivial, as well as uninteresting. Her novels, on the contrary, will reflect the realities of the inner life:

It will make little use of the marvelous fact-recording power, which is one of the attributes of fiction. It will tell us very little about the houses, incomes, occupations of its characters; it will have little kinship with the sociological novel or the novel of environment. ("Narrow Bridge of Art" 18)

Judging from a statement made in another essay, the "facts" of nineteenth century fiction are "trivial and . . . transitory," not "true and enduring" ("Modern Fiction" 152). One can surmise then that what make up the "true and enduring" are the inner thoughts of characters, not facts about their occupations or houses. Totally objective facts obscure, or veil, the reality that is, for Woolf, the inner landscape of the mind.

Instead of merely recording facts, her novels, she says, will give "the relations of the mind to general ideas and its [the mind's]

soliloquy in solitude" ("Narrow Bridge" 19). Apparently, Woolf wants to achieve a synthesis of some kind between "general ideas" and the individual mind. However, what actually occurs is a complex dialectical relationship between objective and subjective which, somehow, centers entirely in the mind, the "soliloquy in solitude." Once the novelist records the mind's relation to ideas and to itself, she runs the risk of recording "facts," which is precisely what she had hoped to avoid. Again, the paradox is made evident: the very process of writing in order to represent abstract thought is the process of objectifying the subjective. This process which reflects the mind's relation to general ideas is another instance in which Woolf appears to take for granted the sovereignty of the self. This autonomous self can apparently originate and control its thoughts with little or no interference from the "world outside." In theory, at least, this idea does not seem to be problematical. However, the idea of the mind representing itself is a concept which remains trapped in a dualistic idea of consciousness inherited from the nineteenth century. The tension between subjective and objective has been internalized but not, as Woolf may have hoped, eliminated. The characters' "soliloquies in solitude" are a construct, a fiction; they are not only speaking to themselves, but also to a reader. Through the language of the novel, the internal is made external and generally accessible, but only at the expense of losing the quality of interiority which Woolf so much desired to represent.

"To make concrete a mental state" is a phrase Woolf used to describe the idea of revealing the inner thoughts of characters ("Phases of Fiction" 121). Like the "soliloquy in solitude" this phrase is paradoxical; a mental state represented in language is no longer in a state of being purely mental--it is impossible to describe a purely mental state because obviously once it has been "translated" into language, it is no longer mental or "before language." The best a writer can do is attempt to represent it or translate it into language, a symbolic system. Woolf envisioned this concrete mental state as a "silver globe" by which she was hypnotized:

I should like to take the globe in my hands and feel it quietly, round, smooth, heavy, and so hold it, day after day.  
(WD 136)

Gaining a firm hold on the essence of life was of great significance to Woolf, both personally and professionally, and yet, her writing is replete with images of sinking, slipping and falling:

Directly I stop working I feel that I am sinking down, down, down. And as usual I feel that if I sink further I shall reach the truth. . . . I shall make myself face the fact that there is nothing--nothing for any of us. Work, reading, writing are all disguises; and relations with people. (WD 141)

Woolf was fearful of "sinking down" into this emptiness of non-being, but she knew that this space was inhabited by the essential self which would be recovered and represented in her fiction. Apparently, for Woolf, the outward processes of living were mechanical, merely things she had to do. The reality, or truth about life, which underlie this surface was what she wanted to uncover in her fiction. Judging from this passage, this underlying reality was simply a void, an empty place

which is disguised by outward activity. The globe she describes is symbolic of her mental state made concrete.

Woolf's desire to bring individual experience out of the realm of the abstract took the form, in The Waves, of six characters which she described as "islands of light--islands in the stream that I am trying to convey; life itself going on" (WD 140). Woolf was not alone in her view of life as a stream, an ocean, or a series of waves. In 1918, Oswald Spengler, writing about the repetition of the stages of life, describes it in similar terms: "Over the expanse of the water passes the endless uniform wave-train of the generations. . . . But over this surface, too, the great Cultures accomplish their majestic wave-cycles" (Ellman 490). Even though Spengler's description is more historically oriented than Woolf's more poetic description, the idea of a sea or stream of humanity is similar, as is the idea of "wave-cycles." T. E. Hulme uses the wave metaphor to describe the fluctuating movements of the mind. His explanation indicates how the writer might represent this movement:

It is as if the surface of our mind was a sea in a continual state of motion, that there were so many waves on it, their existence was so transient; . . . the artist by making a fixed model of one of these transient waves enables you to isolate it out and to perceive it on yourself. (Speculations 150-151)

Woolf shares Hulme's metaphor; in her aesthetic theory, these waves are the subjective reality that underlies objective experience. She assumes, because of her background in late nineteenth and early twentieth century philosophies, that the unconscious contained the essence of life. Like Bergson, she believes that the stream of

immediate experience must be recovered, and like Nietzsche, she sees this unconscious as unorganized and chaotic and in need of a new form by which to organize it. External stimuli constantly rain down on the mind, and each new sensation, as it is filtered through, is given different emphasis:

Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions--trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old; the moment of importance came not here but there. . . . ("Modern Fiction" 212)

Writing in the nineteenth century, Walter Pater had even gone so far as to claim that our physical bodies extend outside of our boundaries to combine with objects in the world:

What is the whole physical life in that moment but a combination of natural elements to which science gives their names ["Phosphorus and lime and delicate fibres"] . . . . That clear, perpetual outline of face and limb is but an image of ours, under which we group them--a design in a web, the actual threads of which pass out beyond it. (Ellman 182)

Pater's theory of the moment is similar to what Woolf would write of some fifty or sixty years later. Pater said that if one were to reflect on the perception of objects in the mind, "of impressions, unstable, flickering, inconstant, which burn and are extinguished with our consciousness of them, it [the reflection of the world] contrasts still further: "the whole scope of observation is dwarfed into the narrow chamber of the individual mind" (183). Pater suspected that the individual created his or her reality in the mind, not totally dependent on external reality, but drawing from it necessary

information. What is necessary to the individual's existence, however, is also what alienates him or her from others, the isolation which Woolf also describes. Pater says,

Experience, already reduced to a group of impressions, is ringed round for each one of us by the thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, or from us to that which we can only conjecture to be without. Every one of those impressions is the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world.  
(183)

Like Woolf's characters who struggle against their prison-like isolation, Pater's solitary individual will never know unity. In addition, for Pater, real life (the passion of living) exists only in moments which fade almost the instant they are perceived. "To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life" (183). Woolf shares Pater's perception of the intensity of the moment, the space in time in which the perception of the object and the subject merge. Woolf felt that the representation of this experience should be foremost in the novel, that nothing of this moment should be excluded. The only thing that should be left out is what she calls falseness:

there is no limit to the horizon, and . . . nothing--no 'method,' no experiment, even of the wildest--is forbidden, but only falsity and pretence . . . ; everything is the proper stuff of fiction, every feeling, every thought; every quality of brain and spirit is drawn upon; no perception comes amiss. ("Modern Fiction" 158)

In a novel, the organizing principle of these disparate sensations would not be a plot in the traditional sense of the word. A sequential plot could not capture the intensity of the moment, nor could it represent the fluctuation between subjective and objective perceptions.

In order to reflect the oscillation her characters experience, she needed a new convention, one "which would not seem to you too odd, unreal, and far-fetched to believe in" ("Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" 112). Whether or not rhythm provides the perfect approach, and whether it fulfills this definition, rhythm is the medium through which the reader perceives the characters in The Waves. Rhythm alone could represent the mind's lack of stability.

In "Letter to a Young Poet," Woolf advises the would-be writer that the self has its own rhythm, making it the easiest and most fit subject about which to write: "I conclude that self offers no impediment; self joins in the dance; self lends itself to the rhythm . . ." (217). The individual constantly struggles and strains to see himself or herself from both subjective and objective perspectives simultaneously. Normally, however, we are so firmly established in our social surroundings that we are not consciously aware of the subtle shifts within our minds, in our way of perceiving the world. The poet, or the writer, has the ability to bring the rhythmic fluctuation of consciousness to our attention. Thus, the rhythm of the self is both the fluctuation of the subjective and objective and the element which subjectifies the objective world:

All you need now is to stand at the window and let your rhythmical sense open and shut, open and shut, boldly and freely, until one thing melts into another, until the taxis are dancing with the daffodils, until a whole has been made from all these separate fragments. . . . Then let your rhythmical sense wind itself in and out among men and women, omnibuses, sparrows--whatever comes along the street--until it has strung them together in one harmonious whole. That perhaps is your task--to find the relation between things that seem incompatible yet have a mysterious affinity . . . .  
(220)

The "mysterious affinity" means, simply, the rhythmic, dialectic relationship between objects and the individual subject.

Woolf perceived that rhythm would give her narrative a specific kind of unity that a traditional, sequential plot would not. While planning and writing The Waves, she says, "What it [The Waves] wants is presumably unity; . . . Suppose I could run all the scenes together more?--by rhythm chiefly" (WD 160). The scenes are made coherent within the larger rhythm which envelops them. In a still more telling statement, Woolf says that the narrative "is I think resolving itself (I am at page 100) into a series of dramatic soliloquies. The thing is to keep them running homogeneously in and out, in the rhythm of the waves" (WD 156). The larger rhythm surrounds the smaller rhythmic movements of the soliloquies--they run "in and out" within this larger rhythm of general consciousness which is itself constantly moving. The rhythm of the soliloquies does not allow for heterogeneity--differences are suppressed as they become homogeneous and monotonous. Taxis and daffodils blend together in this rhythmic unity, as do the subjective perceptions and the objects which are perceived. The new convention Woolf uses in The Waves is both a form and not a form. Form seems to imply definitive boundaries, beginnings and endings. However, when these boundaries begin to melt, when the individual (subjective) and general (objective) interact and intersect, the once definitive form becomes formless.

This natural rhythm of the self metaphorically organizes the outside world, bringing together different objects, positioning them in

such a way as to both dissolve their differences and question their similarities. The oscillation between subjective and objective, between the mind and the world outside the mind, is a process of thought which may utilize metaphor in an effort to erase difference and create coherence, a bond between subject and object. In an essay entitled "The Moment: Summer's Night," Woolf metaphorically suggests a way in which this process works:

Could we not fly too, with broad wings and with softness; and be all wing; all embracing, all gathering; and these boundaries, these prying over hedge into hidden compartments of different colours be all swept into one colour by the brush of the wing; and so visit in splendour, augustly, peaks; and there be exposed, bare, on the spine, high up, to the cold light of the moon rising, and when the moon rises, single, solitary, behold her, one, eminent over us? (5)

Like a metaphor, rhythm binds the most disparate elements together, yet also reveals the vast fluctuations in perception of those elements. These moments in which all is embraced in a larger purpose do not last, as Pater says. They are merely brief, momentary glimpses. What Woolf attempts to do is to maintain and expand these moments over a longer period, over the length of a novel. The fluctuation between subjective and objective is in part due to her inability to maintain these extreme states of mind for an extended period. When the characters are not in ecstasy in some passionate moment, they essentially do not exist, at least for the reader. In those non-existent intervals, they are part of the purely objective and physical. Woolf does not include the moments of non-existence, but instead presents the reader with the reflection of a consciousness split between the two positions of subject and object.

Like Eliot, Woolf advocates an impersonal, or inherently balanced, approach to the novel and rhythm gives her this impersonality. The novel should present not merely people's relations to each other but an "impersonal relationship. We long for ideas, for dreams, for imaginations, for poetry" ("Narrow Bridge" 19). In the period between 1925 and 1927, André Gide wrote of a kind novel that would be poetic, "a fugue; all that will be left in it is the interplay between objective reality and the effort to stylize reality into art" (Ellman 13). In his journal, Gide wrote of a novel called The Counterfeiters. A persona (perhaps Gide) called Edouard describes this new novel as one that would attempt to solve a peculiar problem: "'how to express the general by the particular--how to make the particular express the general'" (Ellman 128). When his friends question him about the subject of this novel, he says, at first, "'It hasn't got one . . . I should like to put everything into my novel'" (128). Then, when pressed for a subject, he says:

the subject of the book, if you must have one, is just that every struggle between what reality offers him [the character of a novelist, whom I make my central figure] and what he himself desires to make of it. (129)

In other words, Gide was concerned with presenting the same struggles as Virginia Woolf, the struggle or dialectic relationship between the subjective and objective reality. Of course, Gide's (or Edouard's) friends criticized him for the same thing for which Woolf's friends criticized her. A book without a subject, save the broodings of the author/narrator, is in danger of being solipsistic. However, in The Waves, the rhythmic form rescues the narrative from over-emotionality.

It gives the novel the impersonal perception that distances the reader from the psychology of both the author/narrator and her characters. Besides, the plot of this novel is poetic, rhythmic fluctuation of consciousness.

The poetry of The Waves, its rhythmic, repetitious language, and the poetic distance which results uniquely combines emotions with structure and form. The rhythmic oscillation enables the reader to "float unattached" with the characters in the subjective/objective world. The author does not guide her reader to pursue one view or another. The hierarchy has been overthrown, and the reader remains unattached to either pole. Woolf strongly felt that any kind of "direction or emphasis, to be told that that is right, to be nudged and bidden to attend to that" would obscure the reader's vision of the consciousness portrayed in The Waves ("Phases of Fiction" 125). In order to achieve the proper poetic distance, the text must reflect an impersonal narrative voice, one that could give the reader no specific guidelines, but one that could envelop the narrative in a general rhythmic pattern. The lack of direction from the narrator, along with the distance from emotion, gives The Waves its unique portrayal of consciousness. "Realism" is refashioned in Woolf's hands to be a mimesis not of purely objective nor of purely subjective reality, but of a complex interplay between the two, reflecting the dilemma of self-consciousness. The dynamic relationship between these two poles of perception is what makes The Waves a dynamic representation of the dilemma of language and identity. As I have indicated, Woolf's problem

with representing the inner self in language is firmly situated in the continuing argument between high modernist and nineteenth-century philosophy and aesthetics. Woolf's particular use of rhythm as a gesture towards unifying the perspectives of the identity distinguishes her from writers such as Pound, Joyce, and Eliot. The following chapter will demonstrate the way in which the subjective and objective perspectives rhythmically interact within the soliloquies and interludes, and how the soliloquies and interludes interact with each other by sharing rhythmic patterns and motifs. Further, this rhythmic interaction represents the dilemma of consciousness from which neither the author, the characters, or the reader can be free.

## CHAPTER II

## THE "SOLILOQUY IN SOLITUDE": THE RHETORIC OF SELF-REFLECTION

The version of consciousness in The Waves is not presented as a steady stream of unbroken thoughts, but rather as a series of patterns and repetitions organized by rhythm. These patterns reflect the perspectives of consciousness which are divided between subject (self and meaning) and object (other and the materiality of language). In the previous chapter, I demonstrated the way rhythm uniquely addresses the problematic relationship of subject and object. Here, I will discuss the formal characteristics of rhythm as both a linguistic, textual structure and as a psychological dynamic. As mentioned previously, the repetition in the text is a compulsion of the self to recover what it perceives to be lost, and to re-establish its sovereignty. This potential for recovery which rhythm implies focuses the reader's attention not on either the subject or the object, but on the aspiration for unity. Metaphor, which will be discussed in Chapter III, is a figure of speech which simultaneously contains the elements of similarity and difference. Thus, like rhythm, it contains the tension between subject and object as well as an implied unity. Theoretically, Woolf's use of rhythm, and metaphor, would seem to eliminate any tension which the juxtaposition of subject and object would create. However, this tension within the text is an inextricable part of the rhythmic structure of unmediated interludes and soliloquies.

Significantly, Woolf argues that rhythm is a more essential aspect of writing than the language of which it is a part. Rhythm provides a subtle gesture towards meaning which the words do not convey. In fact, in a letter to Vita Sackville-West (1926), she says that without the "right rhythm" it is impossible to get the right words. Furthermore, she says that this rhythm "goes far deeper than words. A sight, an emotion, creates this wave in the mind long before it makes the words to fit it" (247). In other words, rhythm is a primeval force that exists before language, yet makes language possible:

In writing one has to recapture this, and set this working (which has nothing apparently to do with words) and then, as it breaks and tumbles in the mind, it makes words to fit it: But no doubt I shall think differently next year. (247)

Perhaps this letter was the seed out of which grew The Waves. In any event, she did not alter her opinion of the significance of rhythm and apparently went on to use the metaphor of waves in her novel. Woolf discovers in rhythm a way in which to objectify a more adequate version of self, a self which is not limited by language. The subjectivity of rhythm is what makes words both a necessity and a possibility, and yet simultaneously denies their importance. As she says above, "rhythm . . . goes far deeper than words." In The Waves, the rhythm communicates not only the sub-, or rather pre-linguistic desires of the narrator and the characters, but also demonstrates the way the consciousness itself fluctuates between this pre-linguistic, atemporal subjectivity and objectivity which is firmly based in time and language. This chapter will analyze Woolf's inherently paradoxical dynamic of rhythm as it is manifested in the interludes and the

soliloquies of the text. I will show how tension in the language is mediated on three different yet interrelated levels. First, the rhythm of the text seems to resolve the tension on a linguistic level. Second, the construction of characters as a part of this text appears to provide a mediation between the subjective and objective perspectives which rhythm creates. Third, the reader's participation in the perspectives of the six characters and of the narrator seems to resolve the tension by dissolving boundaries between subject and object. On all of these levels, Woolf uses rhythm as a means by which to mediate between subjective and objective aspects of perceived experience. However, in this attempt, she creates a dilemma not only for herself as the creator and observer of her text, but also for the characters she calls into being as manifestations of rhythm, and for the reader who becomes complicit with this process of self-objectification as she participates in the text. The versification of prose in the interludes and soliloquies is Woolf's means of naturalizing expression and therefore eradicating the division between thought and language. However, the effect of this poetization is persistently ironic because at the very moment the rhythm asserts the limitless freedom of consciousness, it reveals the prison of form. The interludes allegorically represent the expansive, unlimited view of experience which is narrowed yet stylistically paralleled in the soliloquies which allegorically represent the more constricted view of subjectivity.

It was Woolf's desire for The Waves to "embody . . . the exact shape my brain holds" (Diary, v.4, 53), in other words to reflect her

consciousness. Consciousness is, however, an elusive element of life, incapable of being fully expressed. Rhythm, an essential quality in poetry, alludes to a pre-semantic, pre-verbal consciousness. In an earlier letter to Sackville-West, she writes, "One test of poetry--do you agree?--is that without saying things, indeed saying the opposite, it conveys things" (199). Not only, then, can poetry communicate through mere suggestion, but according to Woolf, by suggesting the very opposite of what it means, a paradoxical assertion to say the least.

Woolf asserts that writing a novel involves a simultaneous forgetting and remembering. Specifically, she says that in order to write a novel, the writer should think of it as an impossibility:

I believe that the main thing in beginning a novel is to feel, not that you can write it, but that it exists on the far side of a gulf, which words can't cross: that it's to be pulled through only in a breathless anguish . . . a novel . . . to be good should seem before one writes it, something unwriteable; but only visible, so that for nine months one lives in despair, and only when one has forgotten what one meant, does the book seem tolerable. (529)

The rhythmic structure of The Waves disperses itself in the very act of repetition. The content of the text would magically seem to appear through this void of rhythmic wordlessness. Because Woolf wanted The Waves to reflect a unified consciousness, she had to attempt to unite form and content, to show them to be parallel. She felt that there was no way to "separate expression from thought in an imaginative work. The better a thing is expressed, the more completely it is thought" (Letters, v. 3, 201). In Woolf's theory, therefore, the rhythm of thought (content) becomes the rhythm of expression (form).

Woolf uses rhythmic and poetic language to express the perspectives of subjectivity and objectivity. The kind of unity for which she strives in The Waves is not unity of detail, as in a nineteenth-century novel, but a unity of perspective. Woolf criticized nineteenth-century fiction for its inclusion of trivial detail and its lack of individual perspective. Her version of reality, the expression of perspective, enables her to achieve the essential vision of the moment. Her definition of the novel is that it should be more distanced from experience; it should not record the minute details of life, but rather "express the feelings and ideas of the characters closely and vividly" from different perspectives ("Narrow Bridge" 18). Essentially, she wanted the novel to "give the relation of the mind to general ideas and its soliloquy in solitude" (19). The "soliloquy in solitude" is a redundant phrase, yet one which dramatically indicates the dilemma of self-reflexivity, of double isolation. In this self-reflexive mode, the individual plays the role of both the self and the other, forming a society of one. In other words, the self occupies all available positions. By including the perspective of this doubly isolated self, Woolf ironically creates a vicious circle of reflection; in their move towards self-recovery, the characters and the reader share in the fantasy of the egocentric self. The gaze of the other is, in this fantasy, the gaze of the self upon itself. In a letter to Gerald Brenan in 1925, she writes, "One ought to sink to the bottom of the sea, probably, and live alone with one's words" (189). The fact that she would apparently be happier writing for herself indicates her

desire for self-autonomy and self-realization which is at the center of the paradox and tension in The Waves. Again, however, she is trapped in double isolation. Her desire for self-autonomy is illustrated not only by the "soliloquy in solitude" but also by the interludes in which that voice speaking to itself can best be heard. It is ironic that the only place these soliloquies and interludes can be heard is from the "bottom of the sea," from a place where the author is alone with herself. Woolf wanted to develop a language (a social medium) by which to objectify herself in a non-social, isolated environment. The "sea" in her mind, where waves of thought rhythmically break and tumble is the setting of and the basis for The Waves.

The basic format of this novel is an interlude, in which the narrator speaks, followed by a chapter of soliloquies in which the characters speak, to themselves and to each other. These interludes and soliloquies which represent the objective and subjective perceptions, respectively, interact with each other in such a way as to create a mirage of unity between them. Both interludes and soliloquies are rhythmic, but in ways that are specific to the voices, or perspectives, of each. For instance, in the interlude, there is a disembodied, faceless narrator who views the world from a cosmic, universal perspective. The general and the essential qualities of experience are described, and within this description, the mind of the narrator is seemingly unified with the world:

The sun had not yet risen. The sea was indistinguishable from the sky, except that the sea was slightly creased as if a cloth had wrinkles in it. Gradually as the sky whitened a dark line lay on the horizon dividing the sea from the sky and the grey cloth became barred with thick strokes moving,

one after another, beneath the surface, following each other, pursuing each other perpetually. (7)

This voice, discovering both its own mind and the world, is struggling to establish its own sovereignty. However, the implicit split in consciousness between self and other disallows any unity or sovereignty of the mind. The free verse style of these lines implies the boundless movement of waves which is the controlling motif of the discourse. The endless repetitive rhythmic patterns parallel the rolling waves which the narrator perceives:

Grádú / állý / áš the ský / whiténed / á dárk / líne láy / ón  
the / hórí / zón dí / vídínġ / the séa / fróm the ský / and  
the / gréy clóth / bécáme / bárréd wíth / thícġ stróġes /  
móvínġ / óne / áftér á / nóthér / bēnéath / the súr / fáġe,  
fó / llówínġ eáġh / óthér, / púrsú / ínġ eáġh / óthér, /  
pěrpé / túállý.

The marching and dancing rhythms of this passage interact as they are juxtaposed to create the fluid movement of waves which have no limits and no end. Furthermore, the internal rhyme of three two-word phrases, "line lay," "grey cloth," and "thick strokes," parallels the fluidity and openness of waves as well. The narrator's voice is expansive and seemingly limitless. However, the paradox of consciousness is illustrated by the poetic syntax of the author's language and the grammatical rules which call attention to the artificiality of meaning in the text.

The dilemma of consciousness is made more apparent as the characters are introduced, as the narrator's general, expansive consciousness becomes more narrowly focused and particularized. The individuation of the mind is a gradual process, so that the general

perspective of the interlude shifts slowly to the perspective of the characters. At first, they seem to share the narrator's view of the world. Because their personalities have not as yet taken on distinctions, they are like babies, discovering the world as blobs of color and splashes of sound:

"I see a ring," said Bernard, "hanging above me. It quivers and hangs in a loop of light."

"I see a slab of pale yellow," said Susan, "spreading away until it meets a purple stripe."

"I hear a sound," said Rhoda, "cheep, chirp; cheep, chirp; going up and down."

"I see a globe," said Neville, "hanging down in a drop against the enormous flanks of some hill."

"I see a crimson tassel," said Jinny, "twisted with gold threads."

"I hear something stamping," said Louis. "A great beast's foot is chained. It stamps, and stamps, and stamps."  
(9)

In these sentences, the objective perspective of the interludes and the subjective perspective of the soliloquies begin to interact. The characters, for instance, are particularized and their subsequent observations are more subjective. However, the way in which the observations are stated is highly stylized and objective: "Í sée / ā ríng / saíd Běrnárd / hángíng / ābóve / mé. / Ít quívěrs / ānd hángs / iñ ā lóop / ōf líght." The repetition and the short feet of these lines demonstrates the particularized, narrow focus of the characters' vision. It is as if a more intricately structured grid has been placed over the less restrictive discourse of the interlude. Furthermore, because the sentences begin with a spondaic foot, they are like the primeval chant of a ritual. In this case, the prelude introduces a cadence, a rhythmic pattern, the same way it introduces primary motifs

and metaphors. However, this rhythm does not emphasize the subject's individual perception of the objective world; rather, the tension between the objects and the observing subjects is revealed as a dynamic interchange. Thus, the tension between interlude and soliloquy is a parallel tension to what the reader perceives in individual sentences and passages, as in the above example, just as the syntax of the individual sentences parallel their content. This initial representation of the dynamic relationship between subject and object continues for the first three pages of the novel, serving to draw the reader into the drama of consciousness. The observations of these characters serve as a basis for the entire discourse. Woolf sets the stage with these short, repetitious sentences in which the tension between subject and object is played out in miniature. The narrative, objective voice of the interludes is connected with the individual, subjective voice of the characters through the repetition of certain phrases, phrases which are repeated and shared by all of the characters and also those which are limited to particular characters.

The dynamic interaction between the subjective and objective perspectives within consciousness is clearly demonstrated as phrases in the interludes are reiterated in the soliloquies. The characters have evolved out of the interludes, and even though the soliloquies become more complex as the narrative progresses, the complexities are stripped away. Within the soliloquies, there is a constant return to what is essential in the self, to the kind of essentiality the reader perceives in the interludes. In the first interlude, for instance, the waves are

described as moving "one after another, beneath the surface, following each other, pursuing each other, perpetually" (7). The particular rhythm of this passage, noted earlier, demonstrates the particular hypnotic quality of the three word phrases and is indicative of the subjective influence on objects in the world. The graphic representation of syntax (i.e., three syllables followed by a comma) also appears to represent directly and freely what the eye of the narrator perceives. However, the subjective viewpoint is also limited by the objects perceived. The waves are intractable, unchangeable forms. The narrator attempts to recover the self through this rhythmic perception, but the repetition of phrase patterns indicates a falling away of this self as well. The function of rhythmic repetition thus serves two ends, both the recovery of memory (self) and desire and the loss of memory and desire. The narrator, who seems to be in a position of control, is now perceived as having lost that position. She is not vulnerable, however, because she is not directly affected by an interaction with the objects she perceives. The objective voice is, nonetheless, dependent on subjectivity. This rhythm is echoed in Rhoda's soliloquy at the end of the first chapter, indicating once more the dialectic of the subject/object relationship, but also the way in which rhythm illustrates recovery and loss: "Let me pull myself out of these waters. But they heap themselves on me; they sweep me between their great shoulders; I am turned; I am tumbled; I am stretched, among these long light, these long waves, these endless paths, with people pursuing, pursuing" (28). The particularized self-consciousness of

Rhoda interacts with the generalized consciousness of the narrator as the two share in the same dilemma of identity. For instance, the limitless movement of the waves is repeated by Rhoda in the same anapestic rhythms as in the interlude: "Ī ām tuŕned; / Ī ām túmblĕd; / Ī ām strĕtched. . . ." ("Grádŭ / āllý / ās thĕ ský / whíteñed / ā dárk / líné láy / ōn thĕ / hŏrí / zŏn dí / vídĭng / thĕ séa / frŏm thĕ ský . . . .") The similarity of the rhythm between the two passages is meant to indicate that all individual consciousness participates in and interacts with the generalized perceptual rhythm. Furthermore, in a significant way, this passage dramatizes the simultaneous affirmation and denial of the self, the recovery and loss of memory. For instance, Rhoda establishes her identity with the word "I," yet this "I" is always in a passive position, being swept, "turned," "tumbled," "stretched," and pursued. Like the narrator in the interlude, Rhoda is perceived to be in a position of passivity; however, unlike the narrator, Rhoda has no control. She is in a position of vulnerability. The tensions between world and mind, the gap between interlude and soliloquy, is both reconciled and questioned by rhythm, structurally and thematically, in order to dramatize a perception which can include both the subjective and the objective.

This self-conscious, rhythmic link of objective to subjective occurs between each interlude and the soliloquies that follow. Another example of this is in the interlude preceding chapter three; two images are described which will be repeated in other chapters, the raindrop and the turbaned warriors. When a flock of birds see the drop of rain,

the world is observed in its most essential state. It is large and all-encompassing, but its image is reduced and enclosed within the drop. The characters, too, perceive that the world may be reduced and enclosed. As early as chapter one, Neville makes reference to the drop as a "globe" which seems to contain the surrounding hills. In both examples, the drop is captured, significantly, in the precise moment of its fullness, before it falls to the ground. The drop is a recurring motif for time, its fullness and its passing, as Bernard notes later in the narrative (184). The connection between the interlude and the soliloquies is again meant to imply the shared dilemma of consciousness, the split between subjective and objective perspectives and the implicit, dynamic interaction between them.

Images and metaphors of waves become a part of the discourse of both the interludes and the soliloquies when, in an early interlude, the narrator describes their sound as the drumming of "turbaned men with poisoned assagais" (75). As a primary rhythmic metaphor and motif, waves are especially significant in representing the inherent tension of consciousness. The simultaneous forward and backward movement of waves illustrates the way in which the consciousness moves from recovery, or knowledge, and loss, or forgetting. The comparison of waves to the drumming of warriors emphasizes the repetitious, almost monotonous sound of the waves, which illustrates the monotony of repetition in consciousness. Furthermore, the rhythm of the warrior's drums is a dramatic illustration of the primitive, pre-verbal rhythm which Woolf believed to be essential to the writing process (to the act

of self-objectification). The rhythm which characterizes the passage in the interlude is echoed in the following soliloquies. Rhoda and Louis share a poem-like dialogue in which the image and the rhythm are repeated:

"Horns and trumpets," said Rhoda, "ring out. Leaves unfold; the stag blares in the thicket. There is a dancing and a drumming, like the dancing and the drumming of naked men with assagais."

"Like the dance of savages," said Louis, "round the camp fire. They are savage; they are ruthless. They dance in a circle, flapping bladders. The flames leap over their painted faces, over the leopard skins and the bleeding limbs which they have torn from the living body." (140)

Even though no mention of waves is made in these lines, the rhythmic pulse of this passage directly echoes the sound of the waves as illustrated in the interlude. For example, in Rhoda's description, the suggestion made in the interlude of the dancing rhythm of the waves is expanded: "Thěre is ă dán / cĩng ănd ă drúm / mĩng, lĩke thě dán / cĩng ănd thě drúm / mĩng ăf ná / kěd mén / wĩth ăsságaĩs." This rhythm is not only a reiteration of the rhythm of waves as heard in the interludes, but is actually made concrete in this scene of dancing, drumming savages. This rhythm which Rhoda and Louis describe becomes a metaphor for the primitive self of the chora, buried beneath the symbolic, covered over by the demands of the ordinary, and subsequently lost. By invoking the basic rhythms of the inner self, the characters hope to return to the essential state of unity now lost to them. Furthermore, the tension between the subjective and the objective is revealed in this passage in which the interludes interact with the soliloquies. The tension between them may appear to have been

temporarily reconciled, but as noted earlier, the shared rhythm illustrates that the relationship between subject and object is irreconcilable.

Just as the rhythm of the savages' drums represents a society prior to civilization, and thus a rhythm prior to language, the image of stamping horses represents the same vital life-force which is non-human, but nonetheless primitive and non-verbal: "The waves were steeped deep-blue save for a pattern of diamond-pointed light on their backs which rippled as the backs of great horses ripple with muscles as they move" (150). The general perception of the rhythmic motion of waves compared to horses is echoed in Neville's soliloquy which immediately follows in which he describes Percival's fall from a horse: "He is dead. . . . He fell. His horse tripped. He was thrown. . . . His horse stumbled; he was thrown. . . . There was a surge; a drumming in his ears. Then the blow; the world crashed; he breathed heavily. He died where he fell" (151). The rhythmic pattern of the sentences illustrates a movement in this soliloquy similar to the movement of waves and rippling muscles of horses described in the interlude. The choppy quality of the sentences are like white-capped, rough waves and stamping horses: "Hĭs hŏrse trĭpped. / Hĕ wăś thrŏwn. / Hĭs hŏrse stŭmblĕd; / Thĕrĕ wăś ă surġe; / ă drŭmmĭng / ĭn hĭs eărs." Furthermore, the "surge" and the "drumming" are words that have been associated with the motion and the sound of the waves. Rhythm connects these two passages structurally in that the motion of the waves and the horses is represented syntactically. When the intense self-

consciousness of the character interacts with the general perception of the narrator, the tension between and interdependence of the subjective and objective are revealed.

The repetition of phrases from interlude to soliloquy is the most obvious way in which the tension between objective and subjective is textually demonstrated. This same tension is also seen in the subtle change in the tone and content of the soliloquies from the particularized concerns to the more generalized perspective of the narrator's view of history and of nature. When the tones of the individual voices of the characters intermittently change and take on the characteristics of the narrator's voice, the inherent split between mind (subject) and world (object) is both reconciled and questioned. The interjection of the narrator's voice seems to be, many times, a direct question concerning the possibility of unity between the individual mind and the outside world. The voice of the soliloquy often speaks with the same timeless detachment as the narrator in the interludes, referring to events that are beyond the borders of the individual character's experience. As a result, the perspective of the individual is dissolved into the perspective of the narrator, erasing any individual connection to past events. Furthermore, the rhythmic patterns of the interludes, which are felt in the soliloquies, also function like the memory both to recover what is lost and to reveal that loss. The individual, subjective perspective is both dependent on and alienated from the voice of the interludes.

The interjection of the narrator's voice into the soliloquies often concerns both the distant and the recent past. In these passages, the characters apparently want to expand their particular lives to include the past in an effort to recover the self of the present. They seek a unity of self, but paradoxically, this unity is a myth and a fantasy. Louis would like to believe, for example, that he has lived for thousands of years and that he has a kinship with Virgil and Plato:

But when darkness comes I put off this unenviable body--my large nose, my thin lips, my colonial accent--and inhabit space. I am then Virgil's companion, and Plato's. (33)

However, he also recognizes the limitation of living in time, an element characterized by boundaries and distinctions between subject and object:

I seem to already have lived many thousand years. But if I now shut my eyes, if I fail to realise the meeting-place of past and present, that I sit in a third-class railway carriage full of boys going home for the holidays, human history is defrauded of a moment's vision. (66)

From her god-like perspective, the narrator can see human history as a complete unit. However, the characters can only participate in this perspective by forgetting their past, by becoming detached. The individual character appears small and insignificant beside the universal and general, as a drop in the sea of humanity. The self as an individual unity appears lost, absorbed in the universal. However, as evidenced by the interchange between narrator and characters, the individual perspective consists of the dynamic tension between subjective and objective. The voice of the narrator enters Louis' soliloquy again when he asserts the complexity of his identity:

I am not single and entire as you are. I have lived a thousand lives already. Every day I unbury--I dig up. I find relics of myself in the sand that women made thousands of years ago, when I heard songs by the Nile and the chained beast stamping. . . . I was an Arab prince; behold my free gestures. I was a great poet in the time of Elizabeth. I was a Duke at the court of Louis the Fourteenth. (127)

The individual is but a shadow of a more general, universal past which consists of Arab princes and Elizabethan poets. The narrator describes history in universal terms, and Louis believes that by conjuring up particular images and figures in his mind that he can somehow revive and relive the past, thereby unifying his individual perspective with a more universal viewpoint. His alienation from the other will then be reconciled. Both the past and the present as relative time elements are erased into meaninglessness under the scrutiny of the cosmic eye, however; as noted earlier, the general seems to absorb the particular:

"But listen," said Louis, "to the world moving through abysses of infinite space. It roars; the lighted strip of history is past and our Kings and Queens; we are gone; our civilisation; the Nile; and all life. Our separate drops are dissolved; we are extinct, lost in the abysses of time, in the darkness." (225)

Here Louis senses his loss of self in the face of the general other, of which he is, paradoxically, an essential part. The narrator's atemporal detachment is a conspicuous alternative to the established calendar history found in more traditional novels. The conventional novel situates itself in a thoroughly mediated human history, and it is just such social mediation that the narrator in Woolf's text disdains. David Lodge points out that traditional novelists, such as Dickens, adhered to a "historical description of reality" (46). In other words, they described events in closely accurate historical terms. This is an

empirical view of history which portrays life as being connected by a series of events that follow logically and lead to a resolution. However, modernists like Virginia Woolf, more concerned with the objectification of the self, experimented with and distorted this social view of history and opted instead for a more pure historical distance, alienating their characters from the past and calling into question the significance of present events. The narrator's perspective promises the reconciliation of the mind's struggle with the world.

Like Louis, Bernard also attempts to connect himself with ancient history in order to reconcile himself with the world (113-114). The "I" wishes to identify with something larger than itself. The way in which this is expressed syntactically also indicates that the individual consciousness participates in and interacts with the more universal consciousness. However, the other side to this dilemma is that the "I" seems lost in this universality; the "I" is not established, but deferred. The rhythm of coming into and losing of consciousness is illustrated in these passages. Bernard recalls the time of kings as "one inch of light" and the rest of time as an abyss in space, into which he can fall, a flood of flowing water which can drown him:

It is a trick of the mind--to put Kings on their thrones, one following after another, with crowns on their heads. And we ourselves, walking six abreast, what do we oppose, with this random flicker of light in us that we call brain and feeling, how can we do battle against this flood; what has permanence? Our lives too stream away, down the unlighted avenue, past the strip of time, unidentified. (227)

Empirical, phenomenological time is a "trick of the mind"; the past, traditionally thought of as the one thing that had permanence and solidity, is now fluid and unstable. The past appears as a small gap in the space of absolute, impersonal Time. The voice of the interlude therefore questions the possibility of a unity between individual time and universal time.

A stunning example of a character's appropriation of the narrator's perspective is Bernard's description of his desire to escape the burden of individuality. This is the only passage in the narrative in which a character repeats word for word the phrases from the interludes:

So now, taking upon me the mystery of things, I could go like a spy without leaving this place, without stirring from my chair. I can visit the remote verges of the desert lands where the savage sits by the camp fire. Day rises; the girl lifts the water fire-hearted jewels to her brow; the sun levels his beams straight at the sleeping house; the waves deepen their bars; they fling themselves on the shore. . . . The birds sing in chorus; deep tunnels run between the stalks of flowers; the house is whitened; the sleeper stretches; gradually all is astir. (291-292)

In this passage, the reader perceives a clear echo and summary of all of the interludes; every element is included--the sun, the girl, the waves, the birds, the flowers, the house. Bernard's soliloquy is an attempt to return to the essential, to strip away the complexities, and to discover the secret of the universal perspective: "What does the central shadow hold? Something? Nothing? I do not know" (292). Bernard takes on the characteristics of both the subjective and the objective; he maintains the particularity of his own identity while simultaneously recalling to the reader the voice of the narrator which

sees beyond the particular and the subjective, yet contains both. Within the general consciousness lies the answer to which all of the characters search, yet cannot quite grasp. Eventually, the pull of individual desires brings Bernard back to his own subjectivity:

Oh, but there is your face. I catch your eye. I, who had been thinking myself so vast, a temple, a church, a whole universe, unconfined and capable of being everywhere on the verge of things and here too, am now nothing but what you see. (292)

From the universal perspective which seemed to free him from the limitations of the self, he is brought back to a self-consciousness which he seems to regret. The desire to be lost in the general is as great as the desire, which he voices in the last pages of the narrative, to retain his individuality.

Rhoda appropriates the narrator's perspective, yet not as directly as Bernard. Rhoda describes a "place" to which she escapes: "Pools lie on the other side of the world reflecting marble columns. The swallow dips her wing in dark pools. . . . The swallow dips her wings; the moon rides through blue seas alone. . . . I, who long for marble columns and pools on the other side of the world where the swallow dips her wings" (105). The narrator's voice which emerges in this passage illustrates the desire to lose the self, to be free of the trap of subjectivity. Rhoda is particularly uncomfortable with her identity; in fact, she says that she has no identity. Paradoxically, of course, to escape the dilemma of consciousness is to cease to exist; in the end, Rhoda does commit suicide. However, up until that point, her soliloquies provide dramatic illustrations of the subjective-objective

dialectic. In one passage, the subjective and objective are juxtaposed:

A wind ruffles the topmost leaves of primeval trees. (Yet here we sit at Hampton Court.) Parrots shrieking break the intense stillness of the jungle. (Here the trams start.) The swallow dips her wings in midnight pools. (Here we talk.) That is the circumference that I try to grasp as we sit together. (223)

The interjection of these jungle visions into the soliloquy which illustrates the interaction between interludes and soliloquies indicates the way in which the objective and subjective perceptions that are present within consciousness are interdependent. The objective, universal perspective, brought into juxtaposition with Rhoda's particular and limited situation, does not provide a unified "circumference," but reveals the interaction and tension inherent in consciousness. Aware of the limitations of her present, subjective situation, Rhoda attempts to expand that situation by envisioning a wider, more objective and less constricting perspective of experience. Significant in this passage is that the present, limited world has been syntactically bracketed away from the objective, universal voice of the narrator. The desire to lose the self, to be rid of the burden of individuality, is thus dramatically illustrated in these subtle links between interlude and soliloquy.

Rhoda's desire to escape the burden of identity, coupled with the desire to retain it (desires shared by all of the characters) is basic to the dilemma of self-consciousness. The impulse for self-affirmation which the characters experience is ambiguous because it is simultaneously a move towards self-dissolution. The walls of their

egos seem to disappear even as they strive to construct them.

J. Hillis Miller's observations about Mrs. Dalloway are based on this dilemma of the characters' identities. He points out that this novel "seems to be based on an irreconcilable opposition between individuality and universality" (183). The narrator connects the characters' minds through repetition in order to resolve this opposition. The reader is aware of the presence of a controlling author who seems to "enclose[s] all [of the characters] in a reconciling embrace" (Miller 178). The possibility of reconciliation between mind and world is a common theme in Woolf's fiction. However, in The Waves the repetition of motifs is more pervasive in that the discourse is enveloped by rhythmic patterns, as well as characterized by the rhythmic repetition of phrases. The tension between and interaction of the individual's perception and the outside world demonstrated in The Waves is both its plot and its theme. As seen in the previous section, the voice of the narrator surfaces again and again within the soliloquies, establishing not a reconciliation, but the dialectic, interdependent relationship between subject and object. However, beyond the province of the characters themselves, the images that they share take on a life of their own. Images such as the waves, the door which opens and shuts, the globe, and the thread, erase the boundaries between the characters' egos and create an autonomous voice, or a new order. In fact, these images seem to create another system of motifs that displaces the system of characters and reveals the artificiality of character as a system in the text. This system of

motifs illustrates the possibility of unity and the simultaneous denial of such a possibility.

The waves, the embodiment of the coming into and losing of consciousness, are correspondingly seen by the characters as protective or overwhelming and frightening, and are associated with desire and with the dissipation of desire. For instance, as Bernard and Susan run in the woods, Bernard describes the sensation of sinking beneath the waves:

We shall sink like swimmers just touching the ground with the tips of their toes. . . . We sink as we run. The waves close over us. (16)

The alliteration of the first line illustrates the rhythmic nature of the waves, as well as the repetition of the phrase, "We shall sink."

The desire to sink beneath the waves implies that the individual subject desires to be relieved of the burden of consciousness. At the close of this same day, as Bernard pulls the sheet over his head, he says it is "like a film of water drawn over my eyes by a wave" (27). Again, the desire to be enclosed and covered by the wave is like the desire to return to the safety of the womb, to a state of pure unity, the non-identity, pre-desire, pre-linguistic state in which there is no dilemma of consciousness. However, there is also fear associated with losing the self. For instance, Rhoda is afraid of being overwhelmed by the waves. As a child, rocking flower petals in a basin of water, she is relieved that her "ship" does not founder and sink: "They have scattered, they have foundered, all except my ship which mounts the wave and sweeps before the gale" (19). When she goes to sleep,

however, she fears sinking beneath these waves which have become frightening:

I sail on alone, under white cliffs. Oh, but I sink, I fall!  
 . . . Let me pull myself out of these waters. But they heap  
 themselves on me. (28)

In these passages, Bernard and Rhoda use the same terms, "sinking" and "falling," which connects them rhythmically. The repetition of words and similar imagery illustrates that the desires and fears of one individual are experienced by all, and in addition, further illustrates the dynamic interaction of subjective and objective perceptions.

Unlike Bernard and Rhoda, Louis can identify the waves with comfort and order; these waves hide and submerge him in a crowd. He is comfortable knowing that his individuality can be lost, or submerged, in the general mass of humanity:

I, who would wish to feel close over me the protective waves  
 of the ordinary, catch with the tail of my eye some far  
 horizon; am aware of hats bobbing up and down in perpetual  
 disorder. (94)

His description of the waves varies from the protective waves to the pounding waves of passion (142), to the sullen thud of waves of the shore (58). In each instance, regardless of their different contexts, the waves, rhythmic and enclosing, indicate the presence of a consciousness which would free him, and the other characters, from the dilemma in which they are all trapped. In the last paragraph of the novel, Bernard describes the wave as swelling desire:

And in me too the wave rises. It swells; it arches its back.  
 I am aware once more of a new desire, something rising  
 beneath me like the proud horse whose rider first spurs and  
 then pulls him back. (297)

Desire to retain the particularity of one's own identity is just as strong as the desire to lose the burden of this identity and be free of its limitations. Bernard seems to have resigned himself to the nature of his consciousness, that it is a dilemma which will not be resolved outside of death.

Like the image of the waves, the image of the door which opens and shuts also embodies the dialectic nature of the fluctuating perspectives of consciousness. The characters perceive this image as either a symbol for hope and expectation, or fear and apprehension. For Jinny, the door connotes hope. When she attends a party, for example, she notes the door that opens and shuts; behind the door is the hope that she will cease to be trapped in the never-ending dilemma of subjectivity: "The door opens. The door goes on opening. Now I think, next time it opens the whole of my life will be changed" (104). The rhythmic intonation of the phrases reveals her constant desire to be outside of her own subjectivity, to be able to identify with the other. However, the paradox of this desire is made evident through Rhoda's dread of the open door. When the door opens for Rhoda, only fear awaits: "The door opens; the tiger leaps. The door opens; terror rushes in; terror upon terror, pursuing me" (105). Even though she may desire to identify with the outside world, it is an overwhelming thought. She is more comfortable in her own subjectivity. She is paradoxically trapped in this consciousness which both desires objectivity and denies it. Bernard's use of this phrase best illustrates the idea of the fluctuating consciousness because in his

soliloquies, the image connotes not only the waxing and waning of desire, but the way in which time is an inescapable limiting influence on consciousness. Time and desire both imply a deferral of closure, as the image of the opening and shutting door illustrates. Rhythm is the repetition which is inseparable from deferral. This door represents the desires that life offers, both realized and unrealized. When Percival dies, for instance, Bernard reflects, "A child playing--a summer evening--door will open and shut, will keep opening and shutting, through which I see sights that make me weep for they cannot be imparted. Hence our loneliness; hence our desolation" (156).

Bernard later adds to the motif the rhythm of a clock (the rhythm of Time) in order to represent the fluctuating desires of youth and of consciousness itself: "Opening and shutting, shutting and opening, with an increasing hum and sturdiness, the haste and fever of youth are drawn into service until the whole being seems to expand in and out like the mainspring of a clock" (257); this rhythmic fluctuation continues into middle age: "Opening, shutting; shutting, opening; eating, drinking; sometimes speaking--the whole mechanism seemed to expand, to contract, like the mainspring of a clock" (261). The image of opening and shutting involves, then, not only desire, but time. Consciousness itself is defined by this rhythmic expanding and contracting of time and desire.

Juxtaposed to images of deferral are the images of attempted closure: the steel ring of poetry and the globe. These images embody the irony of objectifying the subjective. As the characters try to

solidify their experience which is unstable and fleeting, they simultaneously recognize the impossibility of such a process. Louis notes, for instance, that poetry can be a ring of steel, a solid substance which will enable him to grasp "the moment" in its entirety. Poetry is a more subjective genre than prose, so Woolf asserts, and yet poetry is made to carry the burden of objectifying and solidifying experience. Louis notes that in a steel ring of poetry, he can hope to concretize the fluctuating, momentary experience: "This I see for a second, and shall try tonight to fix in words, to forge in a ring of steel" (40). The image of the globe functions in the same way, as an attempt to solidify experience. As the characters repeat this motif, the tension within the image is revealed, as well as the tension between the subjective and objective perspectives of consciousness. First, the globe is transparent; one can easily discern the contents of this globe "hanging down in a drop against the enormous flanks of some hill" (Neville 9). In this initial statement, Neville perceives in this globe a small part of his world, and thus an opportunity to capture it in an unmovable frame of reference. In her attempt to describe what this globe contains, Jinny says it holds "love, hatred, by whatever name we call it, this globe whose walls are made of Percival, of youth and beauty, and something so deep sunk within us that we shall perhaps never make this moment out of one man again" (145). For Jinny, this globe contains the essential elements of experience. Thus she can objectify, or distance, them from her subjective perception and give them a new order. Bernard also notes that the globe represents experience made concrete:

Now to explain to you the meaning of my life. . . . the illusion is upon me that something adheres for a moment, has roundness, weight, depth, is completed. . . . But unfortunately, what I see (this globe, full of figures) you do not see. (238)

In his attempt to solidify experience into a manageable shape and density, however, he discovers that this globe is not solid; in other words, it is not possible to objectify experience: "The crystal, the globe of life as one calls it, far from being hard and cold to the touch, has walls of thinnest air. If I press them all will burst" (256). The globe, like language, is just a convenient illusion which is necessary for the characters to have a sense of control over and distance from their experience. The paradox of objectifying the subjective again becomes apparent as the central issue in the discourse.

The image of the thread represents, like the steel ring of poetry and the globe, an attempt to escape the constant deferral which is characteristic of the desire to objectify experience. According to Woolf's theory of poetry, everything must be intertwined; objects as different as taxi-cabs and daffodils can be strung together on a thread of metaphors in order to reconcile the tension between mind and world and fulfill the desire for completeness and closure. However, because consciousness consists of a dynamic tension between subject and object, the impossibility of unity is again revealed. Bernard, the storyteller, characterizes himself as a string or a thread which weaves in and out among the disparate elements that surround him. He must try to find connection between objects as a necessary means of retaining and

analyzing experience. Susan describes Bernard at Elvedon as slipping from her grasp because of his ability, and his handicap, of manipulating language in order to capture experience: "I am tied down with single words. But you wander off; you slip away; you rise up higher, with words and words in phrases" (16). Neville notes that Bernard, "a dangling wire, a broken bell-pull, always twangling," (19), sometimes fails in his attempt to make connections; he "sags and twiddles a bit of string" (39). Bernard mistakenly assumes, as does the author, that language can unify and stabilize the chaos of sensation that the mind experiences. However, because language is the utterance of a split consciousness, it is unable to objectify subjective perceptions. Louis also struggles with the possibility of unifying experience: "We have laced the world together with our ships. The globe is strung with our lines" (200). However, like Bernard, he realizes that any unity that might be achieved is temporary at best: "How can I reduce these dazzling, these dancing apparitions to one line capable of linking all in one?" (219); unfortunately, "the thread I try to spin" breaks (218). The split between subjective and objective perspectives cannot be closed--the tension in the thread is too great. The repetition of phrases does not resolve the dilemma of consciousness, even though it appears to unify the characters and give coherence to their experience. Dispersal is, however, only one effect of repetition; coupled with dispersal is the possibility of recovering the self. Metaphors which are repeated by and thereby associated with the characters best exemplify the recovering effect of repetition as

well as the tension which embodies both dispersal and recovery. In Chapter III, I will show how metaphor, like rhythm, is a means by which Woolf hopes to unite the perspectives of subjectivity and objectivity in a vision of harmony.

## CHAPTER III

## "I AM THE DAWN": THE METAPHOR OF IDENTITY

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the repetition of phrases serves to establish the identities of the characters and the narrator while simultaneously dissolving these constructs and revealing them to be provisional concepts which are both sustained and threatened by Woolf's imagery. The reader must construct the personalities of the characters only to have these personalities dissolve into other characters as a result of repetition. Metaphor, a trope of substitution which is characterized by the tension between similarity and difference, is used in the text in conjunction with repetition both to develop character distinctions and to erase those distinctions. The substitution which characterizes metaphor occurs within the soliloquies of individual characters and in the large structure of the narrative which includes both soliloquies and interludes. In both instances, the substitution occurs in larger patterns than a single sentence.<sup>5</sup> Entire situations in the characters' soliloquies are metaphorized as they stand for certain emotional events or desires. Used in this way, on both linguistic and textual levels, metaphor becomes the precise location where rhythm becomes meaning: when the logic of repetition is

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<sup>5</sup>See Paul Ricoeur, The Rule of Metaphor (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977). The definition of metaphor is a complex issue. I am using metaphor in the broad sense in order to encompass the idea of similarity and difference. Ricoeur defines metaphor as substitution within a sentence. However, in The Waves, metaphor is extended to extra-syntactic patterns of substitution.

pushed to its limits, it becomes the logic of similarity and difference, or metaphor. Metaphor is the place where the semiotic and the symbolic meet in language. Furthermore, metaphor and repetition both function in The Waves like the memory which recalls the elements of the internal self and simultaneously forgets the materiality of language. The characters' different relationships to metaphor identify their attitudes towards memory and difference. The metaphors the characters repeat serve to recover the self as a defense against the impending loss of that self.

Bernard often refers to the time in his childhood when Mrs. Constable squeezed the sponge over his head, bringing him into a state of self-consciousness:

Mrs. Constable, girt in a bath-towel, takes her lemon-coloured sponge and soaks it in water; it turns chocolate brown; it drips; . . . Water pours down the runnel of my spine. Bright arrows of sensation shoot on either side.  
(26)

This experience acts as a metaphor throughout the rest of the narrative for Bernard's sensitivity, awareness, and desire to establish and retain not only his identity, but also the identities of the other characters. As it is repeated, the image gains connotative strength even as it loses historical and temporal particularity. This image becomes the memory of a birth in general as Bernard internalizes and poeticizes it. In this way, his soliloquy approaches the general quality of the interlude. His memory of Mrs. Constable becomes an ironic plea against self-conscious awareness: "Old Mrs. Constable lifted her sponge and warmth poured over us, . . . We became clothed in

this changing, this feeling garment of flesh" (124). As Bernard notes, this image calls to mind a new-born infant who is slapped on the rear and sponged off, suddenly and violently made aware of itself. The "arrows of sensation" that accompany this awakening of consciousness are not always pleasant:

Then Mrs. Constable raised the sponge above her head, squeezed it, and out shot, right, left, all down the spine, arrows of sensation. And so, as long as we draw breath, for the rest of time, if we knock against a chair, a table, or a woman, we are pierced with arrows of sensation--if we walk in a garden, if we drink this wine. Sometimes indeed, when I pass a cottage with a light in the window where a child has been born, I could implore them not to squeeze the sponge over that new body. (239)

The individual's subjective sensations are an essential aspect of consciousness and, although he or she may feel burdened by them, there is no escape. These sensations continually invade the consciousness, vying for dominance. Directly related to the struggle of consciousness is the subject's desire to be outside of herself, looking at herself as an object as others would see her. In addition, she desires to not only to see herself as other, but also to actually be the other. Bernard, for instance, asserts that he can directly experience the sensations of the other characters, illustrating this classic dilemma of consciousness:

This difference we make so much of, this identity we so feverishly cherish, was overcome. Yes, ever since old Mrs. Constable lifted her sponge and pouring warm water over me covered me with flesh I have been sensitive, percipient. Here on my brow is the blow I got when Percival fell. Here on the nape of my neck is the kiss Jinny gave Louis. (289)

In this final chapter, significantly, Bernard's voice becomes more like the voice of the narrator as he tries to summarize and analyze his own

life. The dialectic tension between his subjective perceptions and his attempt to objectify them becomes more intense.

Whereas Bernard tries to resolve the irreconcilable problem of consciousness by directly substituting his identity for that of the other characters in an elaborate metaphor, Susan asserts herself to be the seasons, the fields, and the dawn. She thus attempts to close the gap between subjective sensations and the objective world. This becomes a metaphor as it is repeated which serves to recover Susan's identity as a defense against its inevitable dispersal:

At this hour, this still early hour, I think I am the field,  
I am the barn, I am the trees; . . . I think sometimes (I am  
not twenty yet) I am not a woman, but the light that falls on  
this gate, on this ground. I am the seasons, I think  
sometimes, January, May, November; the mud, the mist, the  
dawn. (97-98)

The rhythm of the sentences reinforces her identification with nature. As she repeats "I am," she directly identifies herself with the outside world. Ironically, for her to state that such direct relationships exist is simultaneously to deny their existence. Language imposes its own arbitrary logic on the world rather than allowing the individual character to experience it without any external limitations. Language does not refer to experience, but only to itself. For Susan, language is a trap because she desires an absolute similarity and harmony between herself and the world. Unlike Bernard, she cannot accept the irresolvable poles of similarity and difference which metaphors contain. She understands only "cries of love, hate, rage and pain" (131; see also 15, 16, 137, 228). Her identification with the crops which rotate with the seasons is also indicative of her desire to be outside of her own subjectivity: "I shall lie like a field bearing

crops in rotation; in the summer heat will dance over me; in the winter I shall be cracked with the cold" (131-132). Susan's perception of the outside world is revealed to be not a relationship of similarity, but a relationship of dynamic interaction in which she tries to reconcile herself with the other.

By contrast, Rhoda attempts to define her self by what she is not, although like Susan she cannot accept the similarity and difference inherent in metaphor. Both of these characters struggle with the problem of difference. However, while Susan suppresses difference in an effort to affirm her self, Rhoda emphasizes difference in order to obliterate her identity and isolate herself. She says that she has no face, unlike Susan and Jinny: "here [at school] I am nobody. I have no face. This great company, all dressed in brown serge, has robbed me of my identity" (33, 48). Having a face is equated with having an identity, and thus a purpose in life. This image is a representation of Rhoda's complete alienation from others, as well as from herself. She cannot see herself as others see her, as an object, because she does not have an identity to be perceived. As noted previously, she is most comfortable in the world of her own making, a world which bears little or no resemblance to the world of her present experience. Because she does not know who she is in relation to other people, she perceives herself to be faceless. Again, the assertion she makes of having no face is ironic because to assert anything, either negative or positive, is to change it in some way. To say, "I have no face" is to say "I am one who has no face." In other words, for Rhoda to say that

she has no identity is to say she has an identity which is nameless and faceless. Because she perceives herself to be without an identity, she also has no direction in life:

And I have no face. I am like the foam that races over the beach or the moonlight that falls arrowlike here on a tin can, here on a spike of the mailed sea holly, or a bone or a half-eaten boat. (130)

Again, the same effect is achieved. To say that she is directionless, like sea-foam or moonlight is, paradoxically, to say she has a direction that has no single direction. Furthermore, the repetition of the phrase "I have no face" paradoxically establishes her identity firmly in the mind of the reader. Rhoda attempts to close the gap between her subjectivity and the outside world by completely losing her self and denying her own identity--if she has no face, no one will notice her; consequently, she will not be alienated.

Louis, like Rhoda, feels alienated from the outside world. In his discourse, the repetition of the phrases that describe his alienation metaphorically illustrate the way in which his identity is established: "My father is a banker in Brisbane and I speak with an Australian accent" (19). This metaphor recurs throughout the narrative, establishing him as an outsider. He perceives that his accent is laughable and is the root of his alienation: "They laugh at my neat, at my Australian accent" (20). Because of his feelings of inadequacy, he does not feel confident enough to participate with the other boys as they boast of their fathers (31). In order to bridge the gap between himself and society, he subjectifies everything and imitates the speech patterns, as well as the actions, of those around him. However, he

remains alienated and apart: "If I speak, imitating their accent, they prick their ears waiting for me to speak again, in order that they may place me--if I come from Canada or Australia" (94). Because he is trapped in the dilemma of consciousness, desiring to escape subjectivity but unable to, he remains an outsider. He learns to compensate for his alienation by reaching out to the world through finance and trade: "My shoulder is to the wheel; I roll the dark before me, spreading commerce where there was chaos in the far parts of the world" (168). Paradoxically, he remains as alienated from the world as ever, despite his best efforts. In addition, even though his commercial exploits are meant to "expunge certain stains, and erase old defilements" (168), he cannot forget or reconcile his status as an alien. The split consciousness is irreconcilable; the rhythm of the text which pervades every word and sentence is a constant reminder to the reader that the fluctuation of consciousness is inescapable.

Neville seems to be situated between the positions which Rhoda and Susan occupy with regard to metaphor. He recognizes the dialectical nature of language, as seen in metaphor, to be like his internal dialectic. Unlike Rhoda, Susan, and Bernard, Neville is intensely aware of his ambivalence towards language. He formalizes this ambivalence through a continual internal argument between the freedom of poetry and the limits of Latin grammar. First, he chooses to become a Latin scholar because he is attracted to the orderliness of the grammar: "I shall explore the exactitude of the Latin language, and step firmly upon the well-laid sentences, and pronounce the explicit,

the sonorous hexameters of Virgil" (31-32). The attraction to Latin stemmed from his childhood when he realized that words could establish meanings and differences which would organize and objectify experience: "Each tense . . . means differently. There is an order in this world; there are distinctions, there are differences in this world" (21). The repetition of the short phrases illustrates not only Neville's careful, objective analysis of experience, but also, as in other examples, the way in which he tries to close the gap in his own consciousness. If he can submerge himself in a system, like language, which seems predictably to order experience, he will overcome the alienation from the world which he experiences. However, this complete recourse to objectivity does not, cannot, satisfy his desire for unity with the outside world. Therefore, he is also attracted to poetry which he identifies with a satisfying intimate relationship:

That would be a glorious life, to addict oneself to perfection; to follow the curve of the sentence wherever it might lead, into deserts, under drifts of sand, regardless of lures, of seductions; . . . I would rather be loved, I would rather be famous than follow perfection in the sand. (87-88)

Poetry, the medium by which he can hope to express his emotions is, paradoxically, the only way he can objectify and organize his experience. Language seems to be a stable medium by which he can organize experience, but he must realize that language is not stable, shown in his hesitation to be a poet and in his frustration with his scholarly pursuits in Latin. The tension between Neville's desire to organize experience in an objective manner, and his desire to experience the subjectivity of an intimate relationship creates the rhythm and dynamic interaction of consciousness in his discourse.

Unlike the other characters, Jinny uses metaphor not as a substitution for meaning, but as a substitution for pure rhythm, making her perspective most like Woolf's. The metaphors of the other characters may assert the tension between difference and similarity, but Jinny's metaphors of movement both state and exemplify the rhythm of the text. The primitive, pre-verbal rhythm which I described in Chapter II becomes the metaphor for Jinny's identity, and is the rhythm of the semiotic chora. Thus, while Neville stands on the symbolic end of the metaphor, Jinny occupies the position of the semiotic. She is identified as movement and pulsation:

I move, I dance; I never cease to move and to dance. I move like the leaf that moved in the hedge as a child and frightened me. I dance over these streaked, these impersonal, distempered walls with their yellow skirting as firelight dances over teapots. (42)

The rhythm of consciousness is dramatically illustrated in Jinny's discourse. ("Í móve, / Í dáce; Í né / věr ceáse / tǒ móve / ánd tǒ dáce.") The repetition of phrases and the rhythmic syntax indicate the way in which the rhythm functions to recover and establish the self. The movement and dancing which characterize Jinny's identity is the movement she perceives in the world around her. The objective world is made to dance by Jinny's subjective perception:

But the pulse drums so in my forehead, behind my eyes, that everything dances--the net, the grass, your faces leap like butterflies; the trees seem to jump up and down. There is nothing staid, nothing settled in this universe. All is rippling, all is dancing; all is quickness and triumph. (46)

Jinny's perception acts as a metaphor: she imposes her subjective point of view on nature in order to resolve the dilemma of the split

consciousness; however, the tension is made more evident, just as in a metaphor. As in other examples, the rhythm also has a dispersing effect on the identity. Even though Jinny's character is entirely defined by rhythm, it threatens her individual integrity, causing her to be lost in its fluctuating movement:

We go in and out of this hesitating music. Rocks break the current of the dance; it jars, it shivers. In and out, we are swept now into this large figure; it holds us together; we cannot step outside its sinuous, its hesitating, its abrupt, its perfectly encircling walls. (103)

This serves as a metaphorical definition of consciousness and ego. Within the boundaries of ego, the self-conscious identity fluctuates between the perspectives of self and other. Sometimes the two blend together in perfect unity, while sometimes they separate and become opposites between which is a constant, dynamic tension. Language cannot hope to compete with this rhythmic communication. On this level, words are a barrier: "Words crowd and cluster and push forth one on top of another. . . . They jostle and mount on each other's shoulders. . . . It does not matter what I say" (104). Because rhythm is foregrounded, the words themselves are insignificant. The comparison of birds to characters further illustrates the way in which the words themselves are superseded by the structural system of imagery which emphasizes rhythm and not language.

By far, the most pervasive metaphor in the text is the comparison of the birds to the characters. Unlike the metaphors which distinguish characters and define their positions, this metaphor is part of the large textual structure which disperses characters as distinct

individuals. The bird-character comparison asserts a large textual unity which is distinct from the system of character unity which the individual metaphors assert. Beginning in the first interlude, the narrator describes the birds which Woolf means the reader to connect to the characters:

One bird chirped high up; there was a pause; another chirped lower down. . . . The birds sang their blank melody outside.  
(8)

In the chapter that immediately follows, the characters are introduced in short sentences that contain elemental observations. They seem to chirp, like the birds, in blank melodies. This comparison continues throughout the narrative. In fact, the reader could separate the narrative of the birds from the rest of the text and read it as an allegory of the characters' external lives. Metaphor, more directly than rhythm, succinctly contains the tension between subjective and objective perspectives that is inherent in consciousness. The repetition and extension of the metaphor reveals the tension between memory and forgetfulness that rhythm implies. In attempting to objectify the consciousness, an individual character may compare himself or herself to what is outside and seemingly alien to themselves, such as the dawn (Susan) or the movement of a flame (Jinny). These metaphors assert direct similarity between subject and object, yet demonstrate the ambiguity of language which entraps the narrator, the characters and the reader. However, the bird metaphor even more dramatically illustrates this principle of language because it pervades the entire narrative structure.

Both metaphor and rhythm promote ambiguity in the text, on both a character level and a textual level. Furthermore, this ambiguity is accomplished at the expense of the disruption of a conventional plot. If the nature of language is ambiguity and change, as many post-structuralist critics have argued, then metaphor would make language doubly ambiguous and paradoxical. The metaphors in The Waves situate the author in an ambiguous relationship to her characters because to use metaphor to assert identity is to defer that identity even further. The reader, too, is situated in an ambiguous relationship to the text because of the author's use of metaphor as a means of expression. Ramon Saldivar states that "'ambiguity' is often not simply a surface blemish of language but is instead an essential basis of language and is thus implicit in any act of communication" (7). Writing can be seen as a continuous process in which the writer attempts to work out the ambiguity of her thoughts. The ambiguous nature of language concerned Woolf, as well as her peers, because she wanted to represent her own thoughts in fictional narrative. If language itself is ambiguous, how can a writer make fiction conform to the shape of the mind? Saldivar argues that problems in fiction like "disrupted plot sequences" (i.e., the repetitive patterns of The Waves) are "symptomatic of deeper language problems, which in fact they figure" (8). In other words, rhythm and metaphor in The Waves are not merely poetic devices but can be seen as indicative of a struggle to express the fluctuation of subjective and objective perceptions in language, itself an ambiguous, unstable medium.

As a poetic device, metaphor interrupts the linear flow of a metonymic discourse as it enables the writer to present a pattern of complex word relationships which underlie the surface pattern of language. Metaphor acts as a rhetorical manifestation of the oscillating objective/subjective perspectives of rhythm. The Waves is written in what is supposedly a primarily metonymic genre; however, metaphor oddly dominates the discourse. Metaphor, unlike simile, is a trope of direct identification. David Lodge argues that all narrative can be located somewhere between the poles of metaphor and metonymy. He classifies writing based on the proportion of metaphor to metonymy in a given text. Because metonymy is based on contiguity and not on substitution, the inclusion of metaphor in a metonymic genre disturbs its contiguous structure and creates another system of meaning. Furthermore, metaphor causes a greater disturbance than simile because metaphor "asserts identity" while simile asserts a mere likeness (Lodge 112). As noted earlier, Lodge says that because a greater distance exists between tenor and vehicle in a metaphor than in a simile, there is a greater "disturbance to the relationships of contiguity between items in the discourse and therefore to realistic illusion" (112). Thus, the tension inside the metaphor (meaning versus disruption of meaning) is doubled by the tension between metaphor and metonymy. What metaphor does in a metonymic narrative is to create more distance between objective reality and reality perceived by a particular subject. When Louis says, "I am the stalk," or when Susan claims, "I am the seasons," the semblance to reality is disturbed because,

logically speaking, a person cannot be either a flower stalk or a season. The metaphor of the birds also demonstrates the inherent tension in a metaphor. By comparing humans to birds, Woolf attempts, on a larger narrative scale, to reconcile the dilemma of her self-consciousness by closing the gap between subject and object.

This metaphor, a rhetorically, poetic device, is a vehicle through which Woolf can attempt to unify the disparate elements of her perception and directly assert a distinct relationship between them:

behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern; that we--I mean all human beings--are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work of art. Hamlet or a Beethoven quartet is the truth about this vast mass that we call the world. But there is no Shakespeare, there is no Beethoven; certainly and emphatically there is no God; we are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself. (71)

Even in this passage, she cannot escape the paradoxical use of metaphor; in trying to clarify her ideas by asserting direct associations, she further obscures her meaning. The metaphors in the last line are compelling but what, after all, do they really mean? Metaphor, it seems is a dramatic, yet ambiguous vehicle by which Woolf tries to objectify experience. This project of unifying elements in the world is a structured, intentional process of the writer who wishes to expose her readers to the hidden patterns "behind the cotton wool": "Then we see the mind at work; we are amused by its power to make patterns; by its power to bring out relations in things and disparities which are covered over when we are acting by habit or driven on by the ordinary impulses" ("Phases of Fiction" 122). Metaphor, says Woolf, gives writers and readers a new perspective, free from the habits of

daily living. Metaphor calls attention to unity, but it also emphasizes the disparity and tension between objects as well. This tension is what creates the unique perception of objects and our relation to them. Woolf's comparison of birds to characters causes the reader to take a new look at the characters, as well as at the birds. Perhaps the lives of the characters are as trivial and as fleeting as the lives of birds, or the birds are more human than the humans. In any case, this metaphor creates a distinct view of experience in The Waves, one which calls attention to the tension between the objective and the subjective.

Peter Brooks perceives the tension in metaphor as its most valuable quality. Todorov, he says, would claim that narrative in general can be seen as a metaphor:

Narrative operates as metaphor in its affirmation of resemblance, in that it brings into relation different actions, combines them through perceived similarities . . . , appropriates them to a common plot, which implies the reflection of merely contingent (or unassimilable) incident or action. (91)

In The Waves the "common plot" is rhythm, both a representation of all of the action in the novel and a metaphor of that action. Rhythm as a metaphor unifies the action, yet it also disperses the actions of the characters because of its inherent movement and changeability. The rhythmic movement from interlude to soliloquy, from birds to characters, further illustrates the way rhythm reveals the tension of metaphor and thus the tension of consciousness. Typically in a metaphor, two elements push and pull against each other, causing tension and friction. This tension is what gives the metaphor its

vitality, what makes it useful as a narrative tool. Again, in The Waves, the metaphor of the birds works to unify the text as a whole, but the tension within the metaphor (the distance between tenor and vehicle) disrupts the perception of objects in the text and creates a new world in which humans are birds and birds are humans. Meaning is both renewed and displaced by metaphor.

Not only is distance between object and subject made evident in a metaphor, but the lack of distance is also revealed as well. For instance, when the objective voice of the narrator and subjective voice of the soliloquies are juxtaposed through the bird metaphor, the boundaries of subject and object are called into question. Where does one end and the other begin? How much of what we experience is of our own creation? How much of it is beyond our control? By analyzing a text by Flaubert, Saldivar discusses the issue of boundaries between self and other and illustrates the way in which the writer loses himself or herself in the object of their writing. Flaubert describes a moment in which the writer is no longer himself but a part of a world he has created. Saldivar says that in this moment the delineation "between subject and object disappears, and the writer dissolves into the blissful unity of the universe" (5). The writer momentarily forgets his or her identity. In The Waves this process of self-forgetfulness is represented through rhythm, but also through metaphor. Throughout the narrative the birds are metaphorically associated with the characters. The objective, distant perspective of the omniscient narrator is not only juxtaposed to the more subjective perspectives of

the soliloquies, but also becomes directly involved with them. The individual self and the general other are asserted to be not just similar, but essentially the same. The metaphor thus illustrates that the narrator and the characters share the dilemma of consciousness. Furthermore, the metaphoric link between the birds and the characters perfectly illustrates the question of boundaries between self and other, as well as the way in which metaphor is used to both recover lost meanings of identities and to reinforce the ambiguity of such meanings.

The reader must constantly reconstruct the meaning of the pervasive metaphors in The Waves as the context shifts. Both repetition and metaphor create an ambiguous relationship between the established signified and the inherent instability of the signifier; the split between them exists within rhythm and is exemplified by metaphor. What occurs in The Waves through metaphor, as with rhythm, is a dual process of deferral and recovery: the reader is deferred away from meaning, even as she attempts to recover meaning, through the repetition of metaphor. Because the rhetoric of the narrative is metaphorically structured and therefore ambiguous, the reader is denied an access to a core of meaning within the text. However, what the reader discovers is that the ambiguity of the text reflects the unstable, shifting perspectives within her consciousness. In the following chapter, I will show how the rhythm and the metaphors, on both the linguistic and textual levels, reflect the way the consciousness of the author, her characters, and the reader fluctuates between subjective and objective positions.

## CHAPTER IV

## WAVES IN "DARK POOLS": THE TEXTUAL MIRROR OF THE SELF

As demonstrated in Chapters II and III, the repetition and metaphor in The Waves rhetorically reflect the fluctuation between subjectivity and objectivity. These rhetorical devices not only demonstrate the instability of perception, but together, they also form a mirror metaphor for the psychology of the self. In other words, the mirror is a metaphor for subjectivity in the text, or the self-possession of the ego. Furthermore, the mirror as a metaphor for this textual subjectivity dynamically illustrates how the text is Woolf's attempt to recover the essentially unrecoverable self. The narrator, the characters, and the reader engage in the act of self-reflection which reveals the desire to know the self and, simultaneously, the lack which initiates this desire. For instance, the narrator's mirror is a unified vision of the outside world. She attempts to find a completed, unified reflection of her own mind in what she perceives, just as the author tries to present to the reader a finished work of fiction. However, just as the narrator's vision is perpetually in-progress, always incomplete, so the rhythm of the discourse denies the author's vision of a completed novel and creates an ambivalence for the reader between subjective and objective perspectives. Essentially, the author's and the narrator's dilemma in the novel reflect the difference between reading a novel as having already been accomplished and the experimental novel as a contingency. Woolf wanted to do both of these

things in The Waves in harmony. However, for the reader part of the dynamic of this text is the conflict between these two desires.

Furthermore, like the author and the narrator, each of the characters, in their own ways, also searches for a unified reflection of their minds in what is outside of themselves. For Bernard, it is words; for Jinny, it is society; for Susan it is nature. Only Rhoda looks outside of herself in vain and eventually turns inward to see only a vacuum. The existential problems of the six characters provide the reader with six mirrors in which she can see various possibilities of consciousness.<sup>6</sup> It is in this way that she participates in the act of reflection with the author, the narrator, and the characters.

Because it is not possible for either the author, the characters, or the reader to assume a totally subjective or objective position in the text, these reflections of consciousness are unstable and indefinable. The mirror metaphor can illustrate how the author's ambivalent attitude towards time in the text further exemplifies the instability of consciousness. To the Lighthouse is a narrative which is primarily concerned with time and its relationship to the author's and the reader's perception of reality. Lily Briscoe attempts to freeze time in her picture of Mrs. Ramsey. By capturing a moment in time in her painting, Lily hopes to recover the essence of that moment in order to keep it from fading. The Waves takes this notion of recovery even further as a narrative whose primary concern is the

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<sup>6</sup>See Milan Kundera, The Art of the Novel (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), p. 35.

reflection of consciousness as a means by which to stop the passage of time. The reflections of words within words, characters within characters, and patterns within patterns in The Waves are, like Lily's painting, an attempt to freeze time, to create out of the pieces and fragments of experience a whole moment, a solid structure. Perhaps Woolf thought that if one could, theoretically and rhetorically, stop the flow of time and focus on specific moments, one might stop death from occurring, or at least delay its occurrence. Ironically, the continuous "sound" or presence of the waves in the background of the text denies this possibility, even as the author insists otherwise. The waves, which metaphorically represent the continuous rhythm of life (and of death), are the presence of the unconscious, of desire. The waves reflect the ways in which the individual experiences recovery and loss, as well as the constantly fluctuating perspectives of consciousness. This chapter will explore how the author's consciousness is reflected in the text, and how the narrator and characters reflect this divided consciousness, as represented in the soliloquies and interludes, to the reader.

First, The Waves reflects a unified, but imaginary, representation of the author's consciousness to herself as she tries to objectify herself in language. The subject (the author) desires to see in the mirror (the text) a unified object, but the reflection only serves as an imagined unity of subject and object. The author's ambivalence towards subject and object is best illuminated by Lacan's theory of the "mirror stage." In this theory, the child must pass through the

"mirror stage," part of the Imaginary, before it can enter the "Symbolic Order" and perceive itself as separate from those around it. In this stage, the child does not perceive any difference between itself and others. As Toril Moi points out, "there is no difference and no absence, only identity and presence" (99). In the mirror stage, as a prelude for entrance into the Symbolic Order, the identity and presence is reinforced by giving the child a "unitary body image" (Moi 100). When the child sees itself in the mirror, a moment of identification occurs--the child knows itself as itself, but also as that which is outside itself. In other words, the child is not both subject and object, but subject and object are perceived to be one and the same. The self in the mirror is perceived as outside, but as the same, or as unified with what is inside. Likewise, in The Waves, the author uses rhythm to subordinate the differences and unify subject and object. In this way, rhythm and repetition mirror the function of the ego, providing unity and setting up boundaries. The mirror stage, says Lacan

is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation--and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality . . . --and lastly, to the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject's entire mental development. (Écrits 4)

In other words, the mirror stage is essential to the formation of ego boundaries which will operate to keep the identity intact for the duration of the child's life. The boundaries of the mirror image are

necessary for the child to recognize in order for it to believe that it has a definitive identity.

Likewise, the mirrored reflection of boundaries within and around the text are a necessary part of the fiction which the reader agrees to and accepts. However, these reflections are false and misleading. As Terry Eagleton notes, the child actually "'misrecognizes' itself [in the mirror]" (165). The identification a child makes with itself in the mirror may be imaginary, but as Eagleton says, as the child matures, "it will continue to make such imaginary identifications with objects, and this is how its ego will be built up" (165).

Unfortunately, this stage is narcissistic; unless the gaze of the child upon itself is broken, it will not enter into the next stage, that of the Symbolic Order, essential for the introduction of language. When the father enters the child's dualistic world and breaks its narcissistic gaze and its unity with the mother, a loss or a lack occurs, creating a desire which must be repressed. It is "primary repression that opens up the unconscious. In the Imaginary there is no unconscious since there is no lack" (Moi 99). Thus there is no need for language. Language only occurs as a result of desire and the desire is there only as a result of loss. When the child distinguishes itself from those around it, it has effectively entered the Symbolic Order and accepted the laws of language. Sherry Turkle says that this stage signals the entrance of a mediating element into the previous unity of the child's world:

Symbolic signification, of which the "father's name" metaphor is an example, is mediated rather than fusional. It is social, not narcissistic. . . . The laws of language and

society come to dwell within the child as he accepts the father's name and the father's "no." (57-58)

The rhythm in The Waves is meant to deny the "no" of the father, to create an unmediated world in which an object is directly reflected back upon itself. However, to write, to use language at all makes this attempt inherently paradoxical. The gap that exists between subject and object is revealed, through the rhythm, to be irresolvable. Furthermore, the reflections in the text contradict each other; they do not re-establish the initial narcissicism that exists before language.

Because the ego wants to see itself reflected in everything outside itself, it extends the imaginary identity past the mirror image, and thus feels satisfaction. However, when the child enters the Symbolic Order and its desire to see its reflection in everything is thwarted, it is frustrated and disappointed. Language is the only means by which the child can attempt to recapture the lost object of its desire, the only way it can hope to know itself, which is, however, a continuing paradox; because language is a product of desire, it is incapable of representing the self adequately. As Rodolphe Gasche says,

In giving priority to the human being's determination as a thinking being, self-reflection marks the human being's rise to the rank of subject. It makes the human being a subjectivity that has its center in itself, a self-consciousness certain of itself. (14)

Gasche further states that this self-consciousness, the awareness of one's thoughts, is the objectification of the self. When the subject "reflects" upon her thoughts, the possibility of objectification exists, but when she writes them down, these thoughts become an object,

an entity outside of herself and outside of her control, the paradox of the split consciousness.

The Waves poses the dilemma of self-reflection as a process by which Woolf may hope to transform her thoughts into objects. The notion that thoughts are no longer subjective and personal once they are written, published and read by an audience seems to be a reasonable supposition. However, the reader perceives the objectified thoughts of the author as a part of her own mind. The novel is both a subject and an object. Likewise, when the child looks at its image in the mirror, its body is "objectified," yet is simultaneously perceived as the same as itself; it is both subject and object. This same process occurs in a reading of The Waves as the reader perceives herself to be both the subject and the object of the discourse, both a part of it and alien to it. This same phenomenon is true of most narratives. However, the way in which Woolf foregrounds rhythm in the text throws the reader into a uniquely ambivalent position as subject and object. Furthermore, the mirror which reflects the image of the subject, simultaneously objectifying it and subjectifying it, is comparable to the points of view in the text which are subjective and objective as they are presented separately and as they interact. The author and her interaction with her thoughts in the text constitute one way The Waves acts as a mirror. The characters as objectified manifestations of her thoughts are included in this interaction. The characters' interactions (reflections) with each other constitute another significant way in which the text acts as a mirror--they reflect on

their own thoughts, yet they also reflect each other's thoughts and actions, both agreeing with and contradicting each other.

Lacan points out that the theorem "cogito ergo sum" limits the speaking subject, in this case the author and the characters, to being what she can think that she is: "Of course, this limits me to being there in my being only in so far as I think that I am in my thought" (Ecrits 165). The question, as Lacan sees it, is: "Is the place that I occupy as the subject of a signifier concentric or excentric, in relation to the place I occupy as subject of the signified?" (165). Defining it further, he says, "It is not a question of knowing whether I speak of myself in a way that conforms to what I am, but rather of knowing whether I am the same as that of which I speak" (165). For the writer this implies that the very language by which she attempts to objectify herself is subjective and thus suspect. In other words, when the writer asserts her identity through the characters, the syntax, and the structure of the text, this assertion is not identical with the writer. Lacan says that the subject is split between the "I of the discourse, the subject of the énoncé, and the I who speaks, the subject of the enunciation" (Belsey 64). The writer may appear to be directly identified with what she writes; the text is an object, a physical manifestation of her mind. However, in actuality, and this is what Lacan argues, her writing is not, nor can it be, identified with her self, but only indicative of what she is not. Writing itself indicates the lack of identity (presence) and represents the self in the process of becoming. The text of The Waves is thus a reflection of the lack of

an identity, or the fluctuation of consciousness, as much as it is the reflection of the author's outward self. It is paradoxical, however, for a writer to use language, which is itself a subjective and suspect element, in an attempt to assign definite meaning to experience.

Instead of the language reflecting what it describes, the description itself reflects the ambiguity of language and thus the lack of definite meaning. For instance, the detailed subjective soliloquies are

"reflected" in the more general, essential interludes, and vice versa, yet neither one is stable enough to render a precise interpretation.

These soliloquies simply reflect back upon each other. Woolf's attempt to objectify the subjective, to "make concrete a mental state," is

actually a picture of the instability of the mental state, its lack of concreteness. Woolf wanted to objectify, or concretize, her thoughts,

however, without submitting them to the rule of the symbolic. That is,

she wanted to express her thoughts without making them a part of the

public discourse which she detested. This is her "soliloquy in

solitude," her need to speak, but her desire to retain control of her

speech by keeping it inside of herself. This inner speech prompted by

unconscious desire is what Kristeva calls the semiotic chora. Because

it is both inter- and intratextual, this inner language rhythmically

disrupts the grammatical and narrative linearity of language. In her

theory of poetic language, Kristeva differentiates between the semiotic

chora, which is the rhythmic, disruptive aspect of language, and the

symbolic, which constitutes written and spoken language. However,

poetic language is comprised of both the rhythm of the semiotic which

disrupts elements of syntax, and the symbolic, the basic foundations of grammar which enable the individual subject to communicate to the outside world. The semiotic chora is never written or spoken as such. In essence, the rhythms of the chora carry the inexpressible desires of the subject to the surface of symbolic language. The use of poetic language in The Waves, then, is a transgression of the symbolic order of language. It is Woolf's way, perhaps unconsciously, to express her disapproval of and lack of participation in the public nature of the patriarchy which she despised. As a result, the very origins and structural bases of language are questioned. Language in The Waves is destabilized by the rhythm of the chora (repetition and metaphor) because it disrupts the sequence and structure of the narrative.

Kristeva analyzes the instability of language by first describing the individual words which act as a point at which many different contexts converge. She uses Bakhtin's theory of dialogic narrative as an example because he conceives the "literary word" as

an intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings; that of the writer, the addressee (or the character), and the contemporary or earlier cultural context. (Desire 65)

The concept of the text as the authoritative writing is questioned when words themselves are seen as unstable (unfixed) in the text. "The poetic word," says Kristeva, is "polyvalent and multi-determined" and "adheres to a logic exceeding that of codified discourse" (65). The word is like a text in miniature in that it is the intersection of many texts to which it refers and to texts which are implied. In other words, poetic language is found to interact in different kinds of

writing, not just in fiction. Kristeva's detailed analysis of the word reveals that just as a word is the "intersection of textual surfaces" and thus unstable, so the entire discourse is unstable. As Kristeva points out, "any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least double" (66). Intersubjectivity is not replaced by intertextuality, however, as much as intertextuality is a condition of all writing. What implications does the idea of intertextuality have for the writer? A writer who desires to make her thoughts objective, and thereby accessible to herself and to her reader, is caught in the revolving door of paradox. The rhythm of the discourse, meant to unify its subjective and objective perspectives, actually enhances the ambiguity of the text and its "reflections" of the author's thoughts. The dialogic process inherent in thinking (in language) is represented in the dialogic perspectives of The Waves. Any attempt to reconcile the duality of these perspectives and unify them is a device of fiction, and is a part of the intersecting texts which Kristeva describes as inherent to poetic language.

Kristeva's theory of the subject-in-process implies that the writer as a "speaking subject" is split between the subject of enunciation (her "I") and the enunciation.<sup>7</sup> For the writer to utilize a subjective point of view at all is to assume a language with which to

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<sup>7</sup>Kristeva's theories, in many ways, originate in Lacan and are unthinkable without him. However, she creates her own set of terms to define the idea of language as a process.

speak from--the semiotic is that which underlies all language as a symbolic system. Kristeva points out that:

Because the subject is always both semiotic and symbolic, no signifying system he produces can be either "exclusively" semiotic or "exclusively" symbolic, and is instead marked by an indebtedness to both. (RPL 24)

The "chora," as "energy charges" generated within the semiotic "precedes and underlies figuration and thus specularization, and is analogous only to vocal or kinetic rhythm" (26). The chora creates a gap in language, a symbolic system, in which there is no meaning; it is a space which is entirely rhythmic, "which has no thesis and no position" (26). Kristeva's discussions of Mallarmé, one of the leading Symbolist poets, indicates a specific type of language that can be called poetic:

Indifferent to language, enigmatic and feminine, this space underlying the written is rhythmic, unfettered, irreducible to its intelligible verbal translation; it is musical, anterior to judgment, but restrained by a single guarantee: syntax. (29)

If the writer, as subject, is already split, characterized by the interaction of the semiotic and the symbolic, and if the language she speaks and writes is always undercut by the presence of the semiotic, how can she write anything that is unified? The rhythm of the waves may indicate the presence of the semiotic in language, but, as Kristeva says, the semiotic is not identifiable as the semiotic, but as a symptom or condition of language. The rhythm, as noted previously, which masks the underlying fragmented discourse, is indicative of the instability and ambiguity of the text. As a metaphoric mirror, then,

The Waves reflects the instability of the position of the author, her thoughts, and the language she speaks and writes.

The issue of the instability and ambiguity of language becomes even more complex when the characters are considered. They are a part of the language system of the text, yet, as a part of the fiction, they take on their own lives; they become autonomous, once the reader agrees to and accepts the fiction the author has created. The characters are inextricably linked to the author's thoughts, and thus to her language. However, as the characters interact and exchange ideas, the author becomes the observer, another reader. Their reflections, on their own thoughts and on the thoughts and actions of their fellow characters, essentially constitute another language system, and thus another perspective from which the narrative can be analyzed. The narrator, whose voice is "heard" in the interludes, is a character as well, even though the interludes may come the closest to representing the objective position of the author. The phrases from the interludes that emerge in the soliloquies indicate that the narrator and the characters interact with each other on yet another level. The position of the characters in relation to themselves, to each other, and to the narrator, is called into question by the repetition of phrases in the narrative. These repetitions act as a mirror in that as the words or phrases are repeated, they are reflected back upon themselves. Furthermore, as the repetitions become more complex, the reflections (meanings) they create change. The presence of rhythm, as Kristeva points out, signals the presence of the semiotic, a pre-language

phenomenon which is, nonetheless, governed by syntactical rules. The text, or novel, consists of the symbolic but the semiotic underlies it and interrupts it, reflecting the divided consciousness.

In the introduction to the English translation of Kristeva's book, Revolution in Poetic Language, Leon Roudiez explains Kristeva's definition of intertextuality and how the reader may detect the presence of poetic language in the text. This elaboration will indicate how the semiotic operates in a text, as well as the way in which the symbolic "threads" of the text interact with the semiotic "threads":

The nature of the "threads" thus interwoven will determine the presence or absence of poetic language. Those that are spun by drives and are woven within the semiotic disposition make up what Kristeva has defined as the genotext; they are actualized in poetic language. Those that issue from societal, cultural, syntactical, and other grammatical constraints constitute the phenotext; they insure communication. Seldom, however, does one encounter the one without the other. (5)

The semiotic threads in The Waves are the rhythmic patterns, repetition of phrases, and metaphors, while the symbolic threads are the grammatical rules, the characters, and the ideas and ideologies that make it possible for the text to communicate to the reader. The semiotic and symbolic aspects of the text interact, creating a rich textual fabric which reflects the drama of the self. One way the semiotic is detected is through the repetitions which act as reflexive, textual mirrors of consciousness.

In the first real episode of the novel in which Jinny kisses Louis while Susan looks on unobserved, one can see this rhythmic mirror effect in operation. Louis's account of the event is brief, indicative

of his shock: "She has found me. I am struck on the nape of the neck. She has kissed me. All is shattered" (13). Jinny repeats the account, only with more significance attached to it and with more emotion, indicative of her character:

And I dashed in here, seeing you green as a bush, like a branch, very still, Louis, with your eyes fixed. 'Is he dead?' I thought, and kissed you, with my heart jumping under my pink frock like the leaves. (13)

The fragmented syntax of the first sentence signals the presence of the semiotic, and while her account is a mirrored reflection of what actually happened, it has changed considerably from Louis's description. Susan's description of the incident is similar, yet still different from Jinny's:

Through the chink in the hedge . . . I saw her kiss him. I raised my head from my flower-pot and looked through a chink in the hedge. I saw her kiss him. I saw them, Jinny and Louis, kissing. (13)

In this speech, Susan's jealousy is evident through not her words, but how she says them, how they are syntactically structured. The mirroring effect of the passage, reflected in first Louis's and then Jinny's speeches, is a complete alteration of the initial event. It is similar to the effect one gets when looking in a mirror that is reflected in a mirror. As the image is reflected over and over again, it becomes dimmer; the details fade, though the image is still there. In this passage, Susan's perception of the event has changed the original image from Jinny kissing Louis to Jinny and Louis kissing each other, which are two entirely different things. Again, the presence of the semiotic is indicated by the repetitious phrases; the rhythm of the

phrases reveals the displacement of the self and the desire to affirm the identity. Because the chora is that which exists before language, it is fragmented and lacks any inherent meaning. It is the desire which makes language necessary. The language of The Waves is poetic because of the foregrounding of rhythm at the expense of the meanings of the words themselves. The rhythmic phrases in this text have the effect of recovering the lost identity, as well as mirroring the identity of the characters.

The mirror effect of the rhythmic phrases pervades the narrative, but in three particular passages in which the phrases are not only repeated, but are repeated in reverse order, the effect is most evident. When sitting in a restaurant, Louis observes the world passing outside the window:

People go on passing. . . . They pass the window of this eating-shop incessantly. Motor-cars, vans, motor-omnibuses; and again motor-omnibuses, vans, motor-cars--they pass the window. (92)

The words in the second half of the passage are in reverse order of the words in the first part, an exact mirror image. The effect is rhythmic, and thus acts as a way to recover the identity. The dual perspectives of subjective and objective can also be seen in this passage; the rhythmic structure of the sentences contains the tension between the perspectives. However, the subjective viewpoint of the individual character, clearly struggling to be dominant, is controlled by the objective viewpoint which envelops and organizes the entire narrative. In yet another passage, when Bernard takes Susan to Elvedon in Chapter One, the phenomenon occurs again: "Now we are in the ringed

wood with the wall round it. This is Elvedon. There is a ring of wall round this wood" (16). In this case, only certain words are reversed, and upon a first reading, the reverse may not even be evident. It is a subtle change, almost playful. Woolf is enjoying the sounds of the words that her character, Bernard, speaks. As noted earlier, this play on words, according to Kristeva, signals the presence of poetic language, and thus the semiotic rhythm of language which interrupts and disrupts the discourse.

When Bernard describes the effects of passing time, this play on words and repetition again illustrates the process of mirroring and self-recovery. In this lengthy passage, the initial phrase and the phrases that grow out of it are reversed, expanded, shortened, and repeated several times:

"And time," said Bernard, "lets fall its drop. The drop that has formed on the roof of the soul falls. On the roof of my mind time, forming, lets fall its drop. Last week, as I stood shaving, the drop fell. I, standing with my razor in my hand, became suddenly aware of the merely habitual nature of my action (this is the drop forming) and congratulated my hands, ironically, for keeping at it. . . . The drop fell. . . . This drop falling has nothing to do with losing my youth. The drop falling is time tapering to a point. Time, which is a sunny pasture covered with a dancing light, time, which is widespread as a field at midday, becomes pendent. Time tapers to a point. As a drop falls from a glass heavy with some sediment, time falls." (184)

The metaphoric comparison of the drop falling to time passing is not fully explained until the last sentence of the paragraph. In her play with language, Woolf has reversed the more traditional method of explication in a narrative. The reader must infer the comparison from the beginning, which is relatively clear from the context. However,

the comprehension of a metaphor is heavily dependent on the surrounding context. Again Woolf toys with the sounds of the words and the structure of the sentences. She creates a character who, like herself, enjoys the idea that time is like a drop and enjoys turning it over in his mind, looking at it from different angles. Keeping in mind Kristeva's comments about the nature of poetic language, it seems evident that the presence of the semiotic ruptures the flow of the narrative, a phenomenon clearly seen in this sentence: "On the roof of my mind time, forming, lets fall its drop"; and again in the rhythmic repetition of the phrase, "This drop falling" in the second half of the paragraph. The repetitions act as reflections within reflections, much like the "Jinny-kisses-Louis" scene which changes slightly with each repetition. Furthermore, the subjective and objective perspectives are both present in the rhythm of the passage. Bernard is trying to understand and concretize time, an objective, impersonal element which, by its very nature is not concrete. His apparent inability to subjectify time, evidenced by the stammering repetition of phrases, is indicative of the inherent, unresolvable tension between the two perspectives. Finally, the direct comparison of time to a "sunny pasture" and a "field at midday" is essentially a metaphor embedded inside of another, primary metaphor; this is an additional way the language reflects back upon itself, as well as an indication of Woolf's attempt to freeze time as she did in To the Lighthouse. Bernard's reflections on the nature of time lead him into deeper and deeper metaphoric associations. The mirrored image of the outside world in a

drop of water (9) is a perfect example of the way Woolf utilized the objective, impersonal perspective in the subjective observations of the soliloquies.

All of the significant points about the above three passages, the presence of the semiotic manifested in the rhythm, the subjective/objective dialectic, the repetition, and the use of metaphor, can also be seen in those passages in which the characters are juxtaposed to each other. The words are not always exactly repeated from soliloquy to soliloquy, but the ideas and the use of metaphor are consistently similar. Keeping Lacan's theory of the mirror stage in mind, let us examine two of these passages. In the mirror stage, the child sees itself, imagines that it and its image are one and the same. However, this image is not the same as itself, as it discovers when it enters the Symbolic Order and takes on language which signals its loss of unity with the mother. The passages in which the characters "reflect" on each other are not only their attempt to identify with the other, but also an acknowledgment of their lack, or loss, of identity, their inability to communicate effectively, and their desire to fill the gap in their identities which makes language necessary in the first place. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of contradictions represented by these characters indicates again the fluctuating rhythm of the discourse. In the passage in which Rhoda is left in the schoolroom to figure out a math problem, Louis is seen observing her actions. Rhoda feels alone and lost as she attempts to organize her immediate experience:

I am left alone to find an answer. The figures mean nothing now. Meaning has gone. . . . Look, the loop of the figure is beginning to fill with time; it holds the world in it. I begin to draw a figure and the world looped in it, and I myself am outside the loop; which I now join--so--and seal up, and make entire. (21)

Louis sees her sitting inside the classroom, and though he does not repeat her phrases verbatim, his comments are startlingly similar:

And as she stares at the chalk figures, her mind lodges in those white circles; it steps through those white loops into emptiness, alone. They have no meaning for her. She has no answer for them. (22)

First, it is significant that Louis has exactly reversed the order of the events in Rhoda's soliloquy; whereas she begins by saying that she has no answer, Louis ends with that phrase. He begins where Rhoda ends and works his way backwards. It is almost certain that Woolf did not consciously intend for the play on sentence and word order to be a signal for the presence of the semiotic. However, the rhythm of the repetition and the patterns of the words indicate not only the interruption of traditional narrative sequence, but also, the tension between the subjective and objective perspectives which is characteristic of consciousness. Another way in which the passage acts as a mirror is in the shared metaphor of the chalked figures, which changes in Louis's description. He says that Rhoda's mind enters the loop of the figure, while Rhoda says that she will remain outside of the loop. Louis incorrectly identifies his perception of Rhoda because the barrier of language prevents him from directly identifying with her. The poetic, rhythmic quality of the language overrides the words and makes the possibility of unity seem more likely. However, as

demonstrated in Chapters II and III, rhythm itself is shot through with the tension between the subjective and objective perspectives. The contradiction of the two characters parallels the rhythmic juxtaposition of the two perspectives within consciousness. The passage proposes a paradoxical solution to an already paradoxical problem, that of objectively describing subjective experience. In this passage, Louis and Rhoda illustrate the dilemma of being trapped in subjectivity while trying to see oneself as an object.

The phenomenon of the mirror effect seems to be particularly conspicuous in a scene involving Bernard and Neville. The two meet on the street and then go to Neville's apartment; there Neville gives Bernard a notebook of his poems and asks for an opinion. As Neville sees Bernard approaching him on the street, he feels that his identity has been encroached upon and he is confused: "As he approaches I become not myself but Neville mixed with somebody--with whom?--with Bernard? Yes, it is Bernard, and it is to Bernard that I shall put the question, Who am I?" (83). Neville will look to Bernard for an image with which he can identify. However, instead of simply reflecting an image back to him, Bernard defines his own identity as well: "I feel your disapproval, I feel your force. I become, with you, an untidy, an impulsive human being whose bandanna handkerchief is for ever stained with the grease of crumpets" (84). The reflected image of himself, which Bernard perceived in Neville's eyes, is unpleasant, but not totally inaccurate. Bernard begins to talk and to enjoy the sound of his own voice, when he realizes that Neville is not paying attention:

"But stop. You are not listening" (85). Neville's inattentiveness signals to Bernard that he is no longer communicating, that his words are no longer making an impact. He sees that Neville needs to have his identity affirmed, so he complies, reflecting Neville's image back to him: "Let me then create you. (You have done as much for me.) . . . you wish to be a poet; and you wish to be a lover" (85). Again, just as Bernard's imposed reflection of what he believes Neville sees in him is not totally inaccurate, neither is Bernard's judgment of Neville. Neville's gestures communicate a certain image to Bernard and this is the image that is reflected back to Neville. Significantly, each of these characters desire to "see" themselves reflected in the other's eyes. They need to know who they are, essentially, and if their own opinions, subjective as they are, can be confirmed by an outside observer.

As the two go back to Neville's flat to talk, Neville describes Bernard as he perceives him: "You have been reading Byron. You have been marking the passages that seem to approve of your own character" (86). He recognizes Bernard's attempt to identify with Byron, to find his image reflected in lines of poetry. However, Neville is quick to destroy this imaginary identification: "Yet Byron never made tea as you do, who fills the pot so that when you put the lid on the tea spills over" (87). The image which Bernard would like to project is not the image that is perceived. Instead, it is a direct contradiction. When Neville tries to make Bernard listen to him, to his desire to be a poet, he finds that just as he did not listen to

Bernard, Bernard does not listen to him: "You are not listening to me. You are making phrases about Byron" (88). Each of these characters desires to know the other and to know themselves through the other. As in Lacan's mirror stage, the imaginary identification with the image in the mirror is a tenuous relationship and reflects a false image. The ego of the child needs this identification, but also must recognize it is imaginary and thus unstable and false, in order to enter into the laws of language. The desperate need to communicate, to project one's identity into the world is, as both Lacan and Kristeva say, the indication of a loss of unity and the need to piece together the fragments of the subject-in-process. Neither of these characters is satisfied in the exchange. Bernard, for instance, notes the precise pain of friendship and describes their meeting as a humiliating, degrading experience (88-89). The image which Bernard desires Neville to see is that of a complex person, one who is comprised of many different personality possibilities, woven together into a unified being. However, because of Neville's own inability to see past the surface, Bernard is reduced and thereby, he feels, misjudged. The split between the objective and subjective perspectives is again seen to be an unstable and stifling distinction. This passage calls into question the assumption that an individual can communicate with those outside of himself (or herself). Language is a barrier to overcoming the alienation of being an individual subject. The rhythm which underlies the words of the passage is not so much in the repetition of the words themselves or in the arrangement of the sentences, but in the

way the perspectives rhythmically shift back and forth between the characters and within their soliloquies.

The positions of the characters are also ambiguous in relationship to the narrator; the perspective of the narrator merges with those of the characters, yet also clashes with them. These two perspectives contradict each other in that one is seemingly detached and distant, while the other is personal. It appears that the narrator has an objective stance with regard to the characters and to their subjective perceptions. However, as was shown in the previous chapter, this stance varies throughout the narrative, through the repetition of certain phrases and the shared metaphors between the interludes and the soliloquies. The rhythmic repetition from interludes to soliloquies are evidence of the semiotic interruptions in the discourse. The mirror metaphor can be applied to this unstable relationship in order to demonstrate the correlations and contradictions between the two perspectives. The idea that the outside world of the narrator is reflected, and thus "held" in a drop of water is a phenomenon noted by Neville in Chapter One: "I see a globe . . . hanging down in a drop against the enormous flanks of some hill" (9). Rhoda also makes a vague reference to this when she describes the world contained in the looped figures on the chalkboard (21). The world of the interludes, the narrator's domain, is a part of the characters' world, although when the two are juxtaposed, the two perspectives seem to contradict each other. In the previous chapter, connections were seen between the objective perspective of the interludes to the subjective perspective

of the soliloquies by the repetition of certain phrases and ideas: the turbaned warriors, the stamping horses on the beach, the birds singing intermittently. Evidence of the semiotic can be detected in the rhythmic structure of the shared phrases and in the rhythm of the sentences themselves. One example, mentioned earlier, is the description of the dancing savages, particularly Rhoda's description: "There is a dancing and a drumming, like the dancing and the drumming of naked men with assagais" (140). In the interlude preceding this chapter, the narrator had described the waves in these terms: "Their spray rose like the tossing of lances and assagais over the riders' heads" (108). Thus, the world of the narrator is mirrored in the world of the characters, and vice versa. Passages reflect upon each other, both confirming and contradicting. As in the other examples, the reflection is indicative of the desire to identify with the imaginary image. The narrator's world, which exists outside of the characters' world, is nevertheless a part of their world, even though the relationship between the two is tense and unstable. Far from the rhythmic unity Woolf had hoped to achieve, the rhythm emphasizes the fragmented nature of the narrative, and thus the fragmented, divided nature of consciousness. The semiotic rhythm of the language reveals the gap in meaning and in consciousness which has been characteristic of the narrative, the very gap which designates language as a result of loss and of desire.

The paradox of The Waves is that its author, the narrator, and the characters are driven by the desire to capture experience in language,

which is inherently incapable of rendering experience as a unified entity. The very act of writing is paradoxical, as the characters themselves comment several times throughout the narrative that language is inadequate. Bernard, specifically, distrusts the patterns of life that a novel creates; he distrusts the very mode of writing. As Woolf tries to escape the nineteenth-century tradition in fiction, of recording "neat designs of life," she is caught in the same dilemma; she tries to record subjectivity in an objective medium which is unstable, containing multivarious meanings. It seems that the characters are engaged in an extended argument with the author. Essentially, Woolf is talking to herself, trying to objectify herself in language, which she says she does not need. Narrative, as Kristeva defines it, is bounded in the novel, controlled by language, and completed arbitrarily. In other words, the novel is a distinct discourse within the larger space of narrative. Because the novel depends on language, it is a certain kind of language in and of itself and, according to Kristeva, "constitutes a decisive stage in the development of the speaking subject's critical consciousness in relation to his speech" (Desire 57). The novel can be perceived as a language itself, a language process by which the author becomes self-consciously aware, and thus is unable to separate herself from it. Words are an unavoidable necessity if the author is to create this fictional world in the first place. Furthermore, the novel is necessarily ambivalent because of the instability of language and the intentional use of language to create a fictional world. Kristeva

notes that the author controls the words, but because of characters and narrators, the language of the novel is further removed from her control: "The novel is the only genre in which ambivalent words appear; that is the specific characteristic of its structure" (73).

The relationships of the author to her novel, the narrator to the characters, the characters to each other, and the reader to the text as a whole, constitute not only different perspectives of the text, but also indicate the fact that no one of these perspectives is sufficient to describe the way the text operates. Because of the notable presence of the semiotic in The Waves, these positions are perceived as even more questionable. As noted earlier, the perspectives which shift back and forth indicate only one aspect of the poetic language of the text, which is characterized by rhythm, repetition, and playfulness. The problems that poetic language creates for the reader must be understood in terms of the gaps in meaning in the text of The Waves. The reader is caught in the same dilemma as is the author, the dilemma of the divided consciousness. Because the text mirrors a consciousness split into two perspectives which interact, the reader is simultaneously drawn to and repelled by each position. The reader needs to determine the nature of the text based on how these perspectives interact, the manner in which they coincide and contradict each other. The instability of her position mirrors the instability of the text, and thus of consciousness. Such questions that face the reader are: does she, or can she, create the text out of a system of pre-established, pre-arranged codes? Does she, by identifying with the author, create

an entirely new text? The following chapter will explore these questions and the ways in which the semiotic manifestation and the mirrored consciousness affect and determine the reader's position to the text.

## CHAPTER V

"THE UNCIRCUMSCRIBED SPIRIT": THE READER IN THE WAVES

In the years preceding The Waves and for the years afterwards until her death, Woolf was concerned with questions of the meaning of perceived experience in her life and in the lives of her friends. As she hoped to find some stable bulwark against the certain dissolution of their lives together and of the world as they knew it (pre-WWII), she turned to writing as a way to stabilize experience through language. By writing, essays, fiction, letters, she hoped to reduce the chaos of experience, which she perceived around her, to some kind of organized pattern of logic. Woolf's need to objectify, and thereby to stabilize experience in language therefore, was her way of protecting herself from the omnipresent gaze of the other, the alienating forces that pressed her both from the inside (her own demons) and the outside. The Waves, therefore, can be seen as a middle ground between outside social influences and forces and Woolf's subjective perception of experience. The fact that she wrote to and about herself in this novel is significant, but only insofar as it reveals that The Waves is the record of this woman who recognizes and confronts her split consciousness, and attempts to unify it through rhythmic, poetic language. Rhetorically, however, this reification of the self in language is constrained, because as the product of a split consciousness it is limited in its ability to convey unified meaning. The only way language can be a gesture against its inherent limitations

is not through a myth of unity which Woolf proposes in The Waves, but through the "chora," or rhythm and repetition by which it is manifested. Both aesthetically and psychologically, repetition is a response to the dilemma of the possibility of the balance between subjective and objective perspectives which constitute consciousness. Woolf's reader recognizes her own consciousness in this novel as a reflected image, but she must also see herself as the other against whom the novel is written. This reader, in other words, is also the alienating force forever outside of the subjective perspectives portrayed in the novel. Like Rhoda, the reader finds herself outside the loop of time which the novel encloses, yet she is not totally excluded because, as this chapter will demonstrate, she recognizes the dilemma of her own consciousness by her participation with the narrators and the characters in the creation of the text.

As described earlier, The Waves upsets reader expectation initially because of its lack of traditional plot, setting, characterization, but primarily because the rhythm of language is foregrounded at the expense of the traditional communicative role of language. This rhythm illustrates the fluctuation of subjectivity and objectivity, as seen in the alternation between interludes and soliloquies, and in the syntactical rhythm of these passages. As a result of shifts in traditional approaches, the reader becomes not merely an observer of external events, but a participant in a creative process. The rhythm vies with the words to carry the message of the text precisely because rhythm dominates the discourse. In other words,

the semiotic chora, which signals the unconscious pulsations and drives in language, is brought to the fore in Woolf's discourse, thereby communicating the instability and fluctuation of consciousness.

Because meaning in this text is located in the rhythmic patterns of syntax, the reader finds herself situated in an ambiguous position along with the author. The semiotic chora (the rhythm which underlies the symbolic) exposes the gap between the objective and subjective perspectives which is responsible for the ambiguity of the author's as well as the reader's position to the text.

Because the reader seems to be positioned in the ambiguous middle ground between the two poles, she must actively create her own point of view. She cannot rely on either the narrator or the characters to provide a stable perspective within the text because their positions are unstable. Neither can she rely on the guidance of the author. Furthermore, because her own position as passive observer is called into question by the inherent instability caused by the rhythmic fluctuations of language, she must take on a more active, creative role in the textual process. As Linda Hutcheon states in her explanation of the modern reader's dilemma, "The act of reading is no longer safe, comfortable, unproblematic; the assaulted reader's confidence in, and certainty of, his very language is undermined" (99). Because the reader's expectations in The Waves are upset, she must readjust her criteria for reading fiction and evaluate this novel from a new perspective which takes into account the division between subject and object.

Woolf's own advice upon reading any book is to abandon all preconceptions: "Do not dictate to your author: try to become him. Be his fellow worker and accomplice" (The Second Common Reader 234). In other words, Woolf felt that the reader must share in the creation and realization of the work. These brief sentences seem to encapsulate the dilemma of the modern reader, to be the "fellow worker and accomplice" of the author, even when that author presents her with a text like The Waves which seems to deny the reader any access to its core. Modern critics of the reading process would agree with Woolf's advice to the reader to cooperate in the creation of the text. However, they would add that while the reader must formulate her own version of the text, she must realize that this reading renders only a temporary meaning which will change with each new encounter. If words themselves are not stable purveyors of meaning, how can a text contain stable meaning? As Terry Eagleton points out, the very identity of meaning in a text is reproduction, but significantly, is also change:

It is difficult to know what a sign "originally" means, what its "original" context was: we simply encounter it in many different situations, although it must maintain a certain consistency across those situations in order to be an identifiable sign at all. (129)

The reader is thus in an ambiguous position with regard to any text in question. If this meaning of a sign (text) is unstable and never the same as itself for the writer, what about the reader who attempts to discern her position to this sign (text) and decide what this conglomeration of signs called a text might mean? Because there is no "transcendental signifier" on which the writer and reader can

simultaneously agree, the reader can only guess as to the writer's meaning. Consequently, it is this guessing and supposing, based on the text, that constitutes the creative act of reading.

Even though Woolf advises readers to remain open in their opinions of a text, in The Waves the shifting perspectives result in a gap in the language, creating problematic questions for the reader: What is her position with regard to this gap between perspectives? Does she read from within the gap, or from somewhere outside? What does this gap mean in terms of the creative reading process? Kristeva says that the semiotic chora which reveals the gap cannot be defined or identified except as it appears as rhythmic movements of language.<sup>8</sup> In The Waves, these rhythmic movements are foregrounded; the communicative function of language is therefore of secondary importance. This traditionally primary function has been replaced by the author's interest in the rhythmic patterns of sentences and the sounds of the words which convey not unified meaning, but the fragmented, divided meaning that the subject experiences. When Kristeva identifies language as a signifying process as opposed to a system, she refers to the fact that language is unstable and in a constant state of flux. Language is a process because it is made up of the interaction between the semiotic and the symbolic and, therefore, is a complex operation of establishing and re-establishing meaning. Once a concept is uttered in language, it has become a part of the symbolic, and as such, its

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<sup>8</sup>See Julia Kristeva, Revolution in Poetic Language, ed. Leon S. Roudiez (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1984).

meaning becomes automatically suspect. Underlying the symbolic is the reason for the inherent instability of language, the non-linguistic, non-symbolic chora. The reader of The Waves cannot recognize this chora as an entity separate from language because it is an integral element in language and is embedded in subjectivity. On an essential level, however, even though the subjectivity of the text is experienced only through the rhythm, this rhythm paradoxically represents the objectivity of perception in that to write rhythmically at all is to objectify what is subjective. The reader is thrust into this dilemma which is both alienating and comforting because, as has been noted, while the reader cannot unify the shifting perspectives in the text, she may recognize the unresolvable split between them as characteristic of her own consciousness. This division is represented by rhythmic play and it is the reader's role to participate in this play of language as she recognizes her self. As Linda Hutcheon points out, the reader's creative participation in the text parallels that of the author's creative role as writer, which in turn parallels the process of living as a creative act:

Yet the work constantly demands responses comparable in scope and perhaps even in intensity to those of his life experience--thanks to the reader's active participation in the very formation of that fiction. (140)

Because the rhythm of language is the central focus of The Waves, the discourse is reflexive and reflective, reverberating within the boundaries of the text, reflecting in upon itself. The reader can only participate in the text as she can recognize the rhythmic patterns of

the language which reflect to her the division of subjectivity and objectivity in her own consciousness.

Woolf felt that the writer and reader shared the text through certain "conventions" that the writer could communicate to the reader. For instance, Woolf says that the

writer must get into touch with his reader by putting before him something which he recognizes, which therefore stimulates his imagination, and makes him willing to co-operate in the far more difficult business of intimacy. ("Mr. Bennett" 206)

This appears to be a traditional definition of the writer-reader relationship, but the duality of the subjective and objective points of view in The Waves makes the "business of intimacy" difficult to achieve. The reader, however, by recognizing her split consciousness in the text may feel a certain intimacy with the writer, thus also becoming in some way his or her accomplice. The reader must first choose to read and then accept the terms of the discourse before such an interaction can occur. The freedom of the reader to participate in the text forms the basis of Sartre's theory of reading ("Why Write?") in which he assigns to the reader a creative task. Without the reader, he says, the text would remain "only black marks on paper" (1059). Writer and reader are thus engaged in the same type of creative act. His description of the reading process seems to imply the subjective-objective dialectic in that the book as an object loses its object-ness while being read. It then becomes part object and part subject. Sartre, like Woolf, places great emphasis on the willingness of the reader to participate in and create the text.

While Sartre perceives the reader in an active position with regard to the text, Georges Poulet, writing some twenty years later, sees the reader's role as a passive recipient or observer of the text. In Poulet's theory, the book is permeated by the consciousness of the author which interacts with the consciousness of the reader. The writer, he says, makes the reader the "subject of its [the book's] own objects" (1216). As a result, the barriers between subject and object disappear: "You are inside it; it is inside you; there is no longer either outside or inside" (1213). His description of the reading process bears resemblance to Lacan's description of the Imaginary in which there is no distinction between inside and outside; the text acts as an imaginary identification for the reader. In The Waves, as the reader recognizes the activities of her consciousness in the text, the barriers between reader and text seem temporarily to disappear, an effect which is reinforced by the lack of a mediating third voice. Poulet describes the illusion of unity between subject and object which is created when reading:

And thus the greatest advantage of literature is that I am persuaded by it that I am freed from my usual sense of incompatibility between my consciousness and its objects.  
(1214)

The act of reading is an act of temporarily forgetting oneself as an alienated object. In The Waves, the reader is involved with a text which is structured in patterns of repetitious rhythms which act both to recover what may be lost or forgotten and to emphasize the loss and forgetfulness that is characteristic of being self-consciously aware.

While reading for Poulet is an act of forgetting, writing is an act of recovery and preservation. A book is:

the means by which an author actually preserves his ideas, his feelings, his modes of dreaming and living. It is his means of saving his identity from death. (1215)

The reader of The Waves participates with the author and characters in the act of recovery and preservation, but is also subject to the loss and forgetfulness which Poulet describes as a part of the same process.

Ingarden and Iser give the reader an active role with regard to the text, but in their theories, the text remains a controlled, stable object while it is being read. For instance, in Ingarden's theory, the text is an intentional object, and as such, is already schematized. The work is made up of what he calls a "manifold of aspects" which is neither totally subjective nor totally objective, but which "hovers somewhere in between as perceptive transaction" (29). The text contains objects which constitute the schematic aspects of the text which the reader must re-create. In between these objects, however, are "spots of indeterminacy" which concern the generality of language; the reader must particularize the general ideas to which the language refers, thus filling in the spots. In this way, writer and reader interact and communicate. These gaps are not the same as those to which Kristeva refers in her theory of language, but they do refer to the indeterminate nature of language. Because the reader of The Waves is presented with a text based on and written around the idea of fluctuating perspectives and the resulting gaps, Ingarden's theory of unifying the text would not operate well for this text.

Iser's theory is similar to Ingarden's in that he too sees the reader in a creative role with regard to the text. Writer and reader interact as the reader is involved in a process of revising and redefining her view of the text. Through this process an overall perspective of the text is gained. In other words, the reader eventually gains a perspective which transcends any one vision represented in the text. Of course, when those points of view are not clearly defined as in The Waves, this kind of transcendent vision is not possible to achieve because the rhythmic fluctuation, which represents the split consciousness of the author, the characters, and the reader, causes the points of view to shift, with almost every sentence. As noted earlier, in this theory of reading, the process by which the text is always being revised seems to parallel that of experience in life. We are constantly revising our perceptions of the surrounding stimuli in order to maintain a balanced view of reality. In this process, however, a problem of identity arises. One must be aware of life, not simply exist. Likewise, in reading, one must not only be conscious, but critically conscious. One must occupy both subjective and objective positions simultaneously. As stated earlier, this division of perceptions is characteristic of consciousness itself. The dilemma of the split between subjectivity and objectivity is Woolf's dilemma as author, as a particular consciousness which is necessarily conscious of itself, demonstrated in the text. This dilemma is then reflected to the reader.

Since the rhythm of the language is foregrounded in The Waves at the expense of the communicative function of the words, the reader must create significance from the patterns of rhythm. Even though the perspectives in this novel are not stable, they may be found represented in different parts of the text, the subjective primarily in the soliloquies, the objective primarily in the interludes. As has been demonstrated, however, these perspectives interact and intertwine; they fluctuate within the rhythmic language as well as within the larger rhythmic patterns. If Poulet is correct, if the consciousness of the author possesses that of the reader during the reading process, what consciousness would this be in a reading of The Waves? Is it objective, subjective, or more logically in keeping with the nature of the discourse, a mixture of both? The rhythm of the text does not harmonize the perspectives as much as it reveals and emphasizes the gap between them. As the reader perceives the characters trying to overcome the split nature of their identities and formulate a unified consciousness, so the reader attempts to override the fluctuating rhythm and formulate her own perspective by filling in the gap between the two perspectives. However, as stated earlier, because her own identity is characterized by this same division, it is not possible. In this way, the text mirrors the reader's consciousness.

Because The Waves is a product of a consciousness which recognizes itself as split and unstable, this consciousness is translated into a language which is unstable and characterized by the dilemma of the perspectives of subject and object. The rhythmic repetitions serve to

"communicate" this inherent and unavoidable dilemma of consciousness to the reader who recognizes this split as characteristic of her own identity and thus of her own language. In The Waves, the reader is aware of the attempt made to preserve the consciousness in all of its instability, but simultaneously, also recognizes the constant falling away and loss inherent in consciousness. The forgetfulness that reading initiates, the desire to forget oneself, even if only temporarily, and join with another is demonstrated in a reading of The Waves in two ways. The reader does discover herself in the act of reading. However, at the same time, she temporarily forgets that she is an alienated individual as she participates in the text. Secondly, the rhythm of the language underscores the desire to remember, but also the fear of forgetting.

Two examples from the text illustrate both the recovery and the loss the reader experiences while reading. Neville, who longs to put rhythm to use in his poetry, says, "Now begins to rise in me the familiar rhythm; words that have lain dormant now lift, now toss their crests, and fall and rise, and fall and rise again" (82). The fact that he recognizes rhythm to be primary implies the instability of the words. The sentence itself is punctuated with rhythm and movement: "ańd fáll / ańd ríse, / ańd fáll / ańd ríse / ágáin." In addition to this poetic rhythm, the words "fall," "rise," "lift" and the phrase "toss their crests" suggest the movement and appearance of waves. This internal, primeval rhythm which Neville describes serves as a means of preservation and recovery, specifically the preservation of internal

consciousness and the recovery of the potential loss of identity. This rhythm is familiar and comforting, for author and character as well as for reader, because in the unbounded flow of this rhythm, the identity swells outside of its confining limitations. However, rhythm can also be a disruptive, alienating force as it makes its presence known in the inner consciousness. Bernard, for instance, feels his identity dissipate under the force of rhythm:

I could not recover myself from that endless throwing away, dissipation, flooding forth without our willing it . . . over the roughened water to become waves in the sea--I could not recover myself from that dissipation. (279)

The same "flooding forth" that Neville found so comforting, Bernard finds to be threatening to his sense of identity. Thus, rhythm can both reveal and demonstrate the recovery and the dissipation of identity. Bernard's sense of self is lost in a flood of identities from which he feels alienated. Rhythm in this passage is a force which disrupts the identity and separates it from itself. The reader, drawn into the rhythm of these passages, may temporarily forget her own identity, but because of the divided perspectives of the subject and the object in the text which parallel and mirror her consciousness, she cannot totally forget herself as may be possible in less self-conscious texts. As a co-creator of the text, the reader thus constructs what "looks like" her own consciousness.

The characters, as a part of the discourse, are trapped in the author's dilemma of the shifting subjective-objective perspectives. Because of the rhythmic language, the characters seem to be situated somewhere between the two as a part of both, yet a part of neither.

Because the text reflects the split consciousness of the author, her characters are portrayed as existing within this consciousness. They have an external self which they present to society, and an internal self which fluctuates and is much more complex. They speak many times in the soliloquies of the dilemma of being neither inside nor outside of experience. They either feel alienated from the pervading rhythm that surrounds them or involved in that rhythm. For example, when Louis sits in the restaurant watching people come and go, he makes this observation:

I am conscious of flux, of disorder; of annihilation and despair. If this is all, this is worthless. Yet I feel, too, the rhythm of the eating-house. It is like a waltz tune, eddying in and out, round and round. . . . Here is the central rhythm; here the common mainspring. . . . Yet I am not included. (93-94)

He is aware of the chaos which lies outside of the general rhythm of life, and perceives that he is outside of this rhythm in the chaos. However, as a part of the discourse, he is very much a part of the enveloping rhythm which includes both subjective and objective perspectives, both chaos and order. When Louis observes that he is outside of the rhythm, he is caught in the paradox of self-consciousness. He perceives that he is trapped in his own subjectivity, alienated from other individuals who see him as an object. The reader recognizes this struggle to objectify self because it is a dilemma familiar to every being conscious of itself. Bernard notes that the outward consciousness is only a weak facade, that underneath lies a primeval force beyond conscious, linguistic comprehension: "We are only lightly covered with buttoned cloth; and

beneath these pavements are shells, bones and silence" (113). This underground life intrigues him and he wishes to explore it. However, to do so is to surrender his outward, action-oriented consciousness (114). The two perspectives are unavoidably connected, but they are alienated from each other. To give in to one is to abandon the other. Again, a balance is desirable, but the reader must ask, "Is it possible, given the constant fluctuation of the inner consciousness, to attain a perfect balance between the perspectives?" Neville unwillingly abandons his outward, objective consciousness when he steps off the train into a swirling crowd. He anticipates the chaos he will experience and fears it: "The huge uproar is in my ears. It sounds and resounds under this glass roof like the surge of the sea. . . . We are whirled asunder. My sense of self almost perishes" (72). The ordinary experience of merging into the crowd at a train station becomes terrifying as Neville perceives his outward facade of consciousness falling away. Again and again in this novel, the reader sees the self in solitude and the self in society juxtaposed and in conflict. Jean Wyatt points out that by placing Kristeva's theories of language and the psyche alongside Woolf's novels, one can detect the dilemma of consciousness in her texts that such conflicts reveal. Certain questions are raised, such as "is the self in solitude the authentic one, multiple, diverse, fluctuating, while the coherent ego is fundamentally an illusion, a social artifice constructed by language systems?" (124). Neither the "self in solitude" nor the "coherent ego" constitute the authentic self in The Waves. Rather, the authentic self

consists of a tension between the doubly subjective "soliloquy in solitude" and the reader's objectification of this soliloquy. Wyatt's question, however, is pertinent to the reader of The Waves in light of such scenes as the one above, in which a character in the company of many people loses his sense of identity. This self is the social self, the one constructed because of and by language. The reader recognizes in these scenes her own dilemma in language and identity. The entrance of the self into the Symbolic Order simultaneously creates a desire to communicate in an effort to regain what was lost. The desire both fulfills and frustrates the identity which struggles to be known. The identity is always evolving, running the gamut of experience in which it is constantly changing. It is not possible to pin it down or define it exactly. Louis notes that any attempts to say, "'I am this, I am that' . . . are false" (137). The outward identity, in other words, is a mask for society, a necessary facade. Underneath is "a chain whirling round, round, in a steel blue circle" (137). The whirling circular chain is a metaphor for the identity which is unseen by the outside world. It is not a stable, solid structure, but exists in a state of flux. Again, the consciousness is perceived as a split entity, divided between the subjective self which exists in solitude, underneath the objective which the individual presents to society. This outward self is an imaginary representation of the identity, but one which is no less authentic than the self in solitude.

The reader perceives that language in the text is the element used to organize the chaos which the subjective side of consciousness

perceives. Bernard uses phrases so that "instead of incoherence there is perceived a wandering thread, lightly joining one thing to another" (49). He uses language to unify the world and organize his perceptions. However, as previously indicated, it is not possible for language to unify because it is an utterance of a split consciousness and is itself unstable. Neville, too, notes the possibility that language can provide a system whereby experience can be logically organized: "Thus we spin round us infinitely fine filaments and construct a system" (179). This is an ironic statement for the reader, however, because it is demonstrated time and again in the novel that there is no such organized system, that language is not a stable system but a process whereby the individual tries to assign meaning to and for himself or herself concerning the outside world. The rhythm which indicates the presence of the fluctuating consciousness is the rhythm which communicates this consciousness to the reader.

Bernard's dilemma, described explicitly in Chapter Nine of the novel, perhaps best illustrates this principle of consciousness because he is the character for whom language is of central importance in comprehending experience. Through language, Bernard constructs what he perceives to be a comprehensive vision of experience. However, he realizes that the very medium through which he has sought to stabilize experience is unstable. Language, like the outward self, is an illusion for a reality which it cannot fully describe:

I, carrying a notebook, making phrases, had recorded merely changes; a shadow, I had been sedulous to take note of shadows. How can I proceed now, I said without a self, weightless and visionless, through a world weightless, without illusion? (285)

The reader may note that since language is indeterminate, and overdeterminate, that since meanings shift with every use, Bernard realizes that language can only record change. As he begins to look at the world (the objective elements) without his usual recourse to phrases, he finds that words are a barrier rather than a clear avenue to experience: "Thin as a ghost, leaving no trace where I trod, perceiving merely, I walked alone in a new world, never trodden; . . . without shelter from phrases" (286-287). The self is only known through language just as the semiotic, which is pure subjectivity, is only known through the symbolic mode of language. In the theories of Lacan and Kristeva, the child would never know itself (be conscious of itself) were it not for the necessary entrance into the symbolic, which paradoxically we can only describe because we are a part of the symbolic. Bernard asks, "But how describe the world seen without a self? There are no words" (287). There are no words because without self-conscious awareness, there is no language. Without language, consequently, Bernard experiences a newly found, though temporary, freedom. He lets his notebook fall to the floor because he wants to discover a way in which to experience life without the limitations of language: "I need a little language such as lovers use. . . . I need a howl; a cry. . . . I have done with phrases" (295). This "language" would fall between the two poles of experience, the subjective and the objective, which are opposites but are nonetheless dependent on and interactive with each other. Language in any form is always a product of both perspectives; as pointed out earlier, one could not have a

language that was totally subjective or totally objective because to speak or to write implies that one is engaged in a process of communication that involves both a subject and an object, even if that object is one's own mind.

The paradox illustrated and described in The Waves is one which has plagued writers and philosophers over the years, the dilemma of language and the problems of perspective as a self-conscious being. Of course, to be without language is to cease to exist, and as Bernard illustrates, death is an ultimate silence. The space which lies between the subjective and objective, however, is not a silence, but precisely the space which language must occupy because of its inherent instability. The reader perceives that The Waves presents this dilemma of language and of identity, that to be an individual, a "questionable subject-in-process" as Kristeva says, is to dwell in instability and to utilize a language which is characterized by change and by the principles of recovery and loss. Identity, of the author, the characters, and the reader, hinges on rhythm as its means of self-objectification and self-determination. This places the reader, along with the author and the characters, in a position of ambiguity and doubt. Specifically, for the writer to have a means of expressing her thoughts only to have those thoughts subject to emptiness as a result of the rhythm and the repetition in the text creates a dilemma of identity for the reader as she attempts to find a readable position in the text. As demonstrated earlier, the recovery of the identity, which the rhythm of language attempts to achieve, is simultaneously coupled

with loss. Thus the reader experiences both aspects of rhythm as she participates in this novel. The paradox of the dual effect of rhythm essentially places the reader on the edge of the symbolic and the semiotic. The reader, like the characters, floats suspended, unattached to either the subjective or the objective perspectives. Therefore, the rhythm of the discourse does not unify the shifting perspectives in one, transcendent movement as Woolf had hoped that it might. Rather, the gap between them is exposed as the reader attempts to locate an unchanging perspective from which she can view the text. As she perceives the way in which the perspectives dynamically interact, she discovers, however, that instead of achieving a transcendent, all-encompassing perspective, she sees the reflected image of her own consciousness.

## CHAPTER VI

## CONCLUSION

The fluctuating consciousness represented in The Waves and described in the preceding chapters not only mirrors the identity of the author and her characters, but also is a dynamic illustration of Woolf's theory of androgyny. For Woolf, the dialectic between the subject and the object is indistinguishable from the dynamic of sexual differentiation. The reconciliation of subjective and objective perspectives within the rhythmic fluctuation of the text implies, therefore, the reconciliation of the male and female aspects of consciousness. In A Room of One's Own, Woolf proposes that writers utilize the qualities of the male and female because it is "fatal for any one who writes [man or woman] to think of their sex. It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly or man-womanly" (108). Only in this way could the writer hope to avoid the gender trap which limits the experience and thus stifles the way in which writing represents that experience. Significantly, if one were to assign to the words "man" and "woman" their respective traditional associations of "objective" and "subjective," one could then clearly see the correlation between the rhythmic representation of consciousness which fluctuates between objectivity and subjectivity and Woolf's feminist, social theory. The one thing that Woolf most detested about her society was woman's banishment from what she perceived to be a man's world. Consequently in The Waves, the

consciousness that she portrays is neither the consciousness of a man nor of a woman; rather it is one which contains the qualities of both as they are interdependent and as they interact. In Woolf's view, a novel, poem, or play is like a birth, a creation of man and woman: "Some collaboration has to take place in the mind between the woman and man before the act of creation can be accomplished. Some marriage of opposites has to be consummated" (108). The two perspectives of man and woman, objective and subjective, often clash, are often alien to each other. However, as seen in A Room of One's Own and in The Waves, they must interact in order to form a reified perception of experience, demonstrated in Rhoda's failure to survive and Bernard's relative success; in Neville's unceasing argument with the masculine and feminine within himself; in Jinny's uncompromising, relentless desire to have communion with the masculine side of experience. Likewise, the narrator, supposedly distanced from the characters, is not able to view experience totally without the subjective perspective, seen in the presence of metaphor in the interludes. The Waves, more successfully than Woolf's other novels, presents a clear picture of the androgynous mind of not just the writer, but of any man or woman. The reader's perception of the shifting perspectives in The Waves reflects not only the way her own consciousness works, but also the significance of this process and the reason why the process of consciousness must include both objective and subjective perspectives.

Woolf was reacting as much against the male-dominated business of writing novels and male-oriented novels this business produced as

against nineteenth century established perceptions of "reality" because the two issues are so closely interrelated. The notion that "self," specifically the feminine "self," is a sociopolitical construct produced by the dominant patriarchy cuts to the heart of Woolf's feminist theory as laid out in A Room of One's Own. A writer, or a person of any vocation, with a total, or reified vision would be one who could somehow embody both male and female perspectives, the traditional and mythical qualities of the objective and subjective aspects of consciousness. Anything less, according to Woolf, is a betrayal of not just the feminist vision, but the human vision. Unfortunately for Woolf, her theory as practiced in The Waves ends up being a paradox in that these two perspectives do not unify the consciousness into a totalized vision, but rather exposes the dialectical relationship between the two, a relationship in which the two positions are opposed, yet constantly turn in upon each other causing the vision of the novel to be bifurcated. The dynamics of this relationship are indeed a dramatic illustration of the way in which the mind struggles for self-objectification, but no resolution is possible. Bifurcation is a never-ending dilemma of the consciousness. As a feminist discourse, The Waves is not so much a gesture to undermine phallogentrism as much as it is Woolf's gesture towards reifying the divided roles of masculine (objective) and feminine (subjective) in writing as a way of perceiving and understanding experience.

The concerns which Woolf voices in The Waves can be found in her other works as well. Novels such as Mrs. Dalloway and To the

Lighthouse have been the subjects of exhaustive studies on this subject. However, novels like Orlando and Between the Acts have not been as closely analyzed with regard to this aspect of Woolf's feminism and aestheticism. The use of rhythmic language and metaphor to bring together the two perspectives of objective and subjective, represented in the positions of male and female, is a technique utilized in both of these novels. Therefore, an extension of this present study would include one or perhaps both of these novels as further examples of Woolf's paradoxical narrative theory. In addition, I would like to examine the works of the French novelist, Nathalie Sarraute with regard to the dilemma of consciousness, as well as the works of a more recent European novelist, Czech writer Milan Kundera. The span of works, geography, and politics is great, but I feel that such a study would shed new light on the issues of the dynamic interrelationship of the subjective and objective aspects of consciousness as it is presented by twentieth century authors of different ideological orientation.

For example, even though Sarraute distanced and distinguished herself from Woolf, she was concerned with the same issues, those of identity and the stability of consciousness. She describes, for instance, the activities ("movements") "which are hidden under the commonplace" (Tropisms 8). Like Woolf, she believed that these hidden movements are part of the subconscious aspects of the mind: they "slip through us on the frontiers of consciousness in the form of undefinable, extremely rapid sensations" and "constitute the secret source of our existence" in "its nascent state" (8). Also, like Woolf,

Sarraute knew that language was incapable of expressing this nascent identity; only through "equivalent images" and "analogous sensations" (8) can the reader perceive, in the characters and in herself, this inner, secret self. Sarraute chooses to render this self through anonymous characters (i.e., Tropisms) just as Woolf uses her characters as a thinly disguised medium through which to reveal the dilemma of consciousness. Sarraute states that these characters "serve as a mere prop for these movements, which are inherent in everybody and can take place in anybody, at any moment" (8-9). The similarities between the work of Woolf and Sarraute indicate not only their respective struggles with the problems of portraying the "moments" and "movements" of consciousness, but also their concerns with the feminine position in the act of writing and as a subject of that writing. Both Woolf and Sarraute seem to argue, through poetic language and manipulation of perspectives, that marginality is not a preferred position, nor is it feasible, given the way in which the consciousness fluctuates and operates within a continuous paradox.

Milan Kundera addresses some of these same concerns in his novels. The position of the subject and the dilemma of identity which Woolf and Sarraute explore are central to his novels, such as The Joke and Life is Elsewhere. His characters are not anonymous, but are very firmly situated in the political environment of their time. Within this well-established time, however, he skillfully demonstrates the instability of the subject's position to himself and herself, and to others. In The Joke, for instance, each chapter has a different first-person

narrator, thereby placing the reader in different positions in the text. The main character, Ludvik, dominates, but the reader recognizes the questionable stability of each character's position as they are juxtaposed. Kundera's narrative technique, like that of Woolf and Sarraute, does not allow the reader a comfortable in which she has no questions. Life is Elsewhere plays with positionality as well, but even more so with the problem of identity. In this novel, Kundera was looking for an answer to "an aesthetic problem: how to write a novel which would be a 'critique of poetry' and yet at the same time would itself be poetry (transmit poetic intensity and imagination)" (vii). The main character of this novel is a poet, Jaromil. The reader becomes acquainted with him at the moment of his conception and follows him throughout his life to his rather unpoetic death. Poetry is a mirror through which he validates and authorizes his identity. However, this mirror becomes a trap from which he cannot escape: "Is there no way out of the mirrored house?" (167). Like Woolf and Sarraute, Kundera explores the implications of language as an objective expression of the self, which is a continuing paradox.

The works of Woolf, Sarraute, and Kundera will be the subjects of an indepth, comparative analysis of the dilemma of consciousness in discourse and the issues this dilemma implies for the feminine position in writing. Because the works of these writers span several decades, it is useful to analyze them as examples of the continuing problem of the subject in fiction and the continuing process to solve this problem.

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## VITA

Linda Bullock was born on July 26, 1957 in Jackson, Mississippi. She attended elementary through senior high school in Laurel, Mississippi. At Mississippi College, she graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Music Education in 1979. She then went to the University of Southern Mississippi where she received a Master's Degree in English in August of 1982. In January of that same year, she enrolled at The University of Tennessee to begin work on a Ph.D. in English. As a part of her educational experience, she taught freshman composition from January of 1982 until May of 1989. While a graduate student, Linda Bullock served as the chairman of the Graduate Steering Committee and received the Davis Editorial Scholarship. In addition, she participated in scholarly meetings where she read research essays on a variety of topics.