

The Big Bad Wolf

by

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Abstract

In this thesis I demonstrate how Virginia Woolf's work evolves both stylistically and philosophically during the post-war period. I show how she moves from utilizing an invasive and angry narrator to criticize her diseased hopeless culture that allowed WWI to occur, to character narratives that still criticize British society but offer a glimmer of hope and chance to rebuild.

In my introduction, I set up the prior argument (Woolf evolves both work stylistically and philosophically over the post-war period) and give a short background on WWI culture. This background does not go into military detail, as exciting as that would have been. Rather, it goes into detail about issues facing the home front, the issues Woolf faced while writing the following three novels.

In *Jacob's Room*, I present Woolf's angry, post-war narrator and nihilistic critique of British society. I also show how Woolf presents character as pre-war stooges unconnected and misunderstood by themselves and other characters in the novel. Lastly, I show how Woolf knocks down seats of power, suggesting that institutions such as education and marriage failed to prevent if not promoted the war.

In *Mrs. Dalloway* I show how Woolf has begun to change her views and her style. In this novel Woolf understands what went wrong. I show how she uses an angry narrator, but the narrator appears less often and supports the opinions of characters in the novel. I then show how though characters still misunderstand each other, the possibility for understanding exists. It exists primarily through the combined stories Clarissa and Septimus. Lastly I demonstrate that Woolf understands why seats of power crumbled during the war. She recognizes that these seats are empty and dish out promises for order that cannot be achieved.

Finally, in *To the Lighthouse*, I show how Woolf has continued to progress. The angry narrator has almost completely dropped out of this novel. It has been replaced by in-depth character narratives. These characters not only understand themselves but they understand each other. Furthermore, in these characters, Woolf sees the possibility for change and re-growth. The institutions these characters, at times, can represent change as the characters do. Therefore, at the end of the novel we feel a slight sense of hope and well being for both the characters in the novel and British society.

In my conclusion I show that this type of critique provides us with a more fruitful understanding of how the war invades Woolf's texts in the post-war years then looking at these novels individually or with a particular war motif in mind.

CONTENTS

Short Titles	i
Introduction	1.
Chapter I	9.
Chapter II	25.
Chapter III	45.
Conclusion	57.
Works Consulted	60.

Short Titles

WJR: Woolf, Virginia. Jacob's Room. New York: Bantam Books, 1922

WMD: Woolf, Virginia. Mrs. Dalloway. New York: Harvest Books, 1925

WTL: Woolf, Virginia *To The Lighthouse*. New York: Harvest Books, 1927

I would like to suggest that through Woolf's investigation of post-war England, her work moves from a state of expressed critical anger towards the world she lives in to a state of expressed possibility for her world to rebuild. This philosophical move can be charted by a stylistic change. For our purposes, change will be denoted by the increased presence of narration through characters that understand themselves and each other. Woolf goes through an evolution by experiencing the war and particularly its lingering effect. It is this very evolution that we will explore by looking closely at *Jacob's Room*, *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*. We will be looking at these novels as pieces of a whole and how that whole has altered with the progression of time. Like a manual car, we must go through first gear to get to fifth. Similarly, Woolf shifts from a state of intense critical anger to a state of clarity from a more tempered view of the world.

If we define change and possibility as the increased development and expression of characters, how do we define the other side? How do you signify a state of anger or emotion? This state will be recognized by the presentation of an aggressive and often hostile narrator and aggressive, hostile narratives. When the narrator speaks, Woolf's texts become disjointed, confused and critical. We will notice that as Woolf's narrator becomes less invasive so does the tension or anger in her novels. Furthermore, as Woolf's omniscient narrator wanes in importance the importance of her characters as storytellers waxes. Through Woolf's pursuit to understand post-war London, we can trace the changes in attitude in this waning and waxing.

. Before diving into Woolf's novels, let's look at some of the ways the war changed British society. We can find at least traces of these changes in each of the

novels examined, so I think it is important to discuss them. We will look at how the war altered perceptions on truth and faith in institutions of power.

First, in the war 950,000 men lost their lives and 8 million men mobilized¹. The British lost more men in this war than ever before. A whole generation of healthy boys was virtually wiped out either by death or by trauma. And these deaths affected and changed more than a population number. After Vera Brittain's brother Edward dies in battle, she writes, "But I have ceased to care what happened to the War; having no hope, and therefore no fear²". Brittain discusses a desperate situation in which she becomes completely indifferent to the world around. She has no fear but also no hope for her society. This statement evolves into an approach to life after the war. People became disillusioned and alienated with Britain. The Irish, no longer afraid of the British Empire, made a final push and received home rule. The underpaid workers of newly industrialized England had enough as well and in 1926 a general strike crippled British communications, like mail disruption and daily life. The pre-war society's rules and regulations were thrown violently down as people lost their fear of almighty Britain and their hope in its greatness.³

After the war, along with disillusionment came skepticism. People became weary of the information they received from the government and the media because of the war. For example, many on the home front, receiving letters from soldiers felt they could not connect with their men at "The trick was to fill the page by saying nothing and to offer the maximum number of cliches" (Fussell 182). In Fussell's book, The Great War and Modern Memory, he presents "sample" letters. Here reads a sample letter:

¹ Fussell

² Brittain. *Testament of Youth* (410)

Dear old pal – Just a line hoping as how you are in the pink⁴ of condition as this leaves me at present. Well, old pal, we are out of the line just now in a ruined village. The beer is rotten. With good luck we shall be over the top in a week or two, which means a gold [wound] stripe in Blighty or a landowner in France. Well, they say it's all for little Belgium, so cheer up, says I: but wait till I gets hold of little Belgium.⁵

After the war who could believe what? Women learned that their men were not okay, their pals were not okay. Their pals were dead. The truth, the anger due to these lies, was a subjective creation. It was also quite common for a British writer to interview a man straight from war. The writer plans on hearing about some great deed in battle, or a near death experience. But often, with most men, the writer only got, "reactions after battle were simply those of men utterly exhausted, yet glad to be alive⁶". And what was a writer to do with this information? He embellished. He embellished so unrealistically that Somme veterans⁷ wrote, "These preposterous stories were considered an immense joke⁸". Nicoletta Gullace in her article "Sexual Violence and Family Honor: British Propaganda and International Law During the First World War" suggests, "terms of a threat to the family and social order did not originate during the Great War. Between

³ Gray. "The Myths of Air Control and Realities of Imperial Policy," (21) hereafter Gray.

⁴ Meaning healthy or fit to go.

⁵ Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (182)

⁶ Ellis. *Eye Deep in Hell* (104)

⁷ Somme- Trench battle in July of 1916. The Somme happened to be of the bloodiest battles of the war. (Fussell)

⁸ Ellis, *Eye Deep in Hell* (104)

1914 and 1918, however, images of the violation of women, real and symbolic, took on a heightened international significance as the British government attempted to market the war on the basis of alleged crimes against women and the family”⁹. The backlash of this censorship and embellishment was general anxiety about the validity of “official” information or otherwise termed intense skepticism.

This skepticism connects to another issue brought about by the war, a public obsession and yet strong concern about technology. Prior to the war, avant garde culture hailed technology and progress. In high art circles, the futurists were deemed the finest artists partially due to their visual celebration of technology. British writers, such as Pound are inspired by Marinetti’s obsession with technology. David Kadlec writes, “Pound was not politically active before WWI, but his writings from the period around Marinetti and BLAST show that the flood of his own art with such technological influences was accompanied . . . for Pound in London, futurism’s moment had been right”¹⁰. But after the public witnessed the destruction of life and property by technology, its early praise became criticisms. Furthermore, the avant garde circles that once jumped upon the promises technology offered were first to claim it dangerous.

We see this particularly with the airplane, an image Woolf uses in her own text. The airplane promised the ability of speed and protection but it also promised destruction. To subdue its growing nationalistic colonies the British military indiscriminately bombed these colonies, using airplanes. Yet the government suggested, “attacks were neither indiscriminate nor brutal” (Gray 28). And it was the ability to destroy without restraint that re-enforced public fear and skepticism of technology and

⁹ Gullace. “Sexual Violence and Family Honor: British Propaganda and International Law During the First World War” (714), hereafter Gullace

the government. The airplane could mystify and annihilate and therefore should be held as a most perilous weapon.

What all these issues point to are changes in view about the way one should live one's life. The old institutions of power such as the Empire, industry, the military, class, patriarchy were all being reinvestigated by the public and of course Woolf. I do not want to suggest that no one ever looked at the problems with say, the Empire prior to the war, but the war brought out problems with society in general. It shed light on all of the many failures of British culture collectively. It also brought these failures to the attention of a mass public. Sometimes it takes death and disease to reexamine life. As we explore Woolf's critique of her society we will see how these issues play out.

We will begin with the characters and narrator(s) of *Jacob's Room* and move chronologically, therefore moving next to *Mrs. Dalloway* and finally *To the Lighthouse*. I cannot truly suggest that the war in itself caused Woolf to change her writing style or even her world view. Each novel presents us with issues of its own that perhaps have influenced Woolf's writing style and dictate the plots of her novels. For example, In *To the Lighthouse*, critic Shannon Forbes views the novel as an expression of Woolf coming to terms with the death of her mother.¹¹ Others view the novel as Woolf's coded testimonial to lesbianism¹² on the basis that Lily has a strange affinity for Mrs. Ramsay and never marries a man. Yes, these points are all justified and most likely true. But, along with these issues, Woolf looks at her war torn society. Furthermore, when we look at these books together, as a trajectory, we can pick out the aspects that deal with the

¹⁰ Kadlec. "Pound BLAST and Syndicalism" (1016), hereafter Kadlec

¹¹ Forbes Shannon. 'When Sometimes She Imagined Herself Like Her Mother': The Contrasting Responses of Cam and Mrs. Ramsay to the Role of the Angel in the House.

war. In doing so, we can compare these aspects from each separate novel and see how Woolf's philosophical views and stylistic techniques to deal with the war have changed. All the separate issues, though still important to acknowledge, need not hinder our investigation of her stylistic changes due to the war. As we move through Woolf's life, different occurrences motivate her novelistic choices, but so does the war.

First glancing at *Jacob's Room*, the novel seems a war book but only on a superficial level. Jacob's last name is Flanders, which call my attention to John McCrae's poem, "In Flanders fields". The narrator's references battle scenes and military movement. Most importantly the protagonist, Jacob, dies in the war. One could say, though perhaps a book involving the war, since the novel takes place mainly prior to WWI, one could hardly call it a post-war novel. But upon second glance, *Jacob's Room* assuredly can be claimed a post-war novel. It just works differently. Though the novel is set pre-post-war, the narrator is written from a post-war perspective. Woolf, using this "futurist" narrator, criticizes a pre-war culture that allowed WWI to occur. She aggressively anatomizes a diseased culture whose fate could only result in annihilation or death. Starting with *Jacob's Room*, first I will show how Woolf's invasive omniscient narrator interrupts and distorts our understanding of Jacob and in fact every character in the novel. Anger emanates from every word written for the narrator's voice. This will become clear by looking at how the narrator interrupts the plot. Second, the characters themselves have distorted images of themselves and of each other instead of presenting clear images. Lastly, I will demonstrate how these points along with Woolf's retrospective attack of

¹² Neverow, Vara. "Compulsory Heterosexuality and the Lesbian Continuum in *To the Lighthouse*: A Woman's Studies Approach"

different institutions leave us with a representation of a confused and alienated London.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, we spend a day in post-war London. We again find a pre-war perspective in Peter Walsh, but Woolf does not focus the novel around his opinions. His opinions represent only one type of misguided thought that occurs in the novel, and they serve to highlight the gravity of Clarissa's wish to ignore the reality of the war. We find a less aggressive narrator in the novel, but more startling miscommunication between characters. Lastly, we find a narration centered on two characters that never meet each other. They compliment each other but also complicate each other. We do not find ourselves truly close to either one. Furthermore, instead of blindly attacking institutions, Woolf focuses her arguments, suggesting seats of power as mystifying yet empty.

In *To the Lighthouse* we can hardly find the presence of a judgmental narrator. The omniscient narrator who appears rarely, just tells the story, relays the background not the facts. Furthermore, we find ourselves relating, understanding the characters Woolf portrays and the characters understanding each other. Institutions are again critiqued but differently. We explore institutions through characters' experiences with these institutions. Here, unlike in *Jacob's Room* and particularly *Mrs. Dalloway*, institutions are not objectified and made alien in the text. Because criticism of institutions occurs between characters and inside the minds of characters, we struggle with the characters to change our views on these empty seats of power. Lastly, in *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf finds acceptance. Yes, her characters display great anger in the novel. She paints a fate that may not be perfect but is understood and accepted. And

she cannot arrive at this acceptance without going through the previous steps.

Following her steps we too will arrive at an understanding of how post-war England changed with time and how Woolf arrives at a new style of writing.

Chapter I

We begin with *Jacob's Room*. As I suggested in the introduction, the narrator interrupts and distorts the expected plot flow. Anger and alienation results from these off-centering interruptions and thwarted expectations. We see this type of interruption in the in the King's Chapel scene. Directly after Jacob steps off the train and arrives at Cambridge, we have a manifesto from the narrator that seems to be a little too hostile. The narrator relays,

But this service in King's College Chapel – why allow women to take part in it? No one would think of bringing a dog into church. For though a dog is all very well on a gravel path, and shows no disrespect to flowers, the way he wanders down an aisle, lifting a paw, and approaching a pillar with a purpose that makes the blood run cold with horror, a dog destroys the service completely. So do these – women – though separately devout, distinguished.¹³

The hostile nature of this narrative segment frustrates the reader. First, Woolf takes up subjugation of women, an issue that had long existed prior to the war but demonstrates one of the criticisms Woolf's narrator makes of pre-war society. Woolf compares women to dogs. To both female and male readership, this statement must have raised a few eyes. The disgusting tone relates to a disgusting reality. In pre-war London, women had about the same rights as dogs.

¹³ Woolf, *Jacob's Room* (35-36) Incidentally, Woolf brings up this issue about women in King's college, in *A Room of One's Own* as well. It is too much to say that she is continuing thoughts touched on in *Jacob's Room*, in *A Room of One's Own*. But one will note that two texts can be claimed linked by more than just a title.

Next, the position of this narrative in the text is also vexing. It occurs without preface after a train ride, and finishes without conclusion before a luncheon. What can we make of this narration? First it is overtly angry. Again, the dog/woman metaphor demonstrates clearly Woolf's agitation. Second, and we will discuss this issue later, it represents one of Woolf's tangential and over-aggressive yet underdeveloped, contextually, attacks on institutions. Third, and to serve our purposes more for the moment, the narrator's outburst criticizes a culture that placed London in a state of high anxiety. The narrator's plot interruption relates to the war's plot interruption. In the middle of a normal day, in the middle of a story, bang, the whole world changes. Woolf, in her diary writes of her own experience with exploding bombs. Woolf writes in her diary dated Thursday, 6 December (1917),

Nothing was further from our minds than air raids; a bitter night, no moon up till eleven. At 5 however I was wakened by L.¹⁴ to a most instant sense of guns: as if one's faculties jumped up fully dressed. We took clothes, quilts, a watch and a torch, the guns sounding nearer as we went down stairs to sit with the servants wrapped in quilts in the kitchen passage . . . In ten minutes there could be no question of us staying there; guns apparently at Kew . . . it was after 6, carts were rolling out of stables, motor cars throbbing, and the prolonged ghoulstly whistlings which meant, I suppose, Belgian work people recalled to the munitions factory. At last in the distance I heard bugles; L. was by this time asleep, but the dutiful boy

scouts came down our road and wakened him carefully . . .

According to the *Star* I bought was the work of twenty-five Gothas¹⁵, attacking five squadrons and two more were brought down. A perfectly still and fine winter's day, so about 5:30 tomorrow morning perhaps¹⁶.

Perhaps the next day will be better, or perhaps it will bring the death of a loved one, such as her Nephew, Cecil Woolf. She says later, "This talk of peace comes to the surface with a kind of tremor of hope once in three months; then subsides; then swells again. What it now amounts to, one doesn't even like to guess" (WSD 30). The narrator lets loose a pernicious and furious bomb making no sense in time or space.

The King's college scene relates directly, in this manner, to another scene in *Jacob's Room*. We hear the narrator say when discussing Jimmy who died in the war and the woman who loved him, "Often I have seen them – Helen and Jimmy – and likened them to ships adrift, and feared for my own little craft" (WJR 121). Jimmy dies in the middle of his story. The life that he and Helen should have lived has been interrupted, like the plot previously has been interrupted by the King's college narrative. The two characters, Helen and Jimmy, are now two separate entities, not relating to each other. The narrator likens them to ships, and remembering the past, he now lives in fear "for my own little craft". Here in post-war London, where the narrator stands in time,

¹⁴ L stands for Leonard Woolf, Virginia's husband.

¹⁵ Gotha- The Gotha is a German long-range airplane bomber. It was first produced in the autumn of 1916 when the Germans could no longer bomb London due to beefed up aviation defense. Therefore, it was necessary to create a weapon, which did not need fly so close or so low to London. (www.fiddlersgreen.net)

¹⁶ Shorter Diary (24), hereafter WSD

people are set adrift. She has evidence that the path laid down by pre-war society could only result in this alienation.

We can also connect Jimmy's story and the disruptive nature of the King's college narrative to Jacob's life. Ironically Jacob's life is interrupted as well, interrupted with death, his own death in the war. Alex Zwerdling writes of Jacob's interrupted life,

These opportunities and experiences are deliberately presented in an incoherent way because for Jacob they do not add up, they cannot be thought of as sequential steps leading to his definition as an adult human being. Unlike the classic Bildungsroman, *Jacob's Room* lacks a teleology. Woolf's hero remains an essentially molten personality interrupted by death¹⁷.

Jacob remains a mystery because his narrative ends before the climax. Playing with the classic Bildungsroman, Woolf even more drastically expresses the awkwardness of his cut-off life. The reader has an expectation of how the story should read from beginning to end, but we are only given beginning to somewhere indefinable in the middle. The Bildungsroman form was commonly used in British literature, years before the war, but also directly prior to the war. Woolf, in just altering a classic novel chastises her culture. You want the story to achieve this ending, but it cannot! For the story is too sick to achieve a successful finish; it can only end in death. We can link young Jacob dying in the war, Jimmy dying in the war, and the position of the narrator's hostile Cambridge speech. Each are misplaced or as the narrator states, ships adrift. Each person, or in the case of the narration of King's college - a passing thought, is left incomplete or set

adrift. We will never get the desired ending or a linear plot flow because society has failed.

We have discussed how the narrator is overtly hostile and how the narrator interrupts the text. We have begun to look at how Woolf criticizes her culture in using the Bildungsroman form. But let us further develop that exploration. We find another censure by the narrator when she comments on books. We see the narrator give an opinion on literature but our protagonist shares a completely different opinion. The inability to link the narrator to other characters or the plot, because of the narrator's post-war position, further aggravates the reader and promotes a tone of anger and frustration. The narrator says, "It is the same books. What do we seek through millions of pages? Still hopefully turning the pages" (WJR 122). The narrator expresses her usual skepticism, asking can we believe what we read. The narrator asks this question, already knowing that we cannot. She condemns Jacob, a pre-war man for his faith in what he reads. Jacob, in contrast to the skeptical narrator, defines himself by what he reads. Jacob's nature, which the narrator rebuffs so strongly, could be the most frustrating issue the narrator points out. We learn through the narrator to question the validity of written words, yet Jacob does not. He trades his personal identity for an identity created by the "great men", the same great men whose ideals lead to war. Each story he reads secures his view of himself. We see him reassure his civilized greatness when reading *Phaedrus*. "The *Phaedrus* is very difficult. And so, when at length one reads straight ahead, falling into step, marching on, becoming (so it seems) momentarily part of this rolling, imperturbable energy" (WJR 138). But, as we have seen, the narrator presents the opposite. Each story make her less satisfied, less sure, more skeptical. These opposing

¹⁷ Zwerdling. "Jacob's Room: Woolf's Satiric Elegy" (898), hereafter Zwerdling

views continue in Jacob's rebuff of the Moderns. This scene is intrinsically comical due to Woolf's status as a Modern. Jacob says to Fanny, "For the moderns were futile; painting the least respectable or the arts; and why read anything but Marlowe and Shakespeare, Jacob said, and Fielding if you must read novels? (WJR 154)" We know that neither Woolf, nor the narrator, believes this. For, she in fact is a Modern who at times is quite critical of classics such as Shakespeare and Marlowe. As for painting, we know from Woolf's correspondence, she was a great friend and fan of the artist Roger Fry¹⁸. What is Woolf doing by presenting us with a protagonist, who would not even read the very book that shares his name? Woolf wants us to question her protagonist, his opinions. She creates a tension between pre-war and post-war, showing her frustration with the inevitability of war.

Furthermore, one could argue that that our narrator acts like a soothsayer, predicting a future of pain and death. These predictions taint the tone of the novel. Even moments of great joy in the novel foreshadow destruction. For example, the narrator goes through a seemingly long torrent on night turning to day. It appears to be at first just another random thrust of opinion but in fact here the narrator brutally demonstrates how life before the war could only result in death. The narration actually discusses how life on the home front has changed because of the war. The narrator echoes, "People still murmur over the last word said on the staircase, or train, all through their dreams" (WJR 207). Perhaps a woman dreams of the last words her love has whispered before departing for the night. But perhaps this same woman dreams of the last words her love has whispered before departing for war. We cannot be sure, but given the precedence,

¹⁸ Fry is an artist associated with the Bloomsbury Group to which Woolf was apart. He was both an impressionist and post-impressionist artist along with an author and a critic. Woolf writes frequently to Fry.

the latter certainly seems justified. We know our narrator to be hostile and suggestive. The double meaning presented here would comply with her personality. Furthermore, the narrator in finishing this long speech comments, “daily life is better than the old pageant of armies drawn out in battle array upon the plain”(WJR 208). I think this solidifies the belief that this passage is about the reality of war and the annihilation of life in The Great War. Furthermore, it brings to light another way in which Woolf reproaches pre-war society through her aggressive narrator.

The narrator comments about the “pageant of armies”. Prior to WWI people glorified war. They used nation symbols like “sunrises and sunsets, already a staple of prewar Georgian poetry and the literature of the Celtic “Twilight,” move in the very center of English poetry”(Fussell 55) to express the greatness of British civilization. But these two once beautiful symbols of English writing, during The Great War were perverted. The narrator similarly perverts night and day in her torrent. Fussell writes, “It was a cruel reversal that sunrise and sunset, established by over a century of Romantic poetry and painting . . . should now be exactly the moments of heightened ritual anxiety.” The narrator exposes crucial literary symbols as diseased like the rest of society. The fate of these symbols during and after the war was, as Fussell states, to express pain and no longer the greatness of civilized Britain.

Anger and alienation are not only established by the narrator but they are established by the characters’ narratives as well. The characters contradict and misunderstand each other. This represents the other side of our arc. If there is the constant presence of anger and an omniscient narrator there must also be dissonance between character relationships. In *Jacob’s Room* we are not able to relate to or

understand the characters. This strategy will be further developed in *Mrs. Dalloway*, as Woolf moves away from an angry narrator as a guiding force to communicating post-war London and moves towards character development. Alex Zwerdling suggests, "The narrative unit . . . is not obviously connected to the one before or after. The effect is extremely economical and suggestive but at the same time frustrating for an audience trained to read in larger units and look for meaning and coherence" (Zwerdling 897). We witness narrative contradiction at first in debate about the character of Jacob. Mrs. Durrant, upon seeing Jacob for the first time thinks, "He is extraordinarily awkward, noticing how he fingered his socks. Yet so distinguished – looking" (WJR 74). Miss Fanny Elmer thinks, "She thought how young men are dignified" (WJR 148). And again, we see Mrs. Durrant change her mind, or actually addend her opinion when she states, "'distinction' – Mrs. Durrant said that Jacob Flanders was 'distinguished – looking.' 'Extremely awkward,' she said, 'but so distinguished-looking' Seeing him for the first time no doubt the word for him" (WJR 85). What is it? Is he distinct or dignified or distinguished? Though the difference is slight, each word promotes a different understanding of Jacob. Distinct prompts an image uniqueness or originality. Dignified leads one to think of a person who carries himself with pride, sometimes with respect to rank. Finally, distinguished conveys a sense of respect accorded by others due to excellence. Besides these differences, one more time, Sandra suggests that Jacob is, "So distinguished looking – and yet so awkward". (WJR 197) Sandra inverts distinguished with awkward. Therefore, she presents him as more distinguished and less awkward. Which representation of Jacob is correct? Which narrator presents the most

definitive encapsulation of his character? We cannot piece the parts together to form, as Zwerdling puts it, a coherent reading. What effect does this have on the text?

Added to the hostile tone already set by the narrator, the effect of these slight but crucial differences is an alienated and frustrated text, a text where characters do not understand each other. This is further emphasized in a scene in which Mrs. Flanders receives a letter from Jacob. But as for Jacob's character, "Not a word of this was ever told to Mrs. Flanders; nor what happened when they paid the bill and left the restaurant, and walked along the boulevard"(WJR 160). Jacob avidly writes his mother, Mrs. Flanders. He attempts to portray his life while abroad, but he cannot tell her all. He does not want to, nor can he express his true emotions in words. Yet, Mrs. Flanders, for a while, believes that Jacob gives her a clear picture of himself. Woolf writes, "Jacob had nothing to hide from his mother. It was only that he could make no sense himself of his extraordinary excitement"(WJR 166). To this letter, Mrs. Jarvis replies, "Jacob's letters are so like him". And though his mother hesitates before she agrees with Jarvis' assessment, she only "paused, for she was cutting out a dress and had to straighten the pattern". Jacob's letters, as we learn from the omniscient narrator¹⁹, are not honest. Woolf criticizes Jacob's inability to relay information to his mother and Mrs. Flanders' gullibility in believing she knows her son. We should not believe Jarvis and Betty Flanders' perception of his letters. In fact, Mrs. Flanders eventually catches on. "And Betty Flanders even now suspected it, as she read his letter, posted at Milan 'Telling me,' she complained to Mrs. Jarvis, 'really nothing that I want to know'"(WJR 177). Mrs. Flanders first misunderstands Jacob and then learns that she cannot believe his

communications. They do not tell her the information she really wants to know. Mrs. Flanders cannot retrieve a real picture of her son because either she has created her own image of him, or cannot obtain the information necessary for that real picture. She, Betty, complains about her frustration. She cannot learn of Jacob and either can we as readers. Her complaints are our complaints. We understand the anger but not the character.

The situation directly relates to post-war London. Though misunderstandings between people existed far before the war, the war emphasized a particular kind of misunderstanding. Jacob's mother believes she knows Jacob but she does not. Similarly the home front believed they knew their soldiers. The government would have rather lied to the public than expose British society's deathly illness. And Woolf in Jacob's Room again criticizes Jacob or the information source (which was the government in WWI) for its fear of expressing the truth and Mrs. Flanders or the public for its gullibility. The home front believed the soldiers were fine. Post cards were sent acknowledging health and well-being, stating that life at battle was satisfactory. But as more and more cards were sent home, people soon learned that each card was similar if not the same. The home front received information, but not the information needed. Personal touch was censored from these post cards, destroyed. The Field Service Post Card was a pre-fabricated form, where soldiers were just to circle phrases applying to their situation. If one reads the phrases closely, they all say the same thing. Heading the Post Card is a statement that reiterates the need to censor emotion. "Nothing is to be written on this side except the date and signature of the sender. Sentenced not required

¹⁹ Yes, perhaps one can argue that I have suggested that we are not to believe the narrator, so why believe her here? Point taken, but the Jacob himself tells us that he has not written it all down. So we are to believe

may be erased. If anything else is added the post card will be destroyed".²⁰ We cannot get to the root of our characters because the modes necessary to understand are blocked. Like a chain locked door. You cannot open the door enough to make out the shapes for sure. The blocked, locked door impairs your vision and your ability to achieve the information necessary to identify each object. Pulling harder does not increase your frame of vision, and you can try all day. You only achieve a sore arm.

We have discussed how the narrator disjoins the text and aggravates us as readers therefore injecting an angry tone. We have also discussed how the inability of characters to understand and communicate with each other adds to this disjointed feeling and further alienates us as readers. This too contributes to the production of an angry tone. These aspects of the novel seem grounded in Woolf's discussion of issues or problems that her society suffers through - one issue, being the war. But there remains one other way in which Woolf advances her anger about the war by way of *Jacob's Room*. She attacks institutions, generally through her narrator, without clear purpose or without fully developing her anger with these institutions. Often the anger is hypocritical, taking a stance against one ideal or institution and then the opposite ideal or institution. The narrator just lets loose wrath against forms of organization.

We have seen this occur with the narrator's attack on King's college. Here Woolf attacks the patriarchal institution of education. She suggests that education, as it stands, does a great injustice to women. But this commentary, when compared with the

the narrator in this situation. Her information has been corroborated.

²⁰ The Field Service Post Card stated information such as, I am quite well. And then a soldier could choose to include I have been admitted in to the hospital and am either, going on well or and hope to be discharged soon. Or I am being sent down to the base. (Fussell 14) quote from Fussell. (144).

narrator's bashing of a feminist, appears hypocritical, or again, out of place. The narrator describes Julia,

What was she seeking through millions of pages, in her old plush dress, and wig of claret-coloured hair, with her gems and her chilbains? Sometimes one thing, sometimes another, to confirm her philosophy that colour is sound or, perhaps, it has something to do with music. She could never quite say, though it was not for lack of trying. And she could not ask you back to her room, for it was "not very clean, I'm afraid," so she must catch you in the passage, or take a chair in Hyde Park to explain her philosophy. (WJR 132)

Julia is completely disordered. She has no audience, no adopters of her philosophy; she cannot even explain her philosophy to herself. Furthermore, her room, that room of her own, is too messy to work within. Here, Woolf's narrator strangely attacks feminism. Many critics view Woolf as a feminist, who pushed for women's rights. Why would she attack one of her own? Why would Woolf script a feminist as such when she is working for women's equality? The narrator presents "educated like Julia and then also believes men incorrectly view women. It looks to me that the narrator describes Julia correctly. She behaves quite like a dog. She cannot put a complete sentence together and has no concern for order. How can Woolf call for equal education in the King's college speech but negatively critic feminists? Woolf does not answer these questions for us. She attacks without sure reason or solution.

The narrator does not quit with these two attacks. She even challenges the institutions of marriage. For example, the narrator hints at Captain Barfoot's romantic activities with Mrs. Flanders. We also, though not animated by the narrator, have the prominence of prostitutes in the novel as well as Mr. Bonamy's homosexuality. Nobody in the book is happily married or sexually satisfied. We find a scene which takes up this issue of "correct" sexual relations between Florinda, Jacob, and through the narrator, Jacob's mother. In this scene Jacob and Florinda are having sex while the narrator contemplates Mrs. Flanders' response to the affair. Uniquely, the narration of Mrs. Flanders' thoughts comes from her position as a letter. She looks on through the words she has penned and sent to her son, left till later to read.

But the pale blue envelope lying by the biscuit-box has the feelings of a mother, the heart was torn by the little creak, the sudden stir. Behind the door was the obscene thing, the alarming presence and terror would come over her as at death, or the birth of a child. Better, perhaps, burst in and face it than sit in the antechamber listening to the little creak, the sudden stir, for her hear was swollen, and pain threaded it. My son, my son – such would be her cry, uttered to hide her vision of him stretched with Florinda, inexcusable, irrational.²¹

Though she is not there, perhaps her morality diffuses through the air. The narrator tells us, in real time, as the couple fornicates, what Jacob's mother thinks. We judge as she tells us of her judgements. Perhaps, she exists in Jacob's head, her morality, as he

partakes in sexual acts. Nevertheless, he still has sex regardless of what his mother or his morality may wish. Jacob's mother cannot believe Jacob has sex with that sort of woman. Why does a boy like Jacob need to find intimacy with a prostitute? Why do relationships with women not provide Jacob with appeasement? What possibly could Woolf be doing by attacking, through the narrator and her characters, the institution of marriage? Obviously Jacob's mother thinks Jacob improperly behaves, yet she too attracts the wrong type of mate. She says, "Yes, enough for fish-cakes to-morrow certainly – "Perhaps Captain Barfoot" – she had come to the word love." (WJR 19) She, though not openly, has an affair with Captain Barfoot. Is this behavior acceptable? Captain Barfoot has a wife. His wife even knows of the relationship: "Mrs. Barfoot knew that Captain Barfoot was on his way to Mrs. Flanders" (WJR 27). Why must he cheat on his wife? Lastly, how does this attack fit in with the other two seemingly incongruent outbursts?

Again, Woolf shows dissonance and does not say why it exists. The narrator just blurts anger out. The narrator is so bitter because she knows that the characters in Jacob's Room are setting themselves up for destruction, yet the narrator cannot show where the problem lies! Furthermore, attacks on institutions demonstrate Woolf's continuing inability to see the possibility for change in her world. She cannot present clear reasons or any solutions. In the end, we feel even alienated from our own emotions which in turn again makes us ask, what is important? Robert Graves in his retelling of S. Sassoon's letters explains the situation best. Grave stands in similar position as the narrator. He publishes his war book post-war. He writes about the failure of institutions

²¹ Woolf. *Jacob's Room* (115) In this scene Jacob's mother is not truly present. She has sent Jacob a letter and he has left it unread out side his bedroom door. The narrator is relaying to us what she might say if she

as well and how there was no place to turn with your anger and distress. He writes of Siegfried Sassoon,

Yet, in the very next sentence, he wrote how mad it made him to think of all the good men being slaughtered that summer, and all for nothing. The bloody politicians and ditto generals with their cursed incompetent blundering and callous ideas would go on until they were tired of it or had got all the kudos they wanted.²²

After all of that death, who can you believe - not the politicians, not some rule book. We know the experts messed up but cannot say why or how to fix the mistakes. You do not know what to do with your anger; you can see no possibility for escape. Jacob dies in the end and no institution of education, feminism or marriage could save him.

We have seen how Woolf has critiqued pre-war London by recreating the tone of post-war London by way of her invasive narrator. The narrator has used overtly hostile language, disjointed and interrupted the text. She has offered alternative views from the protagonist, therefore showing the protagonist's misguided pre-war ways, and has critically berated pre-war society, showing as a soothsayer that the culture's illness could only result in death. If we have the presence of a pushy omniscient narrator, we must also have the presence of hazy characters. We have seen that characters do not really understand each other. No one really knows Jacob, not even his own mother. Lastly we have seen Woolf furiously but not clearly and often hypocritically attack institutions. She has written about the war with anger, anger and skepticism about the

were there and aware of what was occurring. Important also to note, that Florinda is a prostitute.

²² Graves. *Good-bye to All that* (230), hereafter Graves

way of the world that she now lives in. But this center of anger will not exist forever. Woolf moves with time from this dark place, to a place of light, a place where light shines through even in the stormiest of nights. As she moves away from anger, her writing style also changes. She changes from utilizing an aggressive pervasive narrator to utilizing characters to tell their own stories.

Chapter II

“Those five years – 1918 to 1923 – had been, he suspected, somehow very important. People looked different”(WMD 108). Peter Walsh notices, as he sits on a bench in Hyde Park, London looks different and people look different due to the war. And by the time Woolf writes her book, *Mrs. Dalloway* in 1925, but which takes place in 1923, (a year after the publication of *Jacob’s Room*) even more had changed. Woolf writes, *Jacob’s Room* was “a necessary step . . . in working free. Mrs. Dalloway was to be more close to the fact than Jacob”²³. Woolf notes retrospectively, though closer to the source (the war), *Jacob’s Room* was further from the “fact” As we push through *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf employs a different and for our sake, more progressive strategy when compared with *Jacob’s Room*, to explain the world around her. Though you can still sense the underlying hostility in the novel and even a criticism of pre-war culture, anger does not dominate your reading experience.

Woolf’s strategic changes in *Mrs. Dalloway*, can be seen when viewed against *Jacob’s Room* and later, *To the Lighthouse*. The omniscient narrator does not overtake your reading experience. Though we will find an omniscient narrator, this narrator is not nearly as pushy as our narrator in *Jacob’s Room* (yet much more forcible and recognizable than in *To the Lighthouse*). Like *Jacob’s Room*, we will find characters that do not understand each other. This issue is more prevalent than the issue of a pushy narrator. In fact, the book’s narratives do not center around one protagonist, but two. These two protagonists have no physical contact with each other; they do not know each other. Yet, we cannot get the full picture of Woolf’s world if we do not have both

²³ This information comes originally from Woolf’s Diary (Diary 2, 208, 207-208). But I first encountered the information in Levenback. *Virginia Woolf and the Great War* (45), hereafter Levenback

stories. So what can we make of her choice to split the whole picture in two? Besides the two protagonists, we also find supporting characters misunderstanding each other. Lastly, in her quest to come closer to fact, Woolf reformulates her random attacks on institutions, to focused discussions about people's reliance on empty seats of power. As we explore these issues, we will see how Woolf's style has changed with her changing attitudes towards the war.

We begin with the narrator. We can find a shade of our narrator in Jacob's Room here in a speech about mental health.

To his patients he gave three-quarters of an hour; and if in this exacting science which has to do with what, after all, we know nothing about – the nervous system, the human brain – a doctor loses his sense of proportion, as a doctor he fails. Health we must have; and health is proportion; so that when a man comes into your room and says he is Christ (a common delusion), and has a message, as they mostly have, and threatens, as they often do, to kill himself, you invoke proportion; order rest in bed; rest in solitude; silence and rest; rest without friends; without books, without messages; six months' rest; until a man who went in weighting seven stone six comes out weighing twelve.

(WMD 149-150)

The narrator is extremely critical of Sir William Bradshaw. She dictates Bradshaw's whole profession reeks from a foul smell. Stating, there cannot be a science to mental health because mental health remains unexplored by science. In addition, this speech

evokes the same reader response as the King's college speech. We become heated, either because the ignorant man or the agitated narrator angers us. The text becomes alienated yet again.

A huge difference exists between the two texts. The placement of this speech makes sense, unlike the King's college speech where a critique is placed right in the middle of a train ride and lunch. This speech comes right after Rezia and Septimus visit Sir William Bradshaw. They could be pondering the same thoughts our narrator ponders and relays. Bradshaw does not handle Septimus' situation the way Rezia, the narrator and most likely, the way Woolf would like. Bradshaw had said, "He was not mad was he? Sir William said he never spoke of "madness"; he called it not having a sense of "proportion" (WMD 146). A lack of proportion can be easily treated with rest. But Septimus does not have a lack of proportion; he has shell shock. No amount of rest in solitude can fix this problem. In fact, no one knew how to fix that problem. This disease, still common after soldiers return from war, distorts reality and impairs the mind. Karen DeMesster in her article, "Trauma and Recovery in Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway" writes, "Trauma inevitably damages the victim's faith in assumptions he has held in the past about himself and the world and leaves him struggling to find new, more reliable ideologies to give order and meaning to his post-traumatic life"²⁴. He has not lost his sense of proportion because he does not seek a return to an older way of life. We experience a similar opinion by the narrator of *Jacob's Room's* in her critique of pre-war culture. War and madness resulted from that culture, so why go backwards? The world prior to the war cannot satisfy Septimus; he therefore creates new rules and new ideologies.

The speech also directly links to Septimus' delusions. This again is unlike the speeches in *Jacob's Room*. For example, the letter/marriage speech given by the narrator in place of Jacob's mother does not correlate with Mrs. Flanders' actual sexual behavior. Though she verbally condemns sexual acts with prostitutes, her own "affairs" are not so pure. She is carrying on with a married man. In *Mrs. Dalloway* there is a direct relationship between speech by the narrator and action. The narrator does not use double-talk or ask the reader to be skeptical, as she does with the night and day speech in *Jacob's Room*. The narrator describes Septimus' actual situation: "says he is Christ (a common delusion), and has a message" (WMD 150). Septimus believes he has a message to share from G-d to the world. The narrator almost echoes Septimus when Septimus says, "Men must not cut down trees. There is a God. (He noted such revelations on the back on envelopes.) Change the world. No one kills from hatred. Make it known (he wrote it down). He waited"²⁵. Septimus shares the "common" delusion, which possibly could be the common delusion shell-shock men in general share, he has a message to send out from G-d. The narrator speaks of any man, but this any man happens to be the same as Septimus. Though we feel intense anger in this speech along with the narrator and Woolf, the anger seems guided, not blind and overbearing as in *Jacob's Room*.

There also exists a tight connection between the narrator's views on mental health and Woolf's views. She too was unsatisfied with the way mental health was evaluated and handled. Being bi-polar, her life control was at the mercy of these

²⁴ DeMeester. "Trauma and Recovery in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*" (49), hereafter DeMeester

²⁵ Woolf. *Mrs. Dalloway* (35) Septimus writes down his observations because he thinks they will lead him, and if publicized, the whole of the world to a new order. This correlates with DeMeester's explanation of war trauma. The victim loses faith in the old order and needs to replace it with a new sense of direction.

gentlemen, these scientist who did not even know about the science they practiced. In *Jacob's Room's*, commentary on books, Woolf's narrator and protagonist do not agree. The narrator and Jacob in fact, disagree. This added to the general tone of anger and confusion in the novel. Here, the narrator and protagonist are in agreement which alleviates a bit of the angry tone within the scene.

We see how the omniscient narrator exists in the novel but not as dramatically as our omniscient narrator in *Jacob's Room*. But Woolf has not reached reader/character closeness. In this novel misunderstandings take the foreground as the narrator drops back. Yet, the characters create a different impression than our previous characters. There are two kinds of misunderstanding in this novel opposed to just the one in *Jacob's Room*. We have misunderstanding between characters (like in *Jacob's Room*) and then the lack of understanding of a single character, needing two characters to completely understand one (i.e. Septimus and Clarissa). We need both of their stories to understand post-war London. One would not suffice. We will explore misunderstanding between characters first, as it is the simpler of the two subjects to tackle. We will see three types of misunderstanding between characters, inability to understand what has happened or the pre-war man, total denial of past events, and lastly inability to express what has happened due to faulty listeners.

The exploration of a pre-war understanding of the post-war takes precedence in a particular scene involving Septimus, Rezia and Peter. Peter, having "missed" the war is still convinced of life's greatness and still extols great seats of civilized power. Rezia and Septimus are sitting in the park. Septimus begins to hallucinate. He believes he sees

Evans, a fallen soldier he fought with, come towards him. Rezia does not know what to do with him as he scream out loud, "stop do not come". And Peter Walsh, who happens to be passing by, states, "And that is being young, Peter Walsh thought . . . To be having an awful scene – the poor girl looked absolutely desperate . . . what had the young man in the overcoat been saying to her to make her look like that". He continues, "Never had he seen London look so enchanting . . . the civilization" (WMD 160). The civilization? Peter is completely unaware that the couple fights because Septimus is insane. He thinks he sees dead people. And this state, Septimus' insanity is due to war, a very civil war. Karen Levenback suggests that Walsh has "war-blindness,"²⁶(Levenback 54) but I would have to say that his lack of understanding goes further than a simple one-word definition can explain. Walsh is different than Clarissa, who just looks the other way. She cannot relate because she does not want to dive that far. Walsh represents a different type of misunderstanding. He is not just turning his cheek, or shutting his eyes. This assumes that Peter knows the truth but chooses to think something else. But I believe Peter has no idea what has really happened between the two lovers, or in the world for that matter. Peter seems to be almost of a pre-war mind set. He reminds me of Jacob who thinks that great men have created a great civilization. Remember that Woolf previously attacked this mentality through her narrator but now she continues the attack but now through Peter Walsh. We have Peter, who has not been in London for five years and over fifty. How can he accurately judge the behavior of a common young couple? Nevertheless, he assumes an opinion. Why does Peter not know what truly has occurred between Rezia

²⁶ She states that it was quite common for people to just put the blinders on and not think about the war. She states the Walsh notices changes but does not attribute them to anything out of the ordinary. Furthermore, she suggests the Walsh is out of touch with the situation in London. due to his life in India during the war.

and Septimus? The true fate of a young couple is replaced in the mind of the older generation, with a fabricated reality.

We see Walsh misunderstanding society again in the ambulance scene. Peter again presents us with a pre-war attitude. He believes any problem, such as illness, can be solved by civilization. Mordis Ekstien in *Rites of Spring*, brings to our attention this issue when he writes, "As the war called into question the rational connections of prewar world – the nexus, that is of cause and effect – the meaning of civilization as tangible achievement was assaulted"²⁷. What was once known has become unrecognizable. You cannot explain life, or as he suggests, believe that civilization can be equated with progress. The war ripped definitions and forms of order apart. Yet, Peter cannot put his finger on how the world has changed. Yes, he notices difference; women put makeup on in the park. But what he fails to notice is how order, as he knew it, has crumbled. He still thinks civilization is all mighty. This is evident in his strange reaction to an ambulance racing by to attend to Septimus' dead body. In fact, he is completely unaware of the suicide and his response to the blaring sirens of the ambulance deeply strikes at the core of this character's misunderstandings. He says,

It is one of the triumphs of civilization as the light high bell of the ambulance sounded. Swiftly, cleanly the ambulance sped to the hospital, having picked up instantly, humanely, some poor devil; some one hit on the head, struck down by disease,

²⁷Ekstein. (210), hereafter Ekstien. Ekstien continues to argue that order, old customs, and attitudes have been broken. He states the world pre-war, which followed closely a middle class, bourgeois ethic has been altered beyond recognition.

knocked over perhaps a minute or so ago at one of these crossings (WMD 229).

Again Walsh interprets the situation entirely wrong. First, the ambulance is not rushing to save someone. The man is already dead and he killed himself because of great all powerful and mighty society. Second, the ambulance did not speed to the scene. We know this because the sun is hot when Septimus kills himself, signifying early afternoon. Yet when Peter walks to Clarissa's the sun is setting. This is a June day, and the sun sets around six or seven in June. Therefore, this was no speedy ambulance.

Do you think that this is a triumph of civilization? Walsh's comments have two effects. One, the comment illustrates Woolf's issues with triumphant civilization in general. The civilization that created the ambulance also created the war. Civilization does not prove to be as triumphant as one would like to believe. We equate Walsh with a pre-war societal disposition, a disposition that allowed for if not created the war. Two, Woolf paints us a picture of a character that praises society, praises society with mistaken claims. This speaks to the character's lack of understand about the world around. Woolf does not want us to form affinity for Peter Walsh. We should view his claims negatively and from a silly, out-of-date, man. She does not build into her text a certain connection we as readers should feel with this character and as we progress, she does not build this connection with any of her characters in *Mrs. Dalloway*.

The second type of character misunderstanding is generated by a total denial of the world around. Upon beginning the novel we are struck with the war and Clarissa's denial of it. Clarissa fails to understand an issue most prominent to our other protagonist, Septimus. As Clarissa ventures down Bond Street in the simple search for the most

perfect flowers for her party later in the evening, she thinks to herself, “The War was over, except for some one like Mrs. Foxcroft at the Embassy last night eating her heart out because that nice boy was killed . . . but it was over; that Heaven – over” (WMD 5). The War may have been over but its effect lingered on the people of London had distorted their ability to communication with one and one another. Second, many people had lost loved ones, 8 million mobilized in Great Britain and 950,000 lost their lives, even though Clarissa herself had not. Clarissa is unaware of the pain in her world. She has “war-blinders”²⁸ on and, hiding behind them, she is unwilling to look at the way the war has changed her society, a society that Woolf will strive to show different now because of the war.

Clarissa’s inability to recognize change occurs most prominently with Miss. Kilman. We see this inability for characters to achieve closeness with each other again with Miss. Kilman. Clarissa understands the type of woman Miss Kilman is, but she cannot feel sorry for her. A character may want to help Kilman, as Clarissa thinks to herself, but feels herself too good to respect Kilman. And Kilman is too pathetic to gain sympathy. The narrator tells us of her, “She was over forty; and did not, after all, dress to please. She was poor, moreover; degradingly poor. Otherwise she would not be taking jobs from people like the Dalloways; from rich people who like to be kind” (WMD 186). Kilman has nothing, nobody to love her, no one too love. Again, Clarissa would like to help her, she says, but in actuality, Clarissa does nothing to help this woman because she feels nothing for her. The characters in the novel, Elizabeth and Clarissa end up loathing Miss. Kilman. We see in a scene with Elizabeth,

²⁸ Levenback uses the phrase in her novel.

It was he way of eating, eating with intensity, then looking, again and again, at a plate of sugared cakes on the table next to them; then, when a lady and a child sat down and the child took the cake, could Miss Kilman really mind? Yes, Miss Kilman did mind it? She had wanted that cake – the pink one. The pleasure of eating was almost the only pure pleasure left her (WMD 197).

Kilman would argue with a child for a piece of cake. She proves to be perhaps and enlightened woman but also a bitter middle aged woman. Clarissa cannot cut through the issues of class and appearance to listen to what Miss. Kilman has to say. This demonstrates the limits on Clarissa as a character. Miss. Kilman disgusting and poor, also talks about the war. “And she talked too about the war. After all, there were people who did not think the English invariably right” (WMD 197). Kilman’s controversial discussion of the war stands in opposition to Clarissa’s view, “that the war was over”. Clarissa would rather acknowledge Kilman as poor, bitter and obsessed with food than agree that she her presents a truth about the war. Clarissa’s hates Kilman because of Kilman’s class and position as a woman first, but also and perhaps secretly, Clarissa hates Kilman because she reminds Clarissa of what occurred only years before. Kilman not only obsesses about food, she also constantly talks about the war as well. Forgetting can be difficult when a Miss. Kilman knocks our war-blinders off.

The other type of misunderstanding that occurs in *Mrs. Dalloway* involves Septimus and Clarissa. To understand each character as individuals we must have the

other character's story. Like a melody and harmony, without the one, the song is not complete. *Jacob's Room* has one protagonist who cannot be known. *In To the Lighthouse*, Mrs. Ramsay dies but still can be known. Woolf engages with a different strategy in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Our protagonists can be known, but we have to hear both stories. One could suggest that to understand Mrs. Ramsay we must hear Lily talk about her. This is true, but Lily actually knows Mrs. Ramsay. Clarissa and Septimus have never met. Their stories, for the most part, exist independently of each other. Their dependence does not suggest character closeness, like in *To the Lighthouse*. It points out how limited each character is and how little each character understands about the post-war world.

The situation, which reiterates this point most effectively, is the suicide. Clarissa recognizes that the way she wishes to understand the world is not real. She would like to ignore the way war had changed her landscape, but cannot. Clarissa cannot express her realized disturbance. She keeps her new thoughts inside as her party takes shape below. But Septimus, on the other hand, does communicate his lost faith in "human nature". Clarissa can only say, "She had once thrown a shilling into the Serpentine, never anything more. But he had flung it away. They went on living (she would have to go back; the rooms were still crowded; people kept on coming) . . . Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate; people feeling impossibility of reaching the centre²⁹". Clarissa can only take the thought so far. Though, "She felt somehow very like him – the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away" (WMD 283). She did not do it. She

is unwilling to throw it all away. Not that she should commit suicide, but she had never thrown anything more but a shilling into the Serpentine. Nevertheless, Clarissa's interpretation of Septimus' death is essential in understanding both characters. The two though completely different, from gender, to age, to experience with the war, express together the same reality. Life has been disturbed, but no one can admit order has been displaced and restoration impossible. We do not learn the importance of his death without Clarissa. Likewise, we do not learn of Clarissa's shortcomings without Septimus.

Clarissa superficially views death as an interruption. Her party has been interrupted by the death of this man. Her daily life cannot continue in the same way. Finally, death has struck Clarissa and she feels what thousands had felt in the prior years. Similarly, his committing suicide is also an interruption of social reality. She suggests that death is defiance. In killing himself, Septimus works against the natural desire to live. As discussed previously, Septimus strives to create a new world order. He thinks before he jumps, "Life was good. The sun hot. Only human beings – what did they want?" (WMD 226) Life was good, only human beings – they ruined it. But his act cannot be qualified, we cannot see how humans "ruined it", without Clarissa mental empathy and her lack of action. For in her state of realization, she notices how life has been ruined but her party remains below. Clarissa cannot believe that her company sits and chatters in light of this man's death. Yet, in a few moments Clarissa herself will return to her position as the perfect hostess. She will restore order to her party as if no interruption had occurred. Clarissa returns to her traditional role, the

²⁹ Woolf. *Mrs. Dalloway* (280-281). Serpentine is a small lake or pond in Hyde Park. This place is significant to the novel because Clarissa recalls this scene in the beginning of the novel and Walsh,

woman she has always been, at the end of the novel. Septimus' death points out how thick Clarissa's war blinders could be.

Lastly, we will discuss the change in Woolf's view on institutions. In *Jacob's Room* Woolf blindly attacks all types of order. She bitterly develops full-blown arguments by way of the narrator, but the reason for these arguments seems underdeveloped. We know that she is frustrated but we are unsure of why. When Woolf examines seats of power in *Mrs. Dalloway*, she focuses her attacks. Though we still do not get a sense of how to rebuild wellbeing, Woolf suggests the cause of her frustration. Instead of the confused aggressive outbursts by our previous narrator, institutions are critiqued by looking at symbols and human reaction to these symbols. People invested all their power into the idea of these institutions, the order they once distributed became more important than human life. Post-war Londoners like Clarissa clung to what existed pre-war even though those definitions, those standards of life, were not sufficient. We will look at military technology, government and again marriage. The symbols we will discuss are in reference to the military a car moving down Bond Street in reference to the government and finally roses along with marriage.

In 1922 Derby, the Daily Mail³⁰ hired a plane to write "DAILY MAIL" in the sky. The spectacle drew a crowd of three million. But, the pilot needed ten minutes to complete the phrase and after five minutes the smoke would fade away. No one could be

Septimus and Rezia have all been sitting in the park as the day has unfolded.

³⁰ Newspaper

sure exactly what the plane wrote in the sky.³¹ In John Young's article he offers two explanations for Woolf's usage of skywriting. One, he suggests that it is meant to represent the consumer consciousness of post-war London. For our purposes, this suggests a London that is prone to buy. Perhaps, people seek meaning in objects that are tangible. One can see a glove, a dress. Their values plainly exist for any one to understand. Or, perhaps people buy material objects to replace the substantial ones – loved ones. The second explanation Young gives for the skywriting is "the aerial as also suggests the need for a collaborative reading" (Young 12). I disagree with both readings. First, the institution Woolf critiques may very well be capitalism, but it is also technology. Obsessions with technology grew out of the war and the airplane. The airplane was commonplace because of the growth in production during the war was one of these items obsessed about. It is this faith in technology, she wishes to attack. The plane in the air mesmerizes the people walking on Bond Street. They have no idea what the plane writes or why it is there, but into the air they all stare. Halting their individual daily activities, they give up their personal pursuits to this sign of "progress". Yet this sign of progress cannot give these people more than a moment of distraction. It does not bring them closer as a community, and if anything this scene presents how distant Londoners were from each other.

Young suggests the scene shows how people come together. But, I believe that it poignantly shows how people are unable to communicate with each other. We as readers

³¹ This historical information and the theory about commercialism in Mrs. D is taken from John Young's article in the *Explicator*. He received his historical information from E.S. Turner. The article will hereafter be termed, Young.

get the benefit of multiple interpreters of the letters but the characters in the book do not have this luxury.

But what letters? A C was it? An E then an L? Only for a moment did they lie still; then they moved and melted and were rubbed out up in the sky, and the aeroplane shot further away and again, in a fresh space of sky, began writing a K, an E, Y perhaps? Glaxo said Mrs. Coates . . . Kreemo murmured Mrs. Bletchly.³²

Who can be sure, A or C? Oh, the smoke disappeared. The people down the street cannot hear the woman up the street who saw the G now missing. The need for a collaborative reading to understand the whole text may be warranted, but it is impossible. The characters cannot see the whole picture; they cannot figure out the whole story. "Then they moved and melted and were rubbed out up in the sky," the memorizing ideals technology promises cannot be completed. It is destroyed before fruition.

One will notice that this argument, structurally and philosophically is very different from the attacks in *Jacob's Room*. First, Woolf does not use a narrator to critique, she uses character experiences with symbols. Also, Woolf provides us with a more insightful view into these institutions of power. Woolf expresses frustration with the memorizing and fleeting power embodied in technology, instead of just expressing frustration. We see this again when Woolf critiques the institution of government. We have a motor car: "Passers-by who, of course, stopped and started, had just time to see a

³² Woolf. *Mrs. Dalloway* (29) but the scene as I have defined it, contains the motor car and the airplane. Therefore, the whole scene covers pages 19-32.

face of the very greatest importance against the dove-grey upholstery, before a male hand drew the blind and there was nothing to be seen except a square of dove grey”(WMD 19). We again experience the established mesmerizing effect technology prompts in post-war London, which occurs with the airplane. Again, everyone stops what he or she is doing to glance at the motor car. Daily life has been interrupted. Clarissa sees everyone on the street turn towards the motor car as it drives along. She hears, “Was it the Prince of Wales, the Queen’s, the Prime Minister’s? whose face was it? Nobody knew”(WMD 20). Yet, this dispute does not revolve around disappearing letters, it revolves around who is in the car. The people wonder which government official it could be. Woolf criticizes the distance between these people and the seat of government. The public cannot see in and most likely the official cannot see beyond that grey curtain. Void of anger, this argument against the institution of government strays dramatically from the type expressed in *Jacob’s Room*. Though Woolf still does not provide a solution to the problem of distance, she does not blindly shake her finger at it either. Here Woolf chooses specific points of frustration to pass on towards the reader. She suggests that people are not empowered by the government but rather in awe of it. Furthermore, she suggests that the people and the government stand at a distance from each other, opposed to the government representing the people’s needs. In *Jacob’s Room*, this type of argument does not exist. Woolf knocks down all from of order, and although her arguments are developed, the reasons behind them are not. For example, in *Jacob’s Room* she argues for women’s entrance into King’s college, yet also argues against feminism³³. In *Mrs. Dalloway* we do not experience this type of hypocritical confusion.

³³ I am referencing the two attacks I looked at in *J’s Room* and those would be the King’s college attack

We have looked at how both technology and the government as seats of power are being examined by Woolf. The last “institute” of power I wish to examine is her criticism of relationships. We saw in *Jacob's Room* how the issue of relationships was treated like any other institution. The narrator, giving us inside information, demonstrated them as bunk. We noted the narrator's criticism of Jacob, through his mother's letter and Mrs. Flanders because of her affair with the Captain. Woolf tore the ideal of a “healthy” or stable relationship apart again, giving us no strong reason why to strike down and giving us no way to rebuild. Yes, we understand that something was very wrong, sick even, with pre-war London which resulted in war. But what the “thing” or things are, she cannot yet touch. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, she still does not come to a conclusion about how her society can be cured. Really, who could claim that? But she does present us with possible problems in her society, now that the war has finished. She does not just look at relationships in general and finds fault, she looks inside relationships and determines what that fault may be. Furthermore, this fault has become progressively less severe as the general arguments put forth by the narrator in *Jacob's Room*. Though we will sigh at Clarissa and Richard's inability to say the word love to each other. We will not shake our fingers at them in disgust, like the narrator of *Jacob's Room*. We have a scene in which Richard presents Clarissa with roses.

He thought, grasping his red and white roses together (a vast bunch in tissue paper), is the greatest mistake in the world. The time comes when it can't be said; one's too shy to say it, he thought, pocketing his sixpence or two of change, setting off with his great bunch held against his body to say straight out in

and the attack on Julia Hedge, which stands for an attack on feminism.

so many words . . . I love you. Why not? Really it was a miracle thinking of the war, and thousands of poor chaps; with all their lives before them, shoveled together, already half forgotten; it was a miracle (WMD 174).

Richard buys flowers to express his love for Clarissa in this passage. He knows that he cannot say the words himself, so he uses a token to express his affection. We have progress beyond the relationships in *Jacob's Room*. At least Richard can show that he loves her. But, then in this passage something else is occurring. While Woolf does not strike down the Dalloways' love like she strikes down the Flanders' love, she still criticizes. Richard comments that his inability to say, "I love you", to his wife is a mistake and at the same time, he mentions that war was a great miracle. Actually, as he continues to explain, his life when compared with those who are half forgotten has been a great miracle. He did not die like the others. In fact Richard thinks, "being simple by nature, and undebauched, because he had tramped, and shot; being pertinacious and dogged, having championed the down-trodden" (WMD 174). Richard has spoken for those who could not speak for themselves. Whereas everyone else, "He had no illusions about the London police. Indeed, he was collecting evidence of their malpractices; and those costermongers, not allowed to stand their barrows in the streets; and prostitutes, good Lord, the fault wasn't in them, nor in young men either, but in our detestable social system"(WMD 174). He blames the social system, thinking some outside force produced social disorder. Yet, Richard exists within the social system; he contributes to social disorder. He lives a blessed life, a "miracle" as he puts it. He loves when other men have died. Yet, when he gets home and gives Clarissa those flowers, "Bearing his

flowers like a weapon, Richard Dalloway approached her; intent he passed her . . . not that they would ever speak. But he would tell Clarissa that he loved her in so many words” (WMD 176). He still does not tell her. He finds fault with the social system, gives thanks for being alive and cannot tell his wife that he loves her. He acknowledges a problem and does nothing to change his behavior. And of course, can we blame him? No, it is society’s fault. Society, the government, technology has gobbled up his personal power. He surrenders his weapon to his captors.

We have explored in *Mrs. Dalloway* how Woolf’s writing style has changed from the style she utilized in *Jacob’s Room*. We have looked at an omniscient narrator that still expresses opinion, heated opinion at times, in the book. And we have also seen that this narrator is different than the previous one. The opinions of this narrator correlate with the opinions of the characters and most likely Woolf. Furthermore, this narrator’s speeches make sense in relation to the plot. When Septimus and Rezia leave Bradshaw’s we receive a speech about mental health. We do not get a random speech about education in between a train ride and a luncheon. Understanding between characters has also progressed. We have situations, like those in *Jacob’s Room*, where characters do misunderstand each other. Peter cannot figure out why Rezia and Septimus fight. Clarissa cannot accept post-war London as different or affected. Lastly, issues like class and politics do not allow characters in the book to understand each other, to the point where certain opinions on the war are blanked out. We also have a situation unlike *Jacob’s Room*. We as readers can derive a whole picture of who the protagonists in the book are. But we can only understand Clarissa and Septimus when we are privy to both of their stories. Alone, you could not accurately conceive of these characters’

personalities. Finally we have seen how Woolf's attacks on institutions have become more focused. She hints at why power centers failed, opposed to just pointing out their failure. And though she does not come to any sort of conclusion on how to rebuild she does suggest what needs tending. In *To the Lighthouse*, we will continue to engage with Woolf's stylistic changes with time and movement away from the war.

Chapter III

Woolf's style, by this point has truly changed, even from *Mrs. Dalloway*. John Burt suggests, "Woolf returns not to the facts, but to the fictional conventions of Realism . . . But it is neither a realist novel nor a work of reactionary nostalgia, for then it would be a novel about delusion³⁴". Woolf returns to a stylistic form that advocates character narratives not to look fondly back at the past, but to look with promise into the future. Burt continues, "the return (at times, to realist conventions) embodies what control Woolf is able to exercise." In this novel Woolf attempts to regain control of the world around her. We can hardly find a sign of Woolf's emotionally out of control and pervasive narrator. In fact we find the omniscient narrator in only one section of the novel. That section is the middle part of the novel that time wise corresponds with the years when the war took place. Even here, the narrator is not angry or frustrated with the world around her. She describes her world instead of judging it. She lets characters make judgements. Scenes displaying intense anger occur in this novel, but they occur in the character's narratives, not in narrator's narratives. This is another reason why we feel closer or seem to understand these characters more than we understood the characters of the previous two novels. Along with receiving their emotional stances, without interruption or disagreement from the narrator, we witness how these characters, from their own perspective, not the narrator's, understand themselves and each other. We will see how characters in this novel can accurately describe each other. Furthermore, to

³⁴ Burt. "Irreconcilable Habits of Thought in *A Room of One's Own* and *To the Lighthouse*" (889) and hereafter Burt

understand one character, we do not need the story of another. Unlike in *Jacob's Room* and *Mrs. Dalloway* when one of our protagonists dies, we are not left clueless nor do we need the story of another character to fill in the blanks. Lastly, we will see that Woolf still attacks institutions of order in the novel. But these attacks can be hardly claimed brutal. In fact I would term them explorations of order instead of attacks. The critiques occur within characters, not by pulling out and piecing apart institutions literally or through symbols. Continuing, Woolf seems to find a spark of hope about the direction in which her society ventures. These power centers do not loom so large and the problems she identifies in *Mrs. Dalloway* (blind faith in institutions) may have solutions. Rebuilding can possibly take place. We see this most distinctly when Lily ponders Mrs. Ramsay's death. The world has come crashing down, but Lily can still move on. She can still complete her painting in the end. We also see this with our continuing exploration of how Woolf deals with "relationships" and or marriage in three post war novels.

Uniquely Woolf places the war at the middle of *To The Lighthouse*. Therefore, we experience pre-war, war and post-war time. This differs from our other two novels where the novel is either set pre-war to wartime and post-war. To gain an understanding of how the narrator functions in this novel, I deem that where the narrator shows up in time whether that be pre-war, war or war time, as defined by the novel, significant. The narrator shows up in a section of the novel, ironically named "Time Passes". Here time indeed does pass, without the Ramsay's³⁵. In the absence of their voices we get the voice of the omniscient narrator.

³⁵ The Ramseys are absent for two reasons. One, Prue, Andrew and Mrs. Ramsay have all died. Two, due to the war, the remaining family cannot vacation at the summer house.

Nothing stirred in the drawing-room or in the dinning-room or on the staircase. Only through the rusty hinges and swollen sea-moistened woodwork certain airs, detached from the body of the wind, crept round the corners and ventured indoors. Almost one might imagine them, as they entered the drawing-room questioning and wondering, toying with the flap of hanging wall-paper, asking, would it hang much longer would it fall? The torn letters in the wastepaper basket, the flowers, the books, all of which were now open to them and asking, were they allies? Were they enemies? How long would they endure? (WTL 190-191)

The narrator tells us plainly how the house looks with no one inside. And yes, we can see a hint of opinion expressed by this narrator. She envisions the air asking these books if they are friends or enemies. But this opinion is not attached to a judgement. The world during the war did ask who was friend and who was foe.

As the narrator continues, we think for a moment that she becomes the narrator of *Jacob's Room*, angry and bitter. The narrator deviates from this dialogue about "certain airs" and spits forth, "Night, however, succeeds to night . . . The autumn trees, ravaged as they are, take on the flash of tattered flags kindling in the gloom of cool cathedral caves where gold letters on marble pages describe death in battle" (WTL 192). We can see the anger about the war building up. War destroyed. Woolf suggests night succeeds only night – not day. But then, the narrator rights herself. She says,

Loveliness and stillness clasped hands in the bedroom, and among the shrouded jugs and sheeted chairs even the prying wind, and the soft nose of the clammy sea airs, rubbing snuffing, iterating, and reiterating their questions – ‘Will you fade? Will you perish?’ – scarcely disturbed the peace, the indifference, the air of pure integrity, as if the question they asked squarely need that they should answer: we remain (WTL 195).

The state of the world has gotten pretty awful, but what remains here, inside the house will survive. This narrator does not predict gloom and doom like the narrator of *Jacob's Room*. She also does not articulate a problem without answer as in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Though I do not believe Woolf presents us with a clear-cut solution to the dealing with and understanding the war, she does present us with a glimmer of hope, particularly through this rare insight by the narrator. Something inside of the Ramsay's house survives. Something could be linked to quite a few possibilities. It could plainly be linked to the house, and memories of childhood. Whatever that something is, it provides us with hope of better days.

The characters in the novel also put forth a hint of a solution to dealing with the time that has passed. As Woolf retrospectively looks at time that has passed, time that she has already documented in the other two novels, her approach again has changed. The characters in this book understand each other; they understand Mrs. Ramsay even after she has passed away. At this point Woolf can see the use of angry cultural criticisms apparent in *Jacob's Room* and still in *Mrs. Dalloway* have stopped being

sufficient ways to understand. Woolf writes after finishing *Mrs. Dalloway*, "It's life that matters! Enough of death" (WSD 8). With this mind-set she embarks out to write *To the Lighthouse*.

I would like to explore scenes in "The Window" and then related scenes in "The Lighthouse" to demonstrate how character interactions in this novel are different than the other two novels. We will see how a complete picture of each character can be derived without the presence of another character to complete the whole and how other characters in the novel understand these solid pictures. Furthermore in these conversations about character, we will also see how Woolf's "attack" on institutions has changed. Centers of order, like marriage and government are all examined but through the characters. This results in a less spiteful tone and a more fully developed discuss on why these institutions could not maintain the order they promised to create. Since her critique of people's faith in empty seats of power gravitates around her exploration of character, we will look at these two issues together. They do not need to be explored separately, as we viewed them in *Jacob's Room* and *Mrs. Dalloway*. Her exploration is entirely different and so will be our approach.

First, we will look at a scene in the beginning of the book in which James would like to go to the lighthouse and his father denies him that wish. We will see how these characters differ from the characters in both novels and most specifically *Jacob's Room*.

"But," said his father stopping in front of the drawing-room window, "it won't be fine" Has there been an axe handy or a poker, any weapon that would have gashed a hole in his father's breast and killed him, there and then, James would

have seized it. Such were the extremes of emotion that Mr. Ramsay excited in his children's breasts by his mere presence; standing, as now, lean as a knife, narrow as the blade of one, grinning sarcastically, not only with the pleasure of disillusioning his son and casting ridicule upon his wife, who was ten thousands times better in every way than he was (James thought) . . . 'But it may be fine – I expect it will be fine,' said Mrs. Ramsey (WTL 10-11).

From this small passage we can derive the identity of all three characters. Furthermore, we can see that each character understands the other. We learn here that Mr. Ramsay is a stubborn man who will not give into his children to appease them. He also will not tell his children any sort of lie to calm their anger. We further learn that James holds great hostility towards his father. Also important to note, we learn about James' opinion on his father from James' perspective, "James thought", not the narrator's perspective, like in *Jacob's Room*. James' opinion of his father further holds up with the other characters' opinions of Mr. Ramsay. We see Lily and Mr. Banks discussing Mr. Ramsay and they come to a similar conclusion as James. Lily says of Mr. Ramsay, "You have greatness, she continued, but Mr. Ramsay has none of it. He is petty, selfish, vain egotistical; he is spoilt' he is a tyrant"³⁶. Mr. Ramsay selfishly reigns, thwarting his young son's plans with out consideration. Mr. Ramsay could have explained that it is too dangerous to go to the lighthouse and as soon as the weather settles it would be okay to travel. But, no. He does not say this to his boy; he just says no. And Mrs. Ramsay must even out the

³⁶ Woolf. *To the Lighthouse* (40). Though this quote is spoken by Lily, Mr. Banks has asked Lily to think of Mr. Ramsay. He asks her opinion after sharing quite a negative opinion of his own.

situation. She says, “But it may be fine – I expect it will be fine”(WTL 11). We can determine that Mrs. Ramsay keeps the peace or order in this household. Mrs. Ramsay maintains this title for the other characters in the novel as well.

The critical anatomy that occurred in Jacob’s Room and even Mrs. Dalloway, does not exist here. Yes, Woolf is critical. John Burt suggests in his essay, “Irreconcilable Habits of Thought in A Room of One’s Own and To the Lighthouse”, Mr. Ramsay represents an older generation: “Mr. Ramsay, for instance, is a more or less tyrannical representative of the old order, and we see him time and time again demanding sympathy and support”(Burt 896). Woolf is criticizing this, pre-war generation for thinking problems have easy solutions, like just saying “no”. She criticizes Mr. Ramsay for his own personal traits but also the traits of his generation that he as a character embodies. For these traits, contribute to the “Time Passes” section of the novel, or the war. She argues that the seat of order, patriarchy, did not do its job correctly. This argument is different than the brutal attack on patriarchal education in Jacob’s Room or the mystifying power of the government in Mrs. Dalloway. James knows why he dislikes his father and he does not attribute blind faith to him. Furthermore, as we will see when we glance at “The Lighthouse” her criticism is alleviated by change.

When we glance at a similar scene in “The Lighthouse”, which takes place after the war, we will notice that James still dislikes his father, but something has changed. In a scene where James steers the boat in dangerous waters Macalister says, “‘He’s doing very well,’” said Macalister, praising James. ‘He’s keeping her very steady.’ But his father never praised him, James thought grimly”(WTL 303). James wants his father to

acknowledge him, not be so selfish and difficult to satisfy. James begins to criticize his father yet again, but his opinions are stopped short. "At last he said, triumphantly: 'Well done!' James had steered them like a born sailor" (WTL 306). After the time in the middle, the war, the losses, Mr. Ramsay can now assure his son. Woolf shows that although Mr. Ramsay may be tyrannical, he is capable of change and love. Since Mr. Ramsay represents a pre-war man, Woolf is suggesting the same about an older generation. They may have messed-up but change can happen. Hope can be reborn. Pre-war men in the prior two novels could not make that change.

In this scene we also have a third member. Cam takes the position Mrs. Ramsay once did. Upon hearing her father's praise Cam thinks, "For she knew that this was what James had been waiting, and she knew that now he had got it he was so pleased that he would not look at her or at his father or at any one" (WTL 306). Cam knows both her father and her brother, this does not occur in *Jacob's Room* or in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Like Mrs. Ramsay, Cam can predict how James will react to Mr. Ramsay. A sense of order through Cam, though different than the order in "The Window", has replaced that which was lost with Mrs. Ramsay's death and the war in "Time Passes". Woolf could not see the possibility for re-growth in either of her two prior novels.

We witness characters understanding themselves and each other again, in a scene with Mrs. Ramsay in "The Window" section of the novel. Mrs. Ramsay calls our attention to a paradox, a paradox that Woolf's narrator in *Jacob's Room* screams at with violence, but Mrs. Ramsay attempts to work through. Furthermore, Mrs. Ramsay knows the cause of her distress, while characters in *Jacob's Room* feel distress but think nothing of the cause. She states, while pondering the world around her, "There was

freedom, there was peace, there was most welcome of all, a summoning together, a resting on a platform of stability”(WTL 96). Mrs. Ramsay, here, feels that order, stability can be attained, but following this passage she suggests that it cannot. She asks, and here is the paradox,

How could any Lord have made this world? With her mind she
had always seized the fact that there is no reason, order, justice:
but suffering, death, the poor. There was no treachery too base
for the world to commit; she knew that. No happiness lasted;
she knew that (WTL 98).

Mrs. Ramsay recognizes the world enshrouds us with a veil called freedom and stability but truly the world is cold. Security fades away. And as she puts it, “no happiness lasted”. The other characters we have examined cannot discern this paradox. In *Jacob's Room* no real happiness exists. Characters' stories are interrupted in death before we can come to a point and judge where happiness may lie. Clarissa and Septimus can only take their thoughts so far. Clarissa notes a sense of desperation inside but cannot locate it. She projects her pain onto Septimus, suggesting his death took care of her responsibility to change and think about her world critically. Therefore she never deals with those dark existential thoughts that Mrs. Ramsay can deal with. On the other side, Septimus can see no way out. He cannot create those happy days, that as we will see, Mrs. Ramsay can.

Mrs. Ramsay can look at her world critically and create order in a mess of chaos. We see this in Paul and Minta's engagement: “Nobody else took him seriously. But

she³⁷ made him believe that he could do whatever he wanted. He has felt her eyes on him all day today, following him (though she never said a word) as if she were saying, 'yes, you can do it. I believe in you'" (WTL 119). Mrs. Ramsay knows that happiness is fleeting and the world has no order and no reason, so she creates her own. Furthermore, this is what Mrs. Ramsay is thinking, and he was correct; her eyes were on him all afternoon. Mrs. Ramsay helped Paul find purpose. She understands that he needs her help. The two characters understand each other, and together produce order, predictability and stability.

So if Woolf is praising Mrs. Ramsay for recognizing the state of her world and creating order in spite of that state, why does Mrs. Ramsay die? Why do Minta and Paul's marriage fail? Why do Mrs. Ramsay's dreams for her family vanish? And finally, how can we say that characters in this novel understand each other if all of Mrs. Ramsay's predictions end as predictions and never reality. As we explore the scene that compliments the scene involving Mrs. Ramsay wishing Paul and Minta married, the answers to these questions will become clear and these answers relate to the scenes involving Mr. Ramsay and James. There we learned that Mr. Ramsay's pre-war tyrannical ways could be changed after learn what those ways result in (war). We will explore how Lily from her post-war position understands Mrs. Ramsay though she has died and knows that her goals could not succeed. Mrs. Ramsay's dreams may not be the dreams that a healthy society requires. Furthermore Woolf criticizes Mrs. Ramsay's need for order that animates itself in her wishes for her loved ones. Woolf demonstrates the fragility of order (Mrs. Ramsay's order) and yet, also shows that order can be built through change.

³⁷ She is Mrs. Ramsay

One of Mrs. Ramsay's goals is marriage. Marriage has been disputed in the two other novels and is disputed here in *To the Lighthouse*. In this novel Woolf, though very slightly, suggests marriage may, as an institution of order by not always be empty. Lily says, she knew that Mrs. Ramsay had, "a mania . . . for marriage" (WTL 102). Mrs. Ramsay believes, "People must marry; people must have children" (WTL 92). Here again we see Woolf exploring relationships. We noted that an ideal of what a romantic relationship exists in *Jacob's Room* but none of the character abide by it. Therefore leaving the institution of marriage empty. Likewise, in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Richard must present Clarissa with roses to show that he loves her. He cannot say the words. His society and his own self will not allow the words to exit his mouth. In *To the Lighthouse*, Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay cannot say the word love either, but they do not need articles to demonstrate affection. "They disagreed always about this but it did not matter. She liked him to believe in scholarships, and he liked her to be proud of Andrew whatever he did" (WTL 102). They know each other, and though the word love may not come out, as a reader you feel it. You feel it when, "Mr. Ramsay, stumbling along a passage one dark morning, stretched his arms out, but Mrs. Ramsay having died rather suddenly the night before, his arms, though stretched out, remained empty" (WTL 94). Emotional progress has occurred. Characters are seen understanding and loving one another. Yet, though Woolf recognizes the possibility for stability in marriage, she also knows that this idea does not work for everyone.

Lily says, "It has all gone against your wishes. They're happy like that; I'm happy like this. Life has changed completely" (WTL 260). Lily understands what Mrs.

Ramsay desired. She knows also "Perhaps, had she lived, she would have compelled it"³⁸. But Mrs. Ramsay did not live. Through the war, her wishes died as she did. Woolf does not criticize Mrs. Ramsay harshly as she has other pre-war character of in the past. The other characters understand those wishes and almost fall victim to the road that they predict. But, Woolf does demonstrate that these wishes, and the path defined by Mrs. Ramsay, do not work. But work or not, one can still be happy. Lily's statement sums up what has occurred. Mrs. Ramsay's wishes did not come true but Lily accepts her fate, the Rayleys³⁹, accept their fate. And "They're happy like that". This relates directly to the end of the novel. In the end, Lily thinks of her painting, "It would be hung in the attic, she thought; it would be destroyed. But what did that matter? She asked herself, taking up her brush again . . . With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the center. It was finished" (WTL 310). Her painting may hang in the attic. No one may ever see it. But, she completed it. In the end she reaches a point that she may not have originally desired, but after time has passed, this point is enough. Her goal had changed. Lily alters her wished, a step the other novels do not see as possible.

We have seen that in *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf though still critical of the past society, pre war society, she sees a possibility, though slight, for change and growth. Here, she can see characters acknowledging the state of the world around them, not ignoring it, like Clarissa Dalloway. Woolf has moved stylistically from an angry narrator to cohesive character narratives, where the characters promote an understanding of each other and themselves. We have also seen that Woolf's attacks on institutions occurs

³⁸ It would be Lily's own marriage and perhaps the "righting" of Paul and Minta's marriage

³⁹ The Rayleys are Paul and Minta

through character narrative and not narrator outbursts. Thusly, though still intense, the anger has dropped out. These characters can recognize that mistakes have been made, institutions cannot provide order or peace, but they also note that peace and order is possibly achieved.

Conclusion

We have seen how Woolf's work has evolved both stylistically and philosophically over the course of the inter-war period. One may ask themselves, why is this change significant? So what if her work as altered? I would like to point out the significance of these changes in one way. By looking at Woolf's work in the manner that I have, a new perspective can be obtained.

Many critics, such as Levenback, DeMeester and Young look at the way a specific aspect of war or post-war culture invades Woolf's texts. And although Levenback explores many post-war novels by Woolf, she changes the aspect of war investigated as she changes novel. For example, when she explores Mrs. *Dalloway* she investigates denial. But when she focuses on the way Woolf express concern for the fate of her society. The results of treating her texts are as follows: first, it makes for a less valid argument; second, you can not draw out any general conclusions about Woolf or her novels and lastly, you have isolated a work by a writer whose works speak to each other.

Your argument becomes more valid when using a trajectory to trace stylistic and philosophical changes in Woolf's work because you have given the reader a reference point to qualify those changes. As I demonstrated in the introduction, the "meaning" behind Woolf's texts could be linked to any number of sources. When you look at an individual aspect of war in one novel you cannot necessarily even say that the aspect of interest to which you are looking is related to the war. For example, in *Jacob's Room*, Woolf may be mourning the death of those who died in war but she is also mourning the death of her brother. You have no reference point to judge what her "war" novels are

like, and when information about the war is being introduced. When you look at one aspect of war, in multiple novels, you do not need to prove that the aspect of interest is really about the war. You do not need to prove it because, *Jacob's Room* may be about Woolf's brother but *Mrs. Dalloway* is clearly not. Yet, the two novels share common threads, and those common areas revolve around the war. We have a reference point to war-related information and change in the information within the commonalities of the novels. A comparison makes the texts connect to the war with more validity.

Second, when you make statements about only one novel or relate information in your study to only one novel, you cannot prove any substantial points. I could always argue with these critics above in saying, so Woolf is interested in the war because she creates a shell shock victim in *Mrs. Dalloway*. How do I know that she is generally interested in the war and not just interested in mental health, or further, not just interested in shell shock as a phenomenon? What would the critic say to me in response? This again has to do with giving your reader a reference point to judge information. When you isolate texts you do not give your reader enough information or a point to judge that information.

Lastly, you cannot isolate the work of Virginia Woolf. Woolf's texts speak to each other. She has character that re-appear in multiple books. For example, we looked at the pre-war man. Jacob, Peter and Mr. Ramsay are all related to each other in the way that they view the world. We could not have made that connection between the three if we had looked at the novels separately. Furthermore, we could not have seen that Woolf often critiques her current society by looking at the failures of society past.

I would like to suggest that the style of argument I utilized allows you, the reader to, make accurate conclusions about Woolf and her work. We have seen Woolf investigate pre-war society to critique post-war society. We have seen that her interest lie in systems of order and power. Lastly, we have seen Woolf change narrative style to express philosophical change. The generalizations I have been could not be detected using a different technique and I believe they are all vital in understanding Woolf and the time in which she lived.

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