

**“The triumph of life over the well of tears”: history and
the past in selected novels of Virginia Woolf.**

by

Albertus Breytenbach

submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

M.A.

In the Faculty of Humanities

Supervisor: Professor David Medalie

University of Pretoria

Pretoria

October 2007

CONTENTS:

	Page
Acknowledgements	i
Abstract	ii
List of Abbreviations	iii
Introduction	1
<i>Mrs Dalloway: The triumph of life over a well of tears</i>	15
<i>To the Lighthouse: The triumph of life is a balanced portrayal</i>	56
<i>Between the Acts: Art challenges the well of tears</i>	90
Conclusion	124
List of Works Cited	130

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation towards my supervisor, Professor David Medalie, for his patience as well as his kind support and for guiding me throughout the course of my research in such a way that it was really a worthwhile learning experience.

Furthermore I would also like to thank my family, especially my sister – Mia Stone, whose support and encouragement helped me to persevere in the completion of this dissertation.

Finally I would like to express my gratitude towards the Principal of the college where I teach, Mr Andries van Renssen, and the Managing Director of the Abbotts Colleges, Mr Malcolm Law, for their considerate support and for allowing me the necessary time to complete this study.

Abstract:

As a modernist, Virginia Woolf aimed at the modernisation of existing forms of artistic expression. However, she was also a very historically aware author. Thus the main issues and questions that this dissertation aims at investigating are Woolf's views on, approach to and use of history and the past in three major novels: *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *Between the Acts* (1941).

After a brief exposition of some of Woolf's general views on history and inherited cultural constructions and how these contrast with traditional nineteenth and early twentieth century approaches to history, the argument progresses to explore history and the past in each of the three novels respectively. The choice of novels aims at reflecting something of the scope and range of her concerns with history and the past.

The chapter on *Mrs Dalloway* is mainly concerned with the manner in which Woolf deals with a profound historical event like the First World War and her dual vision of history as both a source of tragedy and as a form of assurance for the continuation of life. In the chapter dealing with *To the Lighthouse* as its main focus, Woolf's response to her personal past and the preceding cultural era will be explored, as well as her attempt to achieve a form of balance between the present and the past through artistic portrayal. In the discussion of the last novel Woolf wrote, *Between the Acts*, her response to history in the making and her views on how the course of history can be altered will be dealt with. Finally, the conclusion considers the implications of this study in the contexts of Woolf as a modernist and an experimental novelist and in the light of the critical views that perceive Woolf as inadequately responsive to history and social issues.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS OF TITLES

Mrs Dalloway – MD

To the Lighthouse – TtL

Between the Acts – BtA

Moments of Being – MoB

Introduction:

In her essay “Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown” Virginia Woolf makes her well-known assertion “that in or about December, 1910, human character changed”. She goes on to explain that she is not “saying that one went out into a garden, and there saw that a rose had flowered, or that a hen had laid an egg. The change was not sudden and definite like that. But a change there was, nevertheless; and since one must be arbitrary, let us date it about the year 1910” [*Collected Essays*, Vol. 1: 320]. What Woolf attempts to express through her assertion that “human character changed” is the inevitable crossover from one cultural epoch to the next. As an example illustrating her assertion she refers to the changed relationship between domestic employees and their employers: “the Victorian cook lived like a leviathan in the lower depths, formidable, silent obscure, inscrutable; the Georgian cook is a creature of sunshine and fresh air; in and out of the drawing-room, now to borrow the *Daily Herald*, now to ask advice about a hat” [*Collected Essays*, Vol. 1: 320]. With regard to the speed with which this subtle cultural change came about Douglas Hewitt remarks that “all ages doubtless seem to be moving fast to those who are living in them but the transformation in [the] half century from the late Victorian world to one recognizably like our own was vertiginous”; he illustrates this statement by drawing a series of comparisons:

in 1890 Queen Victoria still had a decade to reign and Gladstone had not yet formed his last administration; the internal combustion engine was a novelty and the aeroplane was not to be invented for another thirteen years. In 1940 Winston Churchill formed his National Government, British forces were evacuated from Dunkirk, and London was heavily bombed; penicillin was developed and work started on the giant cyclotron at Berkeley. In 1890 Thomas Hardy, who had been born ten years before Wordsworth’s death, had not yet published *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*; in 1940 Graham Greene, who [was] still writing, published *The Power and the Glory*. [Hewitt, 1988: 1].

Furthermore, Woolf also notes that as a result of this transformation “all human relations have shifted – those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. And when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics and literature” [*Collected Essays*, Vol. 1: 321].

It was the above-mentioned shift in human relations and the resulting change in religion, conduct, politics and literature that was the chief impetus for “various writers” from the early years of the twentieth century who “were sure that they were ‘Modernists’” [Hewitt, 1988: 1] to view “tradition [...] with suspicion” [Stevenson, 1998: 3], since they felt that the traditional approach to novel writing could not adequately reflect the change they perceived in human relations and society. As such these writers shared “the belief that a modernizing of forms and the reshaping or abandonment of traditions were necessary conditions of their art” [Stevenson, 1998: 3].

As one of these self-proclaimed innovators, Virginia Woolf drew into question the inherited wisdom regarding the construction of the novel itself, as well as the construction of character in the novel. In “Modern Fiction” she explains that in making use of the traditional form of construction for the novel

the writer seems constrained, not by his own free will but by some powerful and scrupulous tyrant who has him in thrall, to provide a plot, to provide comedy, tragedy, love interest, and an air of probability embalming the whole so impeccable that if all his figures were to come to life they would find themselves dressed to the last button of their coats in the fashion of the hour. The tyrant is obeyed; the novel is done to a turn. But sometimes, more and more often as time goes by, we suspect a momentary doubt, a spasm of rebellion, as the pages fill themselves in the customary way. Is life like this? Must novels be like this? [*Collected Essays*, Vol. 2: 107].

Instead she suggests that novelists should

record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall [in order to] trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight and incident scores upon the consciousness. [They should also] not take it for granted that life exists more fully in what is commonly thought big than in what is commonly thought small [*Collected Essays*, Vol. 2: 107].

The implications of the suggestions contained within the quotation cited above are, however, not only relevant to the construction of the novel. These remarks are highly suggestive of Woolf’s questioning attitude towards the cultural constructions of her society in general. Clearly she seems to question the idea that the real essence of life is contained “in what is commonly thought big”. Both as a modernist writer and as a woman, Woolf drew into question the accepted and inherited conventions of society. Years after the publication of “Modern Fiction”, Woolf investigates in another polemical

discussion, *Three Guineas*, society's culturally instilled tendency to make war. In this work she clearly draws into question accepted concepts and notions inherited from past cultural constructions. In the light of reasons for the waging of war based on patriotic nationalism she explains, for instance, how the “outsider” woman – in short any woman who means to change the course of history leading to war – should

make it her duty not merely to base her indifference [to the waging of war on patriotic grounds] upon instinct, but upon reason. When he says, as history proves that he has said, and will say again, “I am fighting to protect our country” and thus seeks to rouse her patriotic emotion, she will ask herself, “What does ‘our country’ mean to me, an outsider?” To decide that she will analyse the meaning of patriotism in her own case. She will inform herself of the position of her sex and class in the past. She will inform herself of the amount of land, wealth and property in the possession of her own sex and class in the present – how much of England in fact belongs to her. From the same sources she will inform herself of the legal protection which the law has given her in the past and now gives her. And if he adds that he is fighting to protect her body, she will reflect upon the amount of physical protection that she now enjoys when the words “Air Raid Precaution” are written on blank walls. And if he says that he is fighting to protect England from foreign rule, she will reflect that for her there are no “foreigners”, since by law she becomes a foreigner if she marries a foreigner [...] All these facts will convince her reason (to put it in a nutshell) that her sex and class has very little to thank England for in the past; not much to thank England for in the present; while the security of her person in the future is highly dubious [*Three Guineas*, 1938: 312].

Thus it becomes clear that for Woolf it was not possible to have an easy relationship with inherited conventions and traditional notions about art, culture and politics. Yet, on the other hand, she was a profoundly historically aware author, and history encompasses culture, politics and art.

Already in her very first novel, *The Voyage Out*, Woolf exhibits a concern with culture and politics and thus also covertly with history. David Bradshaw points out that this novel “is still too frequently undervalued [whilst] it is the novel in which the ethical strain of Woolf’s fiction is perhaps most ‘bald[ly]’ exposed”. In addition the “socio-political issues it embraces [...] the salient problem of the poor, the viciousness of patriarchy and the oppressiveness of the patriarchal family, the unrelenting determinism of the state, the iniquity of empire and the pervasiveness of militarism are all concerns to which Woolf returns again and again” [Bradshaw, 2000: 196]. Although *Night and Day* –

a novel in the tradition of the English novel both in construction and content (it deals with a problematic love interest as one of its main themes) – failed to refer to the First World War and vexed Katherine Mansfield into criticising it as “reek[ing] of snobbishness” [*The Letters*, Vol. 2: xix], all Woolf’s subsequent novels deal with history and the past on both the public and the private levels. *Jacob’s Room* has as a climax the sudden absence of the main character, killed in the Great War; *Mrs Dalloway* deals with the effects that war and personal history have on the individual, *To the Lighthouse* deals with both Woolf’s personal past and the change in society after the First World War; *Orlando* is a fictitious biography spanning several centuries; *The Waves* traces the lives of a circle of friends over several decades; *Flush* is the biography of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s spaniel; *The Years* is a family history, spanning the crucial era of cultural change between late Victorian Britain and the 1930s; and, finally, *Between the Acts* deals with a pageant depicting English history on the eve of the Second World War.

It seems then that, as an historically interested and aware modernist, Woolf was forced to negotiate her link to the past – a whole tradition of English literature and culture – with her sense of the advancement of new forms that she felt stood so crucially at the centre of art and society as a whole. This leads up to the focus of this dissertation: history and the past in selected novels of Virginia Woolf. Evidently Woolf was very historically aware, but at the same time, she would clearly advocate a different approach to history from the traditional British scholar of history at the beginning of the twentieth century. The more pressing issue that Woolf’s own stance brings to mind is how she then deals with history in her art. Clearly she was very interested in history and to judge from the themes of her novels outlined above, the past and history played a significant role in her creative output. Yet her fascination with the past becomes problematic if one considers her general rejection of traditional approaches to cultural representation. Before her own views regarding history and the past can be further investigated, however, it is perhaps necessary to give an overview of the traditional approach to the discipline of history, as it was practised in Britain in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in order to appreciate how and why Woolf draws the traditional history writing of her era into question.

By the second half of the nineteenth century, history as an academic discipline as it was practised in Britain – just like the research into the natural sciences – had much in common with the way the same discipline was practised in Europe. Thus Woolf's reaction to history as a discipline can be understood to be a reaction with relevance on a broader plain than just the local. To understand how history as an academic discipline came to be practised so similarly in both Europe and Britain one needs to understand and appreciate the contribution that Leopold von Ranke made to the study of history in the nineteenth century as well as the respective contributions of the positivist and empiricist schools of historical thinking.

Von Ranke was a nineteenth century German historian who changed the way scholars think about and study history. Before the age of Ranke history as a discipline did not have a separate existence from the state, its chosen version of history and its chosen form of religion. As such then history was seen as an interpretation of the national character of the state; specific religious schools of thinking were read into it and the interpretation of events was considered more important than the verification of sources. Ranke, however, took a different view of history: he had a desire to "show how it actually was" [Black & Macrauld, 1997: 38-40], in other words he did not simply want to interpret history, but through the use of valid sources to verify the correct facts and produce a clear picture of what had taken place. The result of this, however, is the necessity for a belief in a single universal history because "the belief allows historians to maintain that the historical account is an objective representation, connected to the standpoint of history itself [...] Ranke's 'assurance about the historian's objectivity' was predicated on belief in 'a single process' linking past and present'" [Megill, 1995: 159].

The great change which came over history as a discipline in the age of Von Ranke would not have been possible had it not been coupled with the immense expansion of the state bureaucracy at the same time. In Germany, Britain and elsewhere large collections of national records started to make their appearance which served as the basis for the new document-based history. As a result "empiricism [became] the dominant form of historical scholarship for much of the nineteenth century, and it produced a rash of huge books, or multi-volumed series, displaying a breathtaking amount of reading and research" [Black & Macrauld, 1997: 41].

But the nineteenth century would also see another great school of thinking linked with history and philosophy arise: Auguste Comte's positivism. John Tosh explains that “as a result of its immense strides in both pure and applied work, science enjoyed unrivalled prestige during the nineteenth century. If its methods unlocked the secrets of the natural world, might they not prove the key to understanding society and culture?”; thus positivism strove to “uncover the ‘laws’ of historical development” [Tosh, 2000: 109]. The method positivism advocated for the study of history was closely connected to research methods used in the natural sciences. According to positivism “the historian’s first duty is to accumulate factual knowledge about the past – facts that are verified by applying critical method to the primary sources; those facts will in turn determine how the past should be explained or interpreted. In this process the beliefs and values of historians are irrelevant; their sole concern is with the facts and the generalisations to which they logically lead” [Tosh, 2000: 109]. Comte's application of scientific methods to the study of society and his belief in the progress of civilization would prove to be vastly influential, even in spheres where it was ostensibly rejected.

The Victorian tradition of history writing can in retrospect be identified as a curious mixture between these two schools of thinking. British historians would claim to be rigidly empiricist, a position which they would maintain until after the Second World War, but in effect they exhibited positivist influences. British historians saw the history of Britain as a single history dealing with the steady development towards, what they saw as, the rational and enlightened world of the nineteenth century. This view stands central to the identity of Victorian Britain. These views were covertly embedded in historical works of enormous erudition. According to F.W Maitland (also Sir Leslie Stephen's biographer), Lord Acton, Regius Professor of History at Cambridge, had enough knowledge to write the twelve volumes of the *Cambridge Modern History* on his own. But despite all its great and deep-founded learning it remained an historical approach fundamentally limited, for it was restricted to administrative and political history or as Black and Macrauld name it: “a history of great events” [Black & Macrauld, 1997: 46]. Von Ranke himself wrote that “the spirit of modern times [...] operates only by political means” [Tosh, 2000: 73]. This lofty statement simply boils down to the Victorian historian E.A. Freeman’s simplified definition of history as “past politics” [Tosh, 2000:

73]. As a result, “the claim for the primacy of facts [...] did not extend to the vast majority of the population, the working class. British historians continued to tell the story of monarchs, prime ministers and great battles” [Black & Macrauld, 1997: 46]. Another Regius Professor of History at Cambridge, Charles Kingsley, claimed that the notion of studying “the little man was no science at all”. This was in 1861. By the 1900's nothing had changed as Professor H.W.C Davis, Regius Professor of History at Oxford, claimed that: “Our common humanity is best studied in the most eminent examples that it has produced of every type of human excellence” [Black & Macrauld, 1997: 46]. Still there was no room for the experience of ordinary people.

However, it has to be pointed out that, even in Ranke's own age, authors like Jules Michelet (1798-1874) and Jacob Burckhardt (1818-1897) took a much more all-encompassing view of history than the British empiricist political historians. The histories that Burckhardt produced took into account the fact that different aspects of society (religion, culture and the state) influence and interact with each other. Michelet attempted through his writings to pay homage to those who have “suffered, worked declined and died without being able to describe their sufferings”; as Peter Burke has pointed out this is clearly a very early instance of what would be labelled today as “history from below” [Black & Macrauld, 1997: 46-47]. Thus it would be wrong to portray nineteenth century historians as all of one mind, but the overriding dominance of the empiricist school made that school to become the face of Victorian historical research and writing.

It should be noted, though, that Woolf's questioning of tradition and the inherited legacy of the past stretched far wider than just the narrow confines of history as an academic discipline. It also has to be pointed out that her reaction to traditional history creation was more spontaneous and instinctive than academic, and as such one has to consider the background that she brought to bear on past forms of historical and cultural creation whilst reworking the traditional approach in combination with a modernization of form. In fact few authors were as well equipped as she was to proceed in that way. Not only was Woolf, as a feminist, in an advantageous position to take a fresh and questioning view of her own society and civilization, but she was also a far better educated woman than many of her contemporaries. However, it is true that she felt throughout her life the painful lack of a formal University education [Bell, 1972:70];

writing to her brother Thoby in 1903, she reproaches him because she has “to delve painfully from books and all alone, what you get every evening sitting over your fire and smoking your pipe with Strachey” [*The Letters*, Vol. 1: 76-77]. Indeed her education at home fell far short of being ideal. Her father's attempts at teaching his daughters mathematics were, for example, disastrous and according to Bell “Vanessa's arithmetic was always rudimentary and Virginia continued throughout her life to count on her fingers” [Bell, 1972: 26]. Ironically enough it is perhaps exactly this solitary education that saved her unique genius, allowing her to retain her “brilliant flights, half fantasy, half sober reasoning” [*The Letters*, Vol. 1: 42-43], which would characterise even her mature essays. And though her lonely education might not have been as formal or as formally broad as a Cambridge or an Oxford education might have been, it was in a sense far broader exactly because she was left to forage for herself. Before she was fifteen years old Woolf had read from her father's collection as varied and widely as Froude's biography of Carlyle, Creighton's biography of Queen Elizabeth, Charles Dickens's *The Old Curiosity Shop* and *A Tale of Two Cities*, George Eliot's *Felix Holt* and *Silas Marner*, Carlyle's *The French Revolution*, Thomas Arnold's *A History of Rome* and some Macaulay, to mention only some. In July of 1901 alone she would read *Antigone*, *Oedipus Coloneus*, and the *Trachiniae* in the original Greek [Bishop, 1989: 2-3].

Her education was also broader in another sense. Apart from the fact that throughout her life she continued to be a voracious reader, the journalism she took up for the *Guardian* and the *Times Literary Supplement* brought her into contact with obscure publications she would not normally have read out of own choice. An example of this is for instance *A Belle of the Fifties: Memoirs of Mrs Clay of Alabama* which she had to review for the *Guardian* in February 1905 [Bishop, 1989: 5]. Her teaching at Morley College, a College where working-class men and women could take courses, throughout 1905 and 1906 would also force her to brush up on her formal historical knowledge and to start seriously considering the problems that historical training poses. Writing in a *Report on Teaching at Morley College* in July 1905 Woolf states that: “Each week I read through a reign or two in Freeman or Green; noting as I went. Each time I tried to include one good ‘scene’ upon which I hoped to concentrate their interest [...] I found it not difficult to skim along fluently though superficially; & I tried to make the real interest of

history – as it appears to me – visible to them [...] So we made our way through Early British, & Romans, & Angles Saxons, & Danes, & Normans, till we were on the more substantial ground of the Plantagenet Kings” [Bell, 1972: 203].

However, “the real interest of history” was for Woolf apparently not “the sheet of hard dates to take home with them” [Bell, 1972: 203]. Rather it was to make her students “feel the flesh and blood in these shadows”. So for instance for the battle of Hastings she made out a “vivid account” in the hope to “make their flesh creep” [*The Letters*, Vol. 1: 191]. Thus in an attempt to get “the phantoms that passed through that dreary school room” to leave “any image of themselves upon the women” she concentrated on a more colourful, epic and creative presentation of history, showing her students pictures and lending them books [Bell, 1972: 203] and even taking them on outings to atmospheric historical places like Westminster Abbey (where they “saw the mummy of a forty year old parrot – which makes history *so* interesting miss!” [*The Letters*, Vol.1: 192]).

Unfortunately the principal of the college, Mary Sheepshanks, did not appreciate her attempts at bringing history to life; writing to her confidante Violet Dickinson in June 1905 Woolf mentions that: “I have been doing entirely the wrong thing at Morley – Sheepshanks showed wolf’s fangs” [*The Letters*, Vol. 1: 194]. Surely Woolf was right in approaching the teaching of history in a new way, especially for those working women with a very scanty foundation in the discipline, so why was Mary Sheepshanks unhappy about what she was doing?

The answer to this question is double sided; on the one hand one has to scrutinise Woolf’s attitude to history more closely to understand where her possible error could originate; on the other one has to keep in mind what the reigning sensibilities about history were at this time, as has been discussed earlier on in this chapter, in order to know how Woolf offended them.

A striking clue to Woolf’s attitude to history lies in her statement that she would try to include “one good scene upon which I hoped to concentrate their interest” and that she found it easy to “skim along fluently – though superficially”. For her history, as a discipline, was of less factual interest than of inspirational interest. It was not that she did not realise the importance of fact; in 1905 she mentions that: “I am going to produce a real historical work this summer, for which I have solidly read and annotated 4 volumes

of medieval English” [*The Letters*, Vol. 1: 202]. Clearly she had a good idea of how to go about to write history in the traditional sense and even to teach history, if one has to judge by her description of how she prepared for her Morley College lectures.

But only dealing with the facts bored her. Writing to Violet Dickinson in 1903 she states that: “I can't understand all these facts and figures for the life of me [...] The British brain feeds on facts, flourishes on nothing else – but I can't reason” [*The Letters*, Vol. 1: 100]. In another letter she states that: “I think I hate writing letters about facts” [*The Letters*, Vol. 1: 213], and about politics, that central creator of history, she says: “politics make dry dogs; Jack [Hills, widower of Woolf's deceased half-sister Stella] was here and gets on his legs before the fire and asks if we ever think about the great questions of our time: Chinese labour and protection!” [*The Letters*, Vol. 1: 217]. Clearly Miss Virginia Stephen did not think the “great questions” of her time half as interesting as she should have! But she found the more tangible aspects of history namely culture, tradition and heritage, immensely interesting. In August 1906 Virginia and her sister Vanessa occupied an ancient house, Blo'Norton Hall in Norfolk, for a month. Woolf writes almost nothing about the house's factual history but does write about the atmosphere and the inspiration she drew from the tangible quality of its historical legacy: “It is 300 years old, striped with oak bars inside, old staircases, ancestral vats and portraits, there is a garden and a moat” [*The Letters*, Vol. 1: 234]. During a visit to her brother Adrian at Cambridge she attended “a divinely beautiful service in King's Chapel. Nothing comes up to the Church service in these old Cathedrals”. Clearly she found beauty in tradition, even in a tradition which she rejected – growing up in a house where her parents were sceptics – since she adds about the sermon “though I don't believe a word of it and never shall” [*The Letters*, Vol. 1: 148]. Whatever pleasure she then derived from the experience can only be attributed to her sensitive response to the beauty that tradition and history contain, and not to religious experience.

For history to be interesting to Woolf it had to awaken her imagination. She had the ability to imbue events and places with romance; writing for example about Salisbury she states that she imagines the city to be “ancient and dreamy, and no parties and no conversation” [*The Letters*, Vol. 1: 87]. She could also imagine and connect scenes vividly with a historical setting; during a visit to Bayreuth she writes: “Last night we

walked about after dinner, and all the people were singing over their beer. As there was very little light and a few people peeping out of their windows and virgins tripping by in cloaks, and a great yellow coach standing in the middle of the road, one might have been in the year 1750” [*The Letters*, Vol. 1: 405]. Sometimes her romantic flights of fancy would vastly outdo the actual historical place. Visiting some ruins of a Benedictine abbey near Glastonbury she had to admit disappointedly that she “thought them not half as good as the Glastonbury I have in my head” [*The Letters*, Vol. 1: 341].

Another aspect of history that Woolf found fascinating and that connects intricately and closely with her outlook as a writer, was the human and the personal. Her own family's personal history was quite tragic and the way in which they handled their adversity made Woolf very suspicious of official accounts of events. As her father was slowly dying of cancer and life went on normally around them she writes that: “I am sure the facts of life – the marryings and bearings and buryings are the least important and one act's one's drama under the hat” [*The Letters*, Vol. 1: 79-80]. Later as her father was literally on his deathbed she wrote: “We are the sanest family in London and talk and laugh as though nothing were happening” [*The Letters*, Vol. 1: 119]. The discrepancy between what they were living on the surface and what they were experiencing beneath it made Woolf question the way reality is portrayed. Clearly these two previous remarks underscore her later openly proclaimed suspicion about the ability of the traditional plotline really to capture life. This seems suggestive of Woolf's suspicions regarding official historical accounts as well. She suspected that they omitted the real experience of ordinary individuals and as such they failed to convey the real essence of the event or the experience.

This suspicion of and dissatisfaction with official historical accounts both fed and strengthened her feminism, for of course what could be more incriminating of the formal historical tradition than the conspicuous absence of large numbers of female figures and lives from it? As her well known books on feminism and criticism of masculine society, *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*, indicate, Woolf was very adept at the writing of the unwritten history, of pointing out the silences in the known song and filling it with her own imagination.

The absence of women from history also points to the absence of the ordinary man from history. Woolf found people and their lives, ordinary lives, fascinating. But not the outward details: the inner landscape, as “Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown” makes clear so unmistakably, is what drew her on. For her, scholarly work standing apart from the throng of life was meagre: “if you must put books on the one side and life on the other, each is a poor bloodless thing. But my theory is that they mix indistinguishably” [*The Letters*, Vol. 1: 272].

This was also part of her intense love for London, all the different types and classes living shoulder to shoulder; as she writes to Violet Dickinson about the fascinating elasticity of Christianity: “What a strange religion, and to think that you and Christina Rossetti and the boarding houses of Bloomsbury all worship at the same shrine” [*The Letters*, Vol. 1: 260]. Clearly she found any tradition that could incorporate so many different characters and classes across different ages highly interesting. Surely this fascination with people in general explains, at least partly, her fascination with biography. Reading different lives from Mrs Clay of Alabama to Lady Bury's diaries and the memoirs of Lady Mary Montagu [*The Letters*, Vol. 1: 336] brought her into contact with many different views and inner landscapes. Indeed, so fascinated was she with biography that she declared, perhaps in a jocular way but with a tinge of earnestness about it that: “I believe I shall become a popular lady biographer” [*The Letters*, Vol. 1: 36]. Furthermore what seems to attract Woolf strongly to biography is the challenge to find a balance between that which can be exposed in public and that which should remain private, but also the challenging of the boundaries separating the public and the private. In this regard Anna Snaith notes that “the conceptual dichotomy between public and private spaces, spheres, languages, voices, issues and discourses was one which captured her attention, to be reworked and questioned, rather than accepted wholesale in any form” [Snaith, 2000: 1]. This idea sheds some light on Woolf's questioning and challenging of traditional approaches to the writing of history since that discipline was clearly practised with a public aim in mind; yet the lived experience of any historical event takes place in the context of the private life of the individual. Thus to gain a more rounded and deeper understanding of history in the context of lived experience one would have to consider the impact of historical events on the private life. Along the same lines

fiction, aimed at the public, benefits in terms of credibility from privately lived experience.

Her father also featured strongly in this regard. As the editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography*, Sir Leslie Stephen was a biographer of note. As such Woolf grew up in a house where historical research and the creation of biography were part of her frame of reference. Indeed, Sir Leslie's work featured so prominently in the lives of his children that Woolf would comment years after her father's death, regarding the influence of the *Dictionary of National Biography* on her brother Adrian's life, that "the D.N.B crushed his life out before he was born. It gave me a twist in the head too. I shouldn't have been so clever, but I should have been more stable without that contribution to the history of England" [*The Diary*, Vol. 2: 277]. Yet despite her misgivings expressed in this quotation, it also becomes clear that Woolf had to admit the debt her own intellectual development owed to her father's work. Melba Cuddy-Keane explains that Woolf's pluralistic approach to history might be more indebted to her father's thinking about the discipline than has been recognised in the past. She notes that "despite the evolutionary and Darwinian frameworks that characterize Stephen's writing and the decidedly non-self-reflexive nature of his prose, many of his *ideas* anticipate dialogic and pluralistic modes. Stephen himself suggested [...] that his intention was to connect literary history with 'religious, political, social and economic changes' and thus to foster a different conception of history as 'a very complex tissue' made up of different strands" [Cuddy-Keane, 1998: 63].

The private inner landscapes in which Woolf was so interested are, however, intangible and problematic to research and document. After a visit to her Quaker aunt, Caroline Emelia Stephen, she writes that she has never known "anyone with such a collection of stories – which all have some odd twist in them – natural or supernatural. All her life she has been talking with spirits: and she is like a person who sees ghosts, or rather disembodied souls, instead of bodies" [*The Letters*, Vol. 1: 229]. This is a good example of a phenomenon that biography could explore, and which Woolf found intriguing, but which history as a discipline would not really be able to deal with.

Keeping this aspect of her broad historical interests in mind, it then becomes evident that Woolf would find the traditional chronological narrative of history

problematic since there would be so much experience that could be included, but which would be branded as superfluous or of no real historical significance. Commenting on her own narrative style she writes: “I am forever knotting it and twisting it in conformity with the coils in my own brain, and a narrative should be as straight and flexible as a line you stretch between pear trees”; in other words very straight and not very flexible, and the Victorian historical scholar would agree [*The Letters*, Vol. 1: 300].

Some of the questions and issues that will be investigated then in this dissertation, with this broad overview of Woolf’s views and response to history in mind, include: what role Woolf allocates to history in her fiction and how she manages to render an account of any historical event which is both personal and credible, without becoming ensnared in facts; and how she rewrites history, with specific reference to major events and ages in history (the Victorian era, for instance), in order to come to terms with it. It will also be investigated how she deals with and portrays the disjunction between the self and history in her work, but also how, as she conceives of it and represents it, history becomes for her a possible source of reassurance in opposing annihilation, and a connecting device between different eras and generations because of a shared human experience.

In terms of the conceptual framework that is used it should be noted that history and the past are viewed as inclusive terms referring to both formal history and personal history. Where it is necessary for the sake of the argument it will be specified whether it is formal or traditional historical views and constructions or personal views and constructions of history that are referred to.

Unfortunately, due to the limited scope of this study, the development of Woolf’s views on history cannot be addressed at length or in depth. Something of the development of her views on history is reflected in the choice of novels to be discussed; this ranges from *Mrs Dalloway*, which deals with the First World War and its aftermath up to *Between the Acts* which was completed after the start of the Second World War.

The range of novels to be discussed also reflects different aspects of Woolf’s views of and responses to history. In chapter one, dealing with *Mrs Dalloway*, it will be investigated how Woolf manages to deal in her novel with a major historical event, the First World War, through the experiences of individuals. Her views on the influence of

the past on the present will also be discussed as well as the influence on society of traditional constructions of history.

In the second chapter, which focuses on *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf's use of fiction to respond to her own personal past will be explored. The concern she exhibits with the balance of perspective in any portrayal dealing with history and the past will be explored as well as her attempt to establish a connection between differing eras separated by major historical events.

Finally the third chapter, which has *Between the Acts* as its central focus, will engage with Woolf's response to history in the making as a threat. Her views as to why disastrous events, like war, are repeated in history will be explored as well as her suggestions for how the course of history might possibly be altered.

Mrs Dalloway: The triumph of life over a well of tears

“We had thought that this world had vanished forever, that it was impossible to find on the great ocean of literature a ship that was unaware of what has been happening; yet there is *Night and Day* new, exquisite, - a novel in the tradition of the English novel. In the midst of our admiration it makes us feel old and chill. We had thought not to look upon its like again” [Mansfield quoted in Bell, 1972: 69]. Thus Katherine Mansfield had reviewed Woolf's deliberate study in classicism – both in form and content – in 1919. Perhaps she had reason not to be overly enthusiastic. Indeed Woolf's novel did seem strangely callous in the light of the most recent major historical event – that war to end all wars – World War One. Here was an author who seemed to have taken no note of that cataclysm which apparently could leave no Briton or European untouched.

But Katherine Mansfield was too hasty in her judgement. Woolf was aware of the changes that the war had brought about, not only in literature but also in society. Already in *Jacob's Room* she constructs a novel that relies for its impact on the terrible sense of loss experienced after the sudden and senseless death of the main character in the trenches of World War One. It is, however, in *Mrs Dalloway* – a novel that can be described as a “post-war elegy” [Froula, 2002: 126] – that Woolf finally manages to express something of the full impact of this historical cataclysm, both in society as a whole and in the lives of private individuals. Tragically enough, by the time *Mrs Dalloway* was published in 1925, Woolf had to ask herself to what extent she was heeding her literary rival and critic's request: “do not quite forget Katherine” [*The Dairy*, Vol. 2: 225], since the latter had already become a part of the past herself.

In the eventual scope of *Mrs Dalloway* Woolf found the opportunity not only to write about “madness and society” but really to incorporate “everything, everything” as she so eagerly wanted to [*The Dairy*, Vol. 2: 13]; for this is a novel that explores in depth the effect that War and society and life have on the individual. As a work of art *Mrs Dalloway* is not only a brilliant exposition and critique of how society functions, it is also an illustration, an attempt to place into context the idea that the war was perhaps an extraordinary historical event but it is only one of the many tragedies rooted in history that are part of life, both public and private; yet the very fact that history continues is a

testimony to the fact that life does overcome even the most tragic of historical events. As such this chapter will attempt to explore Woolf's dual view of history as both the well of tears and as evidence of the eventual triumph of life; in the process her many-faceted engagement with history and the past throughout the novel will be dealt with at length.

The First World War was a historical event of a magnitude and scope that are hard to come to terms with even almost a century later. It left twenty-one million disabled and eight million dead. Imagine then the difficulty of having to live through such an event; both as an artist and as a member of the public opposed to the war. Yet for Woolf the war was not such an overwhelming experience whilst it was actually taking place. This was mainly the result of her having very few close friends or personal acquaintances drawn directly into it. By the time World War One broke out Woolf's elder brother, Thoby, was already dead and her younger brother, Adrian, was a conscientious objector, as were most of her friends [*The Diary*, Vol.1: 56]. Her husband was not physically fit to join the army (Leonard Woolf suffered from a tremor) and those friends who were not conscientious objectors were active in areas of the war effort other than active service [*The Diary*, Vol. 1: 68]. Maynard Keynes, for example, was employed in the Treasury [*The Diary*, Vol. 1: 17] and Katherine Cox, Rupert Brooke's friend and mistress, was taking care of refugees in Corsica [*The Letters*, Vol. 2: 77].

For Woolf the war itself was then mainly an experience of personal inconvenience and an unwelcome intruder but she did not experience it as unduly traumatic. The personal inconvenience she handled with a good dose of her sharp sense of humour. In January 1918 her elder sister, Vanessa, asked her to buy her some paint. Unable to obtain the colours Vanessa wanted, she writes this reply which included a shopkeeper's explanation of why paint is scarce: "Now you may not know that every gun when its [sic] first cast has to be dipped in a bath of oil, or after the first or second shot I daresay it would explode, for the outside cools quicker than the in. That means one thousand gallons of oil for each gun – and when the gun's dipped in oil, d'you think much oil is left? No, not a drop – but you come and ask me for what you want and I'll let you have it" [*The Letters*, Vol. 2: 210]. Almost in passing she remarks in 1919: "in public affairs I've forgotten to say that peace was signed [...] I've forgotten the account I was going to

write out of the gradual disappearance of things from shop windows, and the gradual, but still only partial, reappearance of things” [*The Diary*, Vol. 1: 291].

This is not to say that Woolf was unconcerned or unaffected by the war. In August 1914, just after the outbreak of war, she writes to Katherine Cox: “We left Asheham [the Woolfs' country house] a week ago and it was practically under martial law. There were soldiers marching up and down the line, and men digging trenches and it is said that Asheham barn is to be used as a hospital. All the people expected an invasion – then we went through London and oh Lord! What a lot of talk there was! Roger [Fry] of course had private information from the admiralty, and had been seeing the German Ambassadors [Princess Lichnowsky] and Clive [Bell] was having tea with Ottoline [Morrell], and they talked and talked and said it was the end of civilisation, and the rest of our lives were worthless” [*The Letters*, Vol. 2: 51]. Clearly Woolf was alarmed, but it is also clear that she was irritated and bored by all the war-mongering and histrionics.

It was the above-mentioned war mongering and histrionics that really affected Woolf adversely during the war itself. The effect that the irresponsible and insincere encouragement of overblown patriotism and national intolerance had on the public would remain with her years after the war was over and would eventually be a partial motivation for her writing *Three Guineas*. As late as October 1918, when one would have expected all participants in the war to have been exhausted by the slaughter, she records in her diary that: “the Northcliffe papers do all they can to insist upon the indispensability & delight of war. They magnify our victories to make our mouths water for more” [*The Diary*, Vol. 1: 200].

Woolf could not tolerate the exaggerated patriotism that was artificially bred during the war. In January 1915 she writes in a letter to Duncan Grant: “what hellish luck to miss you. And all for the sake of a Queen's Hall concert, where the patriotic sentiment was so revolting that I was nearly sick” [*The letters*, Vol. 2: 57]. In November of that same year she writes to him: “the revelation of what our compatriots feel about life is very distressing. One might have thought in peace time that they are harmless, if stupid, but now that they have been roused they seem full of the most violent and filthy passions” [*The Letters*, Vol. 2: 71].

It seems that what Woolf deplored most was the insincerity of emotion and irrationality that the war cultivated: it contaminated everything it came into contact with. But she also realised that the present situation was a result of a society that had been receptive to and conducive of this type of destructive behaviour even before the war started. The war was the result of a fundamentally flawed society. In January 1918 she writes to Margaret Llewellyn Davies: “I believe the only hope for the world is to put all children of all countries together on an island and let them start fresh without knowing what a hideous system we have invented here” [*The Letters*, Vol. 2: 208].

However, this also does not mean that Woolf did not realise what the immediate effect of the war was on the individual soldier. Her husband's two younger brothers, Philip and Cecil Woolf, were doing active service and through them she came to learn something of how the soldiers at the front actually experienced the war. In January 1915 she writes in her diary about Philip: “he is sick to death of soldiering – told us tales of military stupidity which pass belief. They found a man guilty of desertion the other day and sentenced him, and then discovered that the man did not exist” [*The Diary*, Vol. 1: 106]. After Cecil Woolf was killed by a bombshell, lying next to Philip who was injured in the incident, she comments: “the more one sees of the effects on young men who should be happy, the more one detests the whole thing” [*The Diary*, Vol. 1: 123].

Yet, essentially, Woolf did not and could not have the same war experience as a soldier. Never close to her husband's family, she also did not have the same war experience as someone would who had a close relative doing active service. In the light of her lack of direct war experience – either as a combatant or as a concerned relative of a combatant – the question arises as to how she could attempt to write a response dealing with the adverse effects of war on those involved in it without making that “ghastly and unpardonable” blunder in literature: “people I mean, who wallow in emotions without understanding them”? [*The Letters*, Vol. 1: 226].

Woolf could write a sincere response to the war because she chose to approach her subject matter through two results of the event that she did understand. Firstly she knew what it felt like to be alienated from society because of trauma. Having suffered at least three mental breakdowns prior to the writing of *Mrs Dalloway*, one in the year of her mother's death, 1895, one in 1904 and again in 1912, she was familiar with the effect

of mental instability both on the patient and on the patient's family. In 1922 she comments about her experience of her mental breakdown: “not that I haven't picked up something from my insanities and all the rest. Indeed, I suspect they've done instead of religion. But this is a difficult point” [*The Letters*, Vol. 2: 499]. Clearly she felt that her traumatic experience had granted her some revelation, almost of a divine nature, yet that inner vision came at a heavy price – isolation. Secondly, Woolf understood personal loss. She was only thirteen when her mother died and the loss was to haunt her for the rest of her life. After her young niece Angelica was run over by a car (she survived the incident without any serious injury), Woolf records in her diary: “What I felt was not sorrow or pity for Angelica, but that now Nessa would be an old woman; and this would be an indelible mark; and that death and tragedy had once more put down his paw, after letting us run a few paces. People never get over their early impressions of death I think” [*The Diary*, Vol. 2: 299]. So, as Evans was to haunt Septimus who heard him “singing behind the screen” [*MD*, 1925: 119], those who had died before her haunted Virginia Woolf. On leaving Richmond for London, in January 1924, she writes about the room she is about to leave behind: “I've had some very curious visions in this room too, lying in bed, mad [...] I've heard the voices of the dead here. And felt through it all exquisitely happy” [*The Diary*, Vol. 2: 283].

Thus in dealing with the character in *Mrs Dalloway* who has the most direct war experience, Septimus, Woolf avoids possible pitfalls of insincerity by minimising her descriptions of his actual war experience and concentrating instead on his post-war trauma. Describing an experience she did not live through herself, Septimus' war experience, Woolf summarises it in an emotionless and distanced description: “he had gone through the whole show, friendship, European War, death, had won promotion, was still under thirty and bound to survive [...] The last shells missed him. He watched them explode with indifference” [*MD*, 1925: 73]. Her incorporation of this technique into her plot is seamless as Septimus' unemotional response to the war fits in perfectly with his mental condition and with his fear “that he could not feel” [*MD*, 1925: 74]. However, Woolf's descriptions of Septimus' post-war trauma, something that she could describe from own experience, are detailed and disturbing. The divine quasi-religious experience of his mental illness, his thinking that: “men must not cut down trees. There is a God. (He

noted such revelations on the backs of envelopes.) Change the world. No one kills from hatred. Make it known (He wrote it down). He waited. He listened” [MD, 1925: 21], is contrasted with the horrifying reality of it: “he said people were talking behind the bedroom walls [...] He saw things too – he had seen an old woman's head in the middle of a fern” [MD, 1925: 56]. Woolf thus uses her own experience to furnish her character with a credible fictional experience. In her writing she makes use of her personal past to provide her audience with a credible and sincere response to public historical events.

This is a prevalent technique throughout her work. She used it before she wrote *Mrs Dalloway* and she would return to it again and again. In *Night and Day*, for instance, she modelled the character of Katherine Hillberry, who is secretly fascinated with mathematics, on her sister Vanessa. Writing in 1919 to Janet Case (she taught Woolf Greek), she advised that Case should: “try to imagine Katherine as Vanessa, not me, and suppose her concealing a passion for painting and being forced to go into society by George [Duckworth, Woolf's half-brother]” [*The Letters*, Vol. 2: 400]. In her essay “22 Hyde Park Gate” Woolf describes in detail the discomfort Vanessa had suffered as a result of George's social ambitions for his half sisters: “late at night Vanessa would come into my room complaining that she had been dragged from party to party, where she knew no one, and had been bored to death by the civilities of young men from the foreign office and the condescension of old ladies of title” [*MoB*, 1976: 149]. Once again Woolf uses an incident that she had experienced herself to provide her character with a credible experience. In fact, Septimus is only one of many characters in the *Mrs Dalloway* to have some foundation in an actual experience from Woolf's past.

Miss Kilman, whom Clarissa despises and who is discriminated against because of her German ancestry, is most certainly based to some extent on Miss Louise Ernestine Mattaei. In April 1918 Woolf describes Miss Mattaei, after the latter paid a visit to Leonard Woolf, as “a lanky, gawky, unattractive woman, with a complexion that blotches and shines suddenly, dressed in her best which was inconceivably stiff and ugly”. Woolf goes on to say that she remembers Miss Mattaei from Newnham, where she used to teach, but that they understand that “She has left...under a cloud”. The editor's footnotes explain that Miss Mattaei's sudden departure from Newnham was due to her German origin [*The Diary*, Vol. 1: 135]. Certainly there is something in Miss Mattaei strongly

reminiscent of Miss Kilman. Peter Walsh's habit of playing with his pocket knife was borrowed from Woolf's cousin Harry Stephen "who sat like a frog with his legs akimbo, opening and shutting his large knife" [*The Diary*, Vol. 1: 221]. Rezia Warren Smith, with her simple childlike approach to the world, was based on the character of Lydia Lopokova. Lopokova, a Russian ballet dancer, was married to Maynard Keynes. In September 1923 Woolf notes in her diary that she "wanted to observe Lydia as a type for Rezia" and that she did "observe one or two facts. It was very hot at Lulworth and we sat with the sun in our eyes on a veranda having tea. Suddenly she got cross, frowned, complained of the heat, seemed about to cry, precisely like a child of six" [*The Diary*, Vol. 2: 265]. The character of Hugh Whitbread seems to be a mixture of George Duckworth and Walter Lamb. Peter Walsh thinks Hugh Whitbread to be:

a privileged but secretive being, hoarding secrets which he would die to defend, though it was only some little piece of tittle-tattle dropped by a court footman which would be in all the papers tomorrow. Such were his rattles, his baubles, in playing with which he had grown white, come to the verge of old age, enjoying the respect and affection of all who had the privilege of knowing this type of English public school man [*MD*, 1925: 146].

Already in October 1903 Woolf had remarked in a letter how she found it comic when George Duckworth explained earnestly "how one should always open the door for a lady in a diplomatic household" [*The Letters*, Vol. 1: 101]. About Walter Lamb she writes: "I make him tell me about his Royalties. In fact here's a secret that mustn't be repeated – Walter is writing Prince Albert's academy speech for him [...] indeed he's one of the people for whom the world was made the shape it is" [*The Diary*, Vol. 2: 31].

An even stronger resemblance is to be found between Sally Seton, Clarissa's friend from her youth, and Madge Vaughn, who was married to Woolf's cousin William Wyamar Vaughn, headmaster of Rugby. Clarissa remembers her extraordinary feeling for Sally Seton: "standing in her bedroom at the top of the house holding the hot-water can in her hands and saying aloud, 'She is beneath this roof!'" [*MD*, 1925: 29]. Yet on meeting Sally again years later, she thinks, "one might put down the hot-water can quite composedly. The lustre had left her" [*MD*, 1925: 145]. Woolf experienced exactly the same reaction concerning Madge Vaughn. In her youth, before her marriage, just like Clarissa, Woolf had quite an infatuation with Madge. However, seeing Madge again

years later Woolf remarks somewhat disappointedly that “you can't keep her (Madge) to poetry, love, art, kitchen or children for more than a minute [...] And this was the woman I adored! I see myself now standing in the night nursery at Hyde Park Gate, washing my hands and saying to myself ‘At this moment she is actually under this roof’” [*The Diary*, Vol. 2: 122].

Of course the most famous and well known of all biographical portraits in *Mrs Dalloway*, one that deserves more discussion, is the main character herself, Clarissa Dalloway, for whom Kitty Maxse served as a model. In his biography of his aunt Quentin Bell explains that:

Mrs Dalloway had made a brief appearance on the *Euphrosyne* in *The Voyage Out*, now she re-emerged from the shadows of Virginia's imagination. She was connected with several short stories which Virginia invented at Rodmell that summer. To some extent she may be identified with Kitty Maxse, and Kitty's sudden death in October 1922 – she fell from the top of a flight of stairs and Virginia believed that she had committed suicide – almost certainly helped to transform the stories into a book and to give that book its final character [Bell, 1973: 87].

Indeed, Woolf records in her diary of 1922 that:

the day has been spoilt for me so strangely by Kitty Maxse's death; and now I think of her lying in her grave at Gunby, and Leo going home and all the rest. I read it in the paper. I hadn't seen her since, I guess 1908 – save at old Davies' funeral, and then I cut her, which now troubles me unreasonably I suppose. I could not have kept up with her, she never tried to see me. Yet, yet – these old friends dying without any notice on our part always - it begins to happen often – saddens me: makes me feel guilty. I wish I'd met her in the street [*The Diary*, Vol. 2: 206]

Why did Kitty Maxse's death haunt Virginia Woolf? The most probable suggestion is that it was because Kitty formed part of the world that Woolf's mother inhabited. “Kitty was fifteen years older than Virginia. Their mothers had been close friends. After Jane Lushington died Julia Stephen kept a watchful eye on Jane's three daughters” [Curtis, 1997: 49]. Woolf reminiscences, in her diary, about Kitty's youth and the connection it has with her own childhood. “She got engaged at St Ives [the Stephens' holiday house] and Thoby thought it was Paddy talking to his boy. They sat on the seat by the greenhouse in the love corner” [*The Diary*, Vol. 2: 206]. After Julia's death Kitty

in turn kept a watchful eye on Julia's two daughters. In this time, up to Sir Leslie Stephen's death and for a while after, there existed an especially close bond between Kitty and Vanessa Stephen.

Virginia Stephen, however, had ambivalent feelings about Kitty Maxse. At times in her letters she pays Kitty a compliment concealing a stab: "Kitty is eternal – cool and fashionable – white from tip to toe has little aristocratic stories without much point which is the point" [*The Letters*, Vol. 1: 82-83]. In another letter she complains that Kitty is "to [her] as salt is to a very sensitive snail. I liked her better this time [...] but there is always Leo in every sentence she speaks. Oh damn Leo I say, she lives in an unreal paradise and I am a kind of slug or snail there" [*The Letters*, Vol. 1: 209]. Again, especially during Sir Leslie's illness (he suffered from stomach cancer), Kitty's kindness impressed Virginia. In December 1903 she writes: "Kitty dined here on Friday [...] Really I shall have to revise my judgement. She is going back to her early ways again, and she is then charming" [*The Letters*, Vol. 1: 114].

In order to explore another possible answer to the question initially posed as to why Woolf was haunted by Kitty Maxse, one also needs to have a look at why Woolf had such ambiguous feelings towards her. Kitty was married to Leo Maxse "a campaigning journalist of ferocious energy" and "editor of the monthly *National Review*, a journal that had helped to unseat at least two British Prime Ministers [...] Leo's 'Episodes of the Month' were closely scanned by members of both houses of parliament, many of whom would at one time have attended his wife's fashionable evening gatherings full of celebrated, eminent people" [Curtis, 1997: 49]. Clearly Leo was a man to be reckoned with; yet it is evident that Woolf did not like him or his views very much and deplored his wife's blind following of and admiration for her husband. In November 1903 she writes that "Kitty has been here for an hour talking politics: I should feel more confidence in her schemes for setting the empire on its legs again if they were ever exactly the opposite of 'what Leo thinks'" [*The Letters*, Vol. 1: 103]. What was more: "as the century wore on Kitty's modish metropolitan way of life began to seem more and more unsatisfactory to Virginia. She felt a need to distance herself from it completely" [Curtis, 1997: 50]. Kitty was also a reminder of an aspect of Woolf's past, the respectable Kensington life in Hyde Park Gate, which she rejected.

Yet, Woolf romanticised her childhood and Kitty also featured in that respect, Virginia having known her when she was still “Kitty Lushington, the eldest daughter of His Honour Vernon Lushington, a County Court Judge” [Curtis, 1997:49]. Kitty had formed an integral part of that “vast inter-related circle of young people and their parents in Kensington” [Curtis, 1997: 49]. Kitty was beautiful, graceful and kind. In the winter of 1916 in the midst of a shortage of coal, caused by the war, Woolf ran into Kitty whilst searching for coal to heat her writing room with. Later that day the “ever generous Kitty” showed up at Woolf’s house and left a quantity of coal for her [Curtis, 1997: 51]. It was Kitty who introduced Virginia to the foreign affairs editor of *The Times* which eventually led to her being employed by Bruce Richmond, the editor of the *Times Literary Supplement*. Woolf knew her before she was covered in “Maxse varnish” and believed that if she “ever stayed long enough she would wear [it] off” [*The Letters*, Vol. 1: 112]. Woolf’s ambiguous feelings thus probably sprouted from the tension between the knowledge of what Kitty represented to her in the past, a link with her childhood abounding in charm and kindness; and what Kitty represented to her in the present, a person with few convictions of her own who lead a superficial life and supported an outdated status quo. It would then not be unreasonable to suggest that this ambiguity in feeling for and experience of Kitty is the reason why the memory of her haunted Woolf after Kitty’s death. Woolf was left with an unresolved conflict between the past and the present, between the potential and the actual.

As was stated earlier on Woolf uses characters and experiences from her own past to create convincing fictional characters. But it is not only with her audience in mind that she employs this technique, it is also for her own satisfaction. Woolf was fascinated with people. In her diary of 1917 she notes that: “nothing is more fascinating than a live person, always changing resisting and yielding against one’s forecast” [*The Diary*, Vol. 1: 85]. Going hand in hand with her fascination with people was her love of biography. In 1918 she notes that: “ever since I was a child [...] I’ve had the habit of getting full of some biography, and wanting to build up my imaginary figure of the person with every scrap of news I could find about him” [*The Diary*, Vol. 2: 179-80]. Yet she was well aware of the restrictions that traditional biography writing posed. In her essay “The Art of Biography” she states: “it seems then, that when the biographer complained that he was

tied by friends, letters, and documents he was laying his finger upon a necessary limitation” [*Collected Essays*, Vol. 4: 225]. In contrast, Woolf points out that “the invented character lives in a free world where the facts are verified by one person only – the artist himself”. In choosing to incorporate personal histories and experiences from her own past into her novels Woolf is able to gain the best of both genres. On the one hand she uses her novels as an opportunity to engage actively with her past. Her incorporation of biographical sketches into her novels can be viewed as a process through which the past is mediated. Certainly in portraying Kitty Maxse, through Clarissa Dalloway, as the conflicting character she was, Woolf manages to express and possibly resolve some of her own contradictory feelings for the subject. On the other hand by fictionalising biographies Woolf manages to escape the limitations prescribed by traditional biography writing. Through fiction the symbolic value of real live characters can be pushed to its fullest extent without committing an injustice to the subject. Woolf can then transcend the limitations imposed by “friends, letters, and documents” and freely explore Kitty Maxse/ Clarissa Dalloway as a symbol for upper class society and its superficiality, its humanity, its beauty and its callousness.

The fictionalisation of biographies also enables Woolf to relax the linear rigour of traditional biography writing. In *The Pursuit of History* John Tosh points out that “biographical narrative encourages a simplified, linear interpretation of events” [76: 2000]. As has been demonstrated earlier on in this chapter, Woolf certainly experienced conflicting emotions about Kitty Maxse. It is possible to incorporate conflicting impressions into a traditional biography. Yet because of biography’s linear structure, unless a special space is provided to deal with these contradictions and conflicts of impression directly, much of the dramatic effect of it will be lost through the distance that is created by the linear structure between one incident and the next, especially where there is a big time distance between incidents that can create a conflicting impression. In *Mrs Dalloway* Woolf manages to relax the rigour of chronological narrative through various narrative devices. The most important of these is of course her narrative technique where the narrative is carried from the subjective impressions of one character to the next. These subjective impressions move freely between the past and the present and characters’ impressions often overlap resulting in an instantaneous contrast.

In the case of Clarissa Dalloway, we see that she is perceived differently by several characters according to the place and time where she is perceived. Peter Walsh, for instance, perceives her differently in the present and in the past according to place and time. Recalling the extreme agony he experienced as he realised that the youthful Clarissa was falling in love with Richard Dalloway, he recalls that “Clarissa came up, with her perfect manners [...] and wanted to introduce him to someone – spoke as if they had never met before, which enraged him. Yet even then he admired her for it. He admired her courage, her social instinct, he admired her power of carrying things through” [*MD*, 1925: 52-53]. This preceding quotation illustrates Peter's state of mind at the moment when Clarissa performed this action; however, later on in the evening, when she returns to fetch him to join the boating party, “He was overcome by her generosity – her goodness” [*MD*, 1925: 53]. On the morning of his surprise visit to Clarissa his impression as he leaves her house is that “Clarissa had grown hard [...] and a trifle sentimental [too]” [*MD*, 1925: 41]. Of course it makes perfect sense that Peter's impressions would vary according to place and time, but the effect that the sharing – in quick succession – of these differing impressions has on the reader is one of fostering a far more rounded view of the character Clarissa Dalloway. Like a real human being she leaves many and varied impressions on the characters surrounding her but also on the reader. Likewise Woolf uses her narrative technique to highlight the manner in which experience differs from individual to individual; just as one character can be experienced differently by many characters so one historical event can evoke multiple reactions and experiences in different individuals.

In the traditional historical approach, history as a discipline has a strict relationship with a factually verifiable timeline and chronology. It tends to draw multiple facts and events together, within a chronology, to indicate that these are the causes or the effects of another event. In the process a great deal of the complexity of each respective event may be lost to the whole. What is left is usually a description, in general terms, of a large historical event, for instance the First World War. As has been shown in the introduction, for quite a long time history concentrated on the actions and influence of “great men” leaving very little, if any, scope for the experiences of ordinary, private individuals. On the one hand, even now, this is understandable pertaining to history as an

academic discipline. As such its purpose is to order and to clarify and in order to do that it needs to strip away obsolete and unnecessary information. On the other hand there is clearly some danger involved in this approach. By stripping away all individual experience large historical events become inaccessible to a more general audience. It is often only through encountering descriptions of individual experience that the full impact of an historical event is realised.

As has been pointed out earlier on in this chapter, Woolf made use of personal past experience to provide her characters with experiences that her audience can deem to be authentic. From this first function of her use of the past flows another in the sense that she enables her audience, through the experience of her characters, to grapple once more with historical events and their social cause and impact. In this regard Beverley Ann Schlack states that Woolf “attempts to retrieve society and culture, time and history, *in* and *through* the human being” [Schlack, 1984: 209]. For example: Clarissa Dalloway’s deep admiration for Lady Bexborough “who opened a bazaar, they said, with the telegram in her hand, John, her favourite, killed” [*MD*, 1925: 4], at once forces the audience to enter several emotions surrounding the historical event of World War One. On one level one cannot help but admire Lady Bexborough’s stoical courage, yet on another level one feels disconcerted and even alarmed at the amount of repression that her action entails. A third level of emotion entails a feeling of poignant regret for the waste of such a young life and on a fourth level one may feel disgust at the event that took it. Lastly it forces the audience to reflect on Clarissa Dalloway as a character. Her *admiration* instead of *empathy*, almost as if she envies the opportunity to act in such a courageous manner, makes one suspect Clarissa of superficiality and makes one question the worldview underlying her admiration.

In this instance it is irrelevant whether the Lady Bexborough incident is based on an actual event or not. The incident is realistic enough because of the general reality of the First World War underlying it. A good example of just how successful Woolf is in her technique is to be found in a simple comparison between an actual, general historical statement, based on fact, and Woolf’s fictional incident. Masami Usui, quoting Marwick, states that “the loss of young heirs in the Great War deprived the landed gentry of their estates and titles [...] In 1919, death duties were raised to 40 percent on estates of £2

million and over [...] As a result about half a million acres were on the market by March 1919, and by the end of the year over a million acres had been sold” [Usui, 1991:153]. This statement registers full well the fact that the Great War was a disaster of considerable magnitude, but it does not really engage the audience in a reflection on the individual tragedies underlying it. In contrast the Lady Bexborough incident causes several conflicting emotions and reactions within the audience precisely because it is centred on an individual tragedy.

It becomes evident then that the genius of Woolf’s use of the past lies therein that she manages to translate real individual experience into convincing fiction and general historical realities into fictionalised individual experience. This personalisation of history not only prompts her audience to engage with historical events and socio-historical realities; it also enables them to do so because it presents history through the individual past and thus compels it to present a more manageable, humane aspect of itself. Woolf does this deliberately in order to undermine the colossal, grotesque and impersonal nature of formal history.

Mrs Dalloway’s confusion as to whether her husband is going to attend a committee on “‘Armenians’ ...or perhaps it was ‘Albanians’”[*MD*, 1925: 101] does not only satirize Clarissa’s lack of interest and ignorance of affairs falling outside her social sphere, it is also a good example of how formal history can actually debar the individual from engaging with it. The latter happens exactly because factual, impersonal history spans a too vast, colossal scope and as a result loses its meaning for the individual. In the editor’s footnotes to Woolf’s diary of 1919 it is explained that: “the Armenian population had been decimated by the Turkish massacres of 1915 [...] Famine resulting from attacks by both Turkey and Egypt was at this time causing a reported 150 deaths a day in one region of Armenia alone” [*The Diary*, Vol. 1: p. 271]. Woolf’s reaction to this sheds some light on her attitude to vast factual historical reports of disaster on an unimaginable scale. She writes that she “laughed to [her]self over the quantities of Armenians [killed]” and asks herself how “one can mind whether they number 4000 or 4000 000” because “the feat is beyond [her]” [*The Diary*, Vol. 1: 271]. Indeed Woolf’s own reaction is mirrored by Clarissa Dalloway’s thinking how “she cared much more for her roses than for the Armenians. Hunted out of existence, maimed, frozen, the victims of cruelty and

injustice” [MD, 1925: 102]. Yet all of this leaves Clarissa cold: “no she could feel nothing for the Albanians, or was it the Armenians?” [MD, 1925: 102], because the scope of the event is too overwhelming and it does not deal with a single identifiable individual experience. It is exactly this sense of being overwhelmed by the facts of an historical event that Woolf wanted to subvert through her use of the individual history.

In personalising her portrayal of the effect of an historical event she helps her audience to be able to deal with this event on a more humane level. In doing this Woolf does not necessarily want to undermine the importance of an historical event like the First World War. But what she does want to undermine is the portrayal of an event on an heroically grand scale that plays on national feeling and patriotism but lacks the real sincere individual experience of the event. By personalising such an overwhelming event through the use of the individual past, Woolf helps her audience to grapple with the effect of the event through recognisable individual experience.

Her use of personal historical experience on a small scale is what enables Woolf to construct a “communal post-war elegy” [Froula, 2002:126]. The emphasis here should fall on the word “communal”. This word implies that it is an elegy that involves the experience of more than just one person, but it is also a charting of the effect of the experience from the lowest social stratum of such a community up to its very pinnacle. Furthermore it supposes a common denominator to all the different experiences explored. As a “communal elegy” Woolf attempts, in *Mrs Dalloway*, to chart the experience of and reaction to an overwhelming historical event, the First World War, in the lives of many different characters, from all social stations and belonging to different generations. Her attempt is restricted and undermined to some extent, however, by her own creative choice to focus strongly on experience that she is familiar with. As such she pays little attention to the really poor or the working class and what focus she does lend to them is that of an observer. Yet she does attempt, at least in the scope of characters included in the novel, to convey a whole image of society. On one end of the spectrum of characters portrayed in this novel we meet Clarissa Dalloway, wife of a Member of Parliament, not really affected by the war on a personal level herself, losing neither husband nor son in the carnage. Yet she reflects that “this late age of world's experience had bred in them all, all men and women, a well of tears” [MD, 1925: 8]. On the other end of the spectrum there

is Septimus Warren Smith, a soldier who served with distinction in the war. Yet, in the present of the novel he is just another face in the masses of London and now that the war is over his mental stability is still threatened by his inability to adjust to life in post-war Britain. For Septimus stands convinced that “he had committed an appalling crime and [that he had] been condemned to death by human nature” [MD, 1925: 82].

In between these two extremes lies the experience of numerous characters. These include Mrs Foxcroft for whom the war was not over because “that nice boy was killed and now the old Manor House must go to a cousin” [MD, 1925: 4] and Lady Bruton, whose blood is filled with a coarse overwhelming patriotism for “this isle of men, this dear, dear land” [MD, 1925: 153] and who is now, with the help of the glib Hugh Whitbread, encouraging “the superfluous youth of [England's] ever increasing population” to emigrate to Canada under the pretext that it is “what we owe to the dead” [MD, 1925: 93]. There is Miss Kilman, still bitter because “her career was absolutely ruined” [MD, 1925: 111] by her refusal to “pretend that the Germans were all villains” [MD, 1925: 105]. In Harley Street Dr Bradshaw makes “England prosper” by “penal[ising] despair” including the despair of those men and women who could not find “proportion, divine proportion” [MD, 1925: 84] again after the Great War. Woolf’s range stretches from the professional and influential Dr Bradshaw to the naïve Lucrezia Warren Smith who becomes an indirect victim of war through “Septimus, who wasn’t Septimus any longer” [MD, 1925: 55]; from the humble and politically powerless Lucrezia to a Member of Parliament, Richard Dalloway, who reflects gratefully that in the light of “the war” life is “a miracle” and ruefully remembers “thousands of poor chaps, with all their lives before them, shovelled together, already half forgotten” [MD, 1925: 98].

Contrasted with Richard Dalloway who is “simple by nature” and politically successful having followed “his instincts in the House of Commons” [MD, 1925: 98] is the highly critical Peter Walsh who “had been sent down from Oxford” and who was “in some sense a failure” [MD, 1925: 43]. The Dalloways’ high social station has to a large extent cushioned them against the shock of the changes the war has brought about. Yet Peter Walsh, with an outsider’s perspective, immediately notices on his return from India that “those five years – 1918 to 1923 – had been [...] very important” [MD, 1925: 61]. He reflects that “now, for instance, there was a man writing quite openly in one of the

respectable weeklies about water-closets. That you couldn't have done ten years ago" [MD, 1925: 61]. Clarissa with her "damnable, difficult, upper-class refinement" [MD, 1925: 149] will probably not find this acceptable, and might choose to ignore it, yet it is the reality of how the world has changed after the war.

Finally there is the experience of that old woman "opposite Regent's Park Tube Station" singing "through all ages [...] of love [...] which prevails" [MD, 1925: 69]. Her experience stands apart from the experience of any other character, since she is so poor and humble on the one hand that she seems to form part of the very earth on which she stands; yet on the other, because of her great age and apparent timelessness, she seems elevated above the pettiness of the ordinary.

The question now arises to what extent so many disparate characters can share in a common denominator on which a "communal elegy" is based. Certainly the Great War was an historical event of a magnitude large enough to qualify it as such a common denominator. Yet some of the characters in the novel, like Clarissa Dalloway, can hardly claim to have had a traumatic war experience at all. What experience, which includes the war, can it be then that Woolf draws on as a common denominator? The figure of this old beggar woman opposite Regent's Park provides an important key to the common bond that binds all these seemingly disparate characters and their experiences together.

Tadanobu Sakamoto points out that J. Hillis Miller has revealed that the old woman's song is a translation of a poem by Herman von Gilm, "Allerseelen" (All Souls' Day), later set to music by Richard Strauss. Sakamoto quotes Miller as stating that: "on this day [All Souls' Day] the bereaved lover can hope that the beloved will return from the grave. Like Strauss' song, *Mrs Dalloway* has the form of an All Souls' Day in which Peter Walsh, Sally Seton and the rest rise from the dead to come to Clarissa's party" [Sakamoto, 2005: 29]. Sakamoto goes on to point out how significant this song is to the experience of various characters in the novel, but what is striking about Miller's idea of *Mrs Dalloway* as an All Souls' Day is the inclusiveness of it, thus standing in contrast to the hierarchical structure of society, inherited from the past, which excludes people in a number of different ways. As such it is not only a day for the living, nor only a day for the dead. It is a day where everyone is included, because everyone is included in that

great “pageant of the universe” – life – for the continuation of which this old woman is a symbol.

For disparate as the characters in the novel may seem, reflecting Woolf’s comment that “in this book I have almost too many ideas” [*The Diary*, Vol. 2: 248], they all do share a common bond in humanity. There is a further bond in forming part of the same social system that Woolf wanted to portray “at work, at its most intense” [*The Diary*, Vol. 2: 248]. Thus living as human beings on the same day, in the same society there already exists a common bond between these characters in the sense that this shared milieu, both in a physical and a temporal sense, causes them to share in the same process of history in the making. Through her characters Woolf manages to portray her dual vision of the passage of time, history and the past, as both the cause of “a well of tears” and as the continuous triumph of life. And it is as a dual symbol of the “well of tears” and of the triumph of life that the old woman functions. She symbolises “the well of tears” that all human beings inherit from the past by singing of her lover “who had been dead these centuries” [*MD*, 1925: 69] and thus causing Rezia to pity her, thinking her a “poor old wretch” [*MD*, 1925: 70]. Yet “as the ancient song bubbled up [...] the earth seemed green and flowery [...] it [...] streamed away in rivulets over the pavement [...] fertilising, leaving a damp stain” [*MD*, 1925: 69]. Thus, by necessity, as long as life continues, and there is a narrative of human experience to relate, history will continue; and as long as there is history and a past to remember, however sad, there must also be life. And it is this common song of mourning for “the well of tears” that lies behind us all, which forms the basis of *Mrs Dalloway* as a “communal elegy”.

Yet, if *Mrs Dalloway* is a “communal elegy” it is in equal measure a song rejoicing in the continuation of history, both public and private, because the very fact that history continues means that life continues. In the subsequent discussion it will be shown how this dual vision of the past and that which belongs to it permeates the whole of *Mrs Dalloway*, and stands central to a satisfactory reading of this novel.

An integral aspect of the novel that enables Woolf to capture such a dual vision of history is her choice of setting for *Mrs Dalloway*, London on a hot summer’s day in 1923. In selecting London for her setting Woolf is able to juxtapose all the heroic and formal historical connotations that this city offers with the more humane private pasts of its

individual inhabitants. London offers her the opportunity to explore both public and private history freely, national or public history so often being the cause of private grief, and to contrast public and private lives and public and private spaces. Thus she easily finds the opportunity to place the “face in the car” that will be known “when London is a grass-grown path” in contrast with “all those hurrying along the pavement” who will eventually turn to faceless and nameless “bones with a few wedding rings mixed up in their dust” [MD, 1925: 14].

Woolf manages to retain a classical unity of space and time in portraying the past as a source of tragedy in *Mrs Dalloway* – fitting in aptly with the large number of classical allusions present in the novel as pointed out by David Bradshaw [2002: 113-116] – by moving back in time from the present through the consciousness of her characters. Her narrative technique, which enables her to move freely between the past and the present, also enables her to move freely between major characters and minor ones and thus to incorporate a very large representative body of the city's inhabitants. This in turn makes her portrayal of history as a source of tragedy, along classical lines, not only relevant to the tragic protagonist but also turns it into a true tragedy for everybody. Along these lines her judgement to avoid the use of chapters was also sound. In this way she further enhances the unity of space and time in the novel. Yet, even though she manages to move between the past and the present seamlessly, Woolf wants to emphasise the importance of the passing of time and in this regard Big Ben, so symbolic of London and the British government, features prominently.

The chiming of the clock of the houses of parliament is one of the main ordering devices of the novel. Like the aeroplane that leads the reader's attention from the perception of character to character [MD, 1925: 17-24], the chiming of Big Ben and other prominent clocks in the city of London is used by Woolf as a device to allow her to move from consciousness to consciousness. As such it is a strong reminder of the bond that time forges between individuals, living in the same place on the same moment. So as Sally Seton and Peter Walsh remember their youth at Bourton, Sally points out that “going to Bourton had meant so much to her” and that “she [...] owed Clarissa an enormous amount” because “they had been friends, not acquaintances, friends” [MD, 1925: 160]. This is a powerful indication of that bond between individuals sharing an

experience at the same time, in this case youth. Another example, in the present of the novel, comes from Lady Bruton: as she lies dozing on her sofa she imagines Richard Dalloway and Hugh Whitbread to be “attached to her by a thin thread (since they had lunched with her) as if one’s friends were attached to one’s body, after lunching with them, by a thin thread” [MD, 1925: 95]. On a more impersonal note the same experience at the same time can forge a particular unity of emotion and understanding between perfect strangers. So, for instance, as the mysterious grey car – bearing in it perhaps the Prime Minister or the Queen – passes in the street it leaves “a slight ripple” and “for thirty seconds all heads were inclined the same way [...] for in all the hat shops and tailor’s shops strangers looked at each other and thought of the dead, of the flag, of the empire” [MD, 1925: 15].

But Big Ben is also a poignant indication of what a dividing factor the passing of time proves to be between individuals: “striking the half-hour [...] out between” Clarissa and Peter Walsh “with extraordinary vigour [...] strong, indifferent, inconsiderate” [MD, 1925: 41]. As a result Clarissa never answers Peter’s question about whether she is happy or not, and thus they are not really allowed back into one another’s intimacy as they were all those many years ago at Bourton. The passing of time causes individuals to become strangers to one another. Sally Seton thinks of Peter Walsh as she meets him again at Clarissa’s party: “how odd it was to know him and yet not know a single thing that had happened to him” [MD, 1925: 161]; and Peter wonders, Sally being Lady Rosseter, “who was this Rosseter? He wore two camellias on his wedding day – that was all Peter knew of him” [MD, 1925: 159].

Thus, in *Mrs Dalloway*, the passing of time is portrayed as having the ability to be either a unifier or a divider of individuals. In the very same way the past itself, personal history, can be either a divider or a unifier between individuals in the present, because the past experience of an individual governs his/her reaction in the present. In *Mrs Dalloway* the strangers who move in and out of each other’s field of perception on the same moment forge an abstract connection through the shared experience of history in the making. Yet the nature of the bond, whether it is positive or negative, remains subject to the perceiver’s past experience. In this regard Peter Walsh finds himself regarding Septimus and Rezia Smith with condescending sympathy. As he walks past them in

Regent's Park he thinks that "that is being young [...] to be having an awful scene – the poor girl looked absolutely desperate" and he wonders "what awful fix had they got themselves into" [MD, 1925: 60]. He does this from the basis of his own past experience with Clarissa. An example of a negative reaction because of past experience would be Mrs Dempster's reaction to Maisie Johnson. Maisie feels bewildered and frightened on encountering Septimus and Rezia "for [the] young man on the seat (Septimus) had given her quite a turn. Something was up, she knew" [MD, 1925: 23]. But Mrs Dempster regards her with condescension and contempt because of her own past experience of the challenges posed by life. She feels Maisie lacks the experience, which Mrs Dempster has already gained, that will provide her with a stoical attitude to life. Looking at Maisie she thinks that "that girl [...] don't know a thing yet; and really it seemed to her better to be a little ... moderate in one's expectations" and she wants Maisie to bestow on her "creased [...] worn old face the kiss of pity. For it's been a hard life [...] What hadn't she given to it? Roses; figure; her feet too" [MD, 1925: 23].

The influence of past experience as a dividing factor is so strong that it can leave individuals feeling estranged from the society of which they form part. An example of this would be Miss Kilman. She is at odds with her contemporaries because her past experience of the German people was so positive; she states that: "the only happy days of her life had been spent in Germany" [MD, 1925: 105]. Yet the society in which she lives, England in 1923, regards the Germans as the common enemy. Miss Kilman's refusal to accept the picture painted of all Germans as villains estranges her from her society and leads her to experience much rejection because of her holding on to her past experience.

But past experience as a dividing factor also transcends the individual, turning individuals into representative symbols of a whole group. In this regard past experience functions as a divider between social classes. Miss Kilman deplores the fact that she is "poor [...] degradingly poor" [MD, 1925: 104]. She blames her poverty on the past, her dismissal from her teaching job because of her political convictions regarding the Germans. She regards the establishment as responsible for her failure and now she has to cope with the grim irony that she has "to take jobs from people like the Dalloways; from rich people, who liked to be kind" [MD, 1925: 104], representatives of the very establishment whom she so vehemently detests. To Miss Kilman, Clarissa Dalloway

represents “the most worthless of all classes – the rich with a smattering of culture” [MD, 1925: 104], and this class she “pitied and despised from the bottom of her heart” [MD, 1925: 105] since she believes their lives of luxury and leisure to be carried on at the expense of the greater public good. Another example of this division because of past experience is the animosity that exists between Septimus and Dr Bradshaw. Septimus repeats to himself, “once you fall [...] human nature is on you. Holmes and Bradshaw are on you. The rack and the thumbscrew are applied” [MD, 1925: 83]. Indeed Dr Bradshaw seems to apply “the rack and the thumbscrew” consciously, believing his actions to be for the benefit of society. A “resolute champion” of “family affection, honour, courage and a brilliant career” he has to support him, in his quest against “unsocial impulses”, the “police and the good of society” [MD, 1925: 86]. In return for his services society has rewarded the doctor with a title and wealth, of which his “motor car; low, powerful, grey with plain initials interlocked on the panel [...] to match its sober suavity, [with] grey furs, silver grey rugs [...] heaped in it” [MD, 1925: 80], is a conspicuous symbol. Thus there is a symbolic connection between Sir William’s grey vehicle and the mysterious car with its “dove-grey upholstery” [MD, 1925: 12] and “greatness [...] seated within” [MD, 1925: 14] that features earlier on in the novel. Sir William is a staunch supporter and agent of “the powers that be” within society, finding himself in a position to discuss a “Bill [...] which they wanted to get through the Commons” [MD, 1925: 155] with Richard Dalloway; as such he represents the historical force of society and politics – passing legal bills and sending young men off to war. Septimus in contrast is a representative of the victims of the often ill-fated policies and decisions made by those in positions of power, being sent to war and returning broken. As such Dr Bradshaw is an indirect accomplice to the state in which Septimus finds himself.

On the broad plain of personal relationships the past also serves as a divider between different generations. Miss Kilman telling Elizabeth Dalloway that “all professions [are] open to women of your generation” [MD, 1925, 111] is not only an encouragement, it is also a statement filled with envy and reproach. Clearly she implies that Elizabeth's generation is reaping the rewards of the sacrifice of the previous generation who did not have the privilege of having “all professions open” to them. Elizabeth gets caught up in the historical oppositions of the previous generation: her

mother – as representative of the privileged class, often opposed to women’s rights – “want [s] her to go to her party” [MD, 1925: 111]. But Miss Kilman – a staunch representative of the working class and a champion of women's rights – warns her not to “let parties absorb her” [MD, 1925: 111].

Indeed it is hinted at on several occasions in *Mrs Dalloway* that a division of some sorts exists between Elizabeth and her mother. On walking away from his morning visit to Clarissa, Peter Walsh reflects that “the way she said ‘Here is my Elizabeth’ was insincere. And Elizabeth didn’t like it either” [MD, 1925: 42]. Clarissa cannot “in the least understand” why Elizabeth, at the age of seventeen, had now “become very serious” [MD, 1925: 104]. Nor can she understand Elizabeth’s “odd friendship with Miss Kilman”, finding it incomprehensible that “her own daughter, went to communion”, even more worrying is the fact that she did not care “how she dressed” or “how she treated people who came to lunch” [MD, 1925: 10]. But it is exactly Doris Kilman’s “otherness”, in comparison to Clarissa Dalloway, that holds the attraction for Elizabeth; the latter thinking Miss Kilman “frightfully clever” and “quite different from anyone she knew” especially in her personal history since Miss Kilman’s “grandfather kept an oil and colour shop in Kensington” [MD, 1925, 111]. The very fact that Elizabeth is being educated by a very capable woman stands in stark contrast to her mother’s education, thus also to her mother’s past, Clarissa finding it miraculous that “she had got through life on the few twigs of knowledge Fraülein Daniels gave her” [MD, 1925: 7]. Unlike Clarissa, and the other great ladies of that generation, Elizabeth wants to have a profession. She is determined to become “either a farmer or a doctor” [MD, 1925: 116]. Elizabeth’s opportunities and resolution, however, contain a glaring irony. Had it not been for the mistakes of her parents’ social class and generation, the social change that was effected through the war would never have come about and society would still be stuck on the “antediluvian topic” [MD, 1925: 62] of women’s rights.

On another level it seems as if Woolf views conflict between different generations as inescapable. The fact that Clarissa and Richard are making an effort to ensure that Elizabeth is better equipped to meet life head-on brings on a separation between her and Clarissa; whilst the very fact that Clarissa grew up very sheltered knowing “nothing about sex – nothing about social problems” [MD, 1925: 28] would bring her and her

friends into conflict with their elders because they were interested in social problems. Clarissa remembers that, in order for it to evade her aunt's notice, "when Sally gave her William Morris, it had to be wrapped in brown paper" [MD, 1925: 28]. If Clarissa's very conservative father and aunt had to know that she and Sally meant to found "a society to abolish private property" [MD, 1925: 28-29] they would have been horrified. Yet if Clarissa's father and aunt had been able to foresee the disastrous consequences of aggressive capitalist competition, most notably World War One, perhaps they might have been more receptive to ideas involving social reform.

In this respect the idea of the past as a divider hangs closely together with the idea of the past as the cause of a well of tears. The passing of time has left all the characters in *Mrs Dalloway* with a sad legacy, on both a personal and a public level. And each generation inherits a well of tears from the one preceding it. Thus the generation of the 1890s was bound to inherit a social system which they recognised as potentially disastrous and wanted to change, yet they found themselves unable to do so before it was too late. From this inability to effect social change the generation of 1914 was bound to inherit the war. The well of tears that is inherited from the past is to be detected on all levels of life and in all lives. Thus where history as a divider and history as the cause of the well of tears intersect, it is to be found that personal tragedy and public tragedy also intersect. If the generation gap between Clarissa and her daughter is a source of personal anguish, the political legacy that Septimus' generation was bound to inherit from Clarissa and Peter's generation is a source of public anguish.

The political legacy that the generation of 1914 was bound to inherit was a severely militarised world. And, as will be discussed more fully later, history cannot be contained. The past has the uncanny tendency to repeat itself and to keep on echoing throughout ages to come. As such the boy soldiers marching up Whitehall to deposit a wreath at the cenotaph [MD, 1925: 43] (the monument designed to commemorate the fallen soldiers of World War One) are symbolic of how an even younger generation will still be touched and influenced by one standing almost on the verge of being eclipsed. In this regard David Bradshaw points out that the boy soldiers are probably returning to the headquarters of the Territorial Army Association of the City of London. He goes on to explain that this

was the brainchild of Richard Burdon Haldane (1856 - 1928), Viscount Haldane of Cloan, Secretary of State for War 1905-12, and Lord High Chancellor 1912-15 and 1924. Haldane was a tireless reformer who also created the Imperial General Staff and the Officer Training Corps in schools; Field Marshal Haig called him "the greatest Secretary of State for War England has ever had" (Haldane 288). In a key memorandum of April 25, 1906 Haldane outlined his "scheme by which boys would be gradually prepared for service in the Territorial Army [...] On leaving school all boys would have the opportunity of joining a cadet corps or miniature rifle club where they could be thoroughly trained [...] Thereafter they would be able, at the age of 19, to enrol in the Territorial Army" (Spiers 96). It is such a corps or club ("boys of sixteen" [43]) which marches past Walsh in Whitehall [Bradshaw, 2002: 110].

In this regard Bradshaw quotes the historian M.E. Howard, who wrote *Lord Haldane and the Territorial Army*, as stating that Haldane

wanted, in short, to establish a clear idea of the Army, with all its reserves, as a *Ding an Sich*, and this went far beyond the more usual approach of asking what the Army was *for* [...] He visualised an entire Nation in Arms...[where] ...the military training and indoctrination of the Nation should be undertaken by a new Territorial Army and by associated training corps at schools and universities [Bradshaw, 2002: 110].

And it was the ideal of a militarily trained and indoctrinated nation put into practice that the generation of 1914 was bound to inherit from nineteenth century nationalism. If Septimus is representative of the generation that was to inherit the war as its legacy, Clarissa is representative of the generation that was unable to reform in order to avoid war. But she is also more than this; she is also a representative of that class which was bound to be blamed most, historically, for the outbreak of war – the upper class. And she is in no sense an unwilling member of that class. Peter Walsh reflects that “these Duchesses, these hoary old Countesses [...] stood for something real to her” and that “in all this there was a great deal of Dalloway, of course; a great deal of the public-spirited, British Empire, tariff-reform, governing class spirit, which had grown on her as it tends to do” [MD, 1925: 65]. Clarissa can also be strongly associated with that other historical cause of grief, the formal governing structures of society. She is of course married to a member of parliament, but in her own right she has a longstanding connection with the governing class and formal government since her “people were courtiers once in the time of the Georges” [MD, 1925: 5]. This is of course also a reminder of how much the

occupants of positions of power and privilege rely on historical tradition to justify their position.

Lady Bruton is another example of how the past enables individuals to exert power in the present. As the great-grand-daughter of General Sir Talbot Moore [*MD*, 1925: 89-90], “she had the thought of Empire always at hand” [*MD*, 1925: 153] and as such it is she who is entitled to withdraw with the Prime Minister into a little room and discuss the state of India. This entitlement to wield power in the present on the basis of the past is, however, a contributing factor to history as the well of tears. For it is through historical tradition that institutions like parliament gain the authority to make an active attempt to deal with the “veriest frump, the most dejected of miseries sitting on doorsteps (drink their downfall)” [*MD*, 1925: 47]. It is also the legacy of prestige and his “thirty years' experience of these kinds of cases” which enable Dr Bradshaw to commit Septimus to “one of [his] homes” [*MD*, 1925: 85]. The sister of Sir William's goddess Proportion – Conversion – who loves to “impress, to impose, adoring her own features stamped on the face of the populace” [*MD*, 1925: 85], relies heavily on history to aide her in her cause. For her “plausible disguise[s] [...] love, duty, self-sacrifice” are often closely intertwined with historical ideals manifesting therein that one is expected to do one's duty and sacrifice oneself for the love of the state/family/religion/society on historical grounds.

It is with a sense of duty to their country and with a willingness to sacrifice their lives that young men go to war, and are still for those very same reasons marching up Whitehall in the present of *Mrs Dalloway*. The inspiration for this great love of one's own nationality, duty to the fatherland and self-sacrifice for both, is the romanticisation of national history and the extensive emotion generated by historical national symbols and institutions. It is the mere thought of the Queen or the Prime Minister, passing in the grey car, which inspires in the general public thoughts of “the flag, of Empire” [*MD*, 1925: 15]. Only the thought of the Queen or Prime Minister, those symbols of “the majesty of England” [*MD*, 1925: 14], is needed to invoke the sense of duty and self-sacrifice that cause “tall men [...] of robust physique” to stand “even straighter” and “attend their sovereign, if need be, to the cannon's mouth, as their ancestors had done before them” [*MD*, 1925:16]. Thus the emotion that is created by historical symbols and

the idea of the national past cause individuals willingly to convert their individual identities into a national identity.

Vallins states that in *Mrs Dalloway* the primary purpose of the scene with the car is to “satirise the reverence for power and authority manifested in the crowd’s fascination with the identity of the car’s occupant (which is never revealed to them or to the reader)” [Vallins, 2001: 250]. This scene does not only satirize the reverence for power and authority; it also satirises the irrationality of human emotion evoked by historical symbols. For the men do not even know the identity of the occupant of the car, yet for the mere historical idea of the monarchy they are willing to stand at the cannon’s mouth. In the same way it is the idea of the historical prestige of Britain which inspires Lady Bruton to encourage emigration to Canada. She has very little concern for the personal well-being of the young people whom she is encouraging to uproot and relocate: to her they are only instruments that should be used to the best advantage of the empire. Yet the empire has no existence of its own, sacrificing the lives of people for the sake of empire seems to be a distortion of priorities. Dr Bradshaw also convinces himself that he has only the prosperity of England in mind when he “secludes her lunatics, forbid[s] childbirth” and “penalise[s] despair”, yet the very people whom he is secluding and penalising form part of that entity that he holds so very dear. After all Septimus went to war filled with romantic historical illusions about the very same entity, hoping “to save an England which consisted almost entirely of Shakespeare’s plays” [MD, 1925:73]. It can therefore be said that Woolf criticises history for being coercive and inhuman. It stifles the private life and identity for the very reason that in the long run it exacts the sacrifice of the private life and identity.

As a result history in *Mrs Dalloway* is portrayed as being a dehumanising agent. Peter Walsh becomes aware of the young Territorial Guards through a sound “like the patter of leaves in a wood” [MD, 1925: 43]. Bradshaw calls this an “unexpectedly autumnal phrase” [Bradshaw, 2002: 12] and goes on to point out that “Woolf’s simile catches the ear: falling or fallen leaves are an ancient topos for the dead” [Bradshaw, 2002: 113]. So just like autumn leaves falling en masse, soldiers in World War One died in large, faceless numbers leaving the dead dehumanised as just another name amongst so many other names. On the other hand the face in the car, though it will be known “when

London is a grass-grown path” [MD, 1925: 14], is robbed of its humanity through the historical sentiment that it embodies. For, as has already been pointed out, it is not that specific face which causes the stir as the car passes but the idea of what that face represents. History, in this respect, is then also dehumanising to those who are in positions of power and whose death is sure to be noted, because it debars them from just being private individuals. Their individuality is both enhanced and obliterated by their historical position.

But it is not only national history that Woolf is critical of: she also criticises certain aspects of cultural history, especially traditions associated with class. Peter Walsh reflects on Clarissa’s reaction, whilst he was still wooing her, on learning that her neighbour’s wife had had a baby out of wedlock. She turned “bright pink, somehow contracted and [said] ‘Oh, I shall never be able to speak to her again!’” [MD, 1925: 50]. What Peter is critical of is “her manner [...] timid, hard, arrogant, prudish” [MD, 1925: 50], but this is more than just her personal manner, this is the manner of her class. As such the inherited traditions of her class dictate that duty and decency shall come first and that no personal deviancy will be tolerated. This is part of the reason why Clarissa, as representative of her class, “cared too much for rank and society and getting on in the world [...] she hated frumps, fogies, failures” [MD, 1925: 65]. The fact that “Clarissa herself [...] never lounged in any sense of the word; she was straight as a dart, a little rigid in fact” [MD, 1925: 65] is identified by Barnett as being Clarissa’s “key epithet” which “characterises her physical, moral and philosophical posture; indeed, it sums up her world and especially the women she most admires” [Barnett, 1976: 23]. Of course this inflexibility is the source of much grief, being the source of intolerance towards those who cannot attain the rigorous standards required to maintain such a stance. Clarissa’s attitude towards Ellie Henderson, who had a “three hundred pounds income” and who felt herself “more disqualified year by year to meet well-dressed people” [MD, 1925: 143], sprouts from this rigidity. At Clarissa’s party Sally Seton remarks to Peter Walsh that: “Clarissa was really very hard on her [Ellie] [...] Clarissa was hard on people” [MD, 1925: 162]. And of course it is this intolerance towards the weak and the deviant that also underlies Sir William’s conduct towards his patients. But Clarissa and her class’s rigorous attitudes are not only a source of grief to others but also to themselves. Lady

Bexborough's great tragedy in opening a bazaar with the notice of her son's death in her hand is an example of this. Her action is more than just an act of personal stoicism: it is an expression of the rigours which she and the members of her class impose upon themselves as part of what they view as their role and station in society, hence Clarissa's admiration for her handling of the situation.

Thus, if Woolf criticises the traditions of the class Clarissa belongs to by being critical of Clarissa, she also criticises the past through Clarissa; especially the culture of late Victorian Britain and its ideals of masculinity and femininity. Both Clarissa and Septimus become victims of these ideals, Clarissa becoming merely the perfect hostess when she could have been so much more. For "with twice his wits, she had to see things through [Richard's] eyes - one of the tragedies of married life. With a mind of her own she must always be quoting Richard" [*MD*, 1925: 65]. This is what the talented Clarissa was reduced to by the inherited gender attitudes of her society. What is even more poignant is that in her hour of crisis, the great decisive moment of her life when she either had to part with Peter or commit herself to him, it would seem as if she received no guidance from those members of society more experienced than herself. How could she have been expected to make a sound decision if society's conditioning of young women according to its expectations caused her to be so poorly equipped to face life?

If an intelligent woman like Clarissa was reduced by Victorian society to becoming the "perfect hostess" as a result of her gender, a sensitive man like Septimus Warren Smith is forced to become a soldier because of his gender. For Septimus only develops manliness in the eyes of the preceding generation, most notably Mr Brewer who had desired a change in Septimus [*MD*, 1925: 73], on becoming a soldier. Lee R. Edwards points out that it is "odd that what a man is should not be sufficient to define him as a man, and that 'manliness' should be seen as a quality to be learned" [Edwards, 1988: 168]. She goes on to point out that "what is most interesting in *Mrs Dalloway* is the lesson Septimus learned after he became a man: he must not feel". This ties in closely with Elaine Showalter's view, quoted in Usui, that: "both men and women were oppressed under the image of manhood and womanhood respectively in Victorian society and the Great War was 'a crisis of masculinity and a trial of the Victorian masculine ideal'" [Usui, 1991: 151]. Thus, in living up to the ideal of masculinity of his age,

Septimus “was one of the first to volunteer” [MD, 1925: 73]. He returns disillusioned, but there is no escaping the force of society. For even as Septimus is descending deeper and deeper into the pit of despair and finally threatens to kill himself, Dr Holmes – as agent of the dominant culture – reprimands him for not behaving according to the accepted masculine ideal, asking him whether his threat does not give Rezia “a very odd idea of English husbands” [MD, 1925: 78].

Septimus’ experience is a powerful example of how personal history can be at odds with political history. *Mrs Dalloway* opens with a description of the life and bustle of “London, this moment of June. For it was the middle of June. The war was over” [MD, 1925: 4]. But for Septimus Warren Smith the war is not over. He is looking for “a bridge that will allow him a ‘sense of connection’ with the post-war world” [Levenback, 1996: 74]. Septimus is overwhelmed by his war experience and by a pervading sense of guilt. Yet around him life continues as if the war had never taken place. In a sense Septimus’ very survival of the war stands at odds with what history would want to commemorate. In this regard Levenback remarks that Septimus’ achievements during the war were “essentially invalidated when he returned to his native England, where the only real heroes were dead [...] the only heroes [in *Mrs Dalloway*] are cast in bronze” [Levenback, 1996: 75]. As a result Septimus stands at odds with national political history, not being able to adjust as a survivor in peacetime; yet he is still alive with the result that he cannot be officially commemorated and cleared away.

Septimus, however, is by no means the only character in the novel who stands at odds with national political history. Clarissa Dalloway seems to have come through the war all but unscathed in stark contrast to so many of the other women in her social circle, like Mrs Foxcroft or Lady Bexborough. Aunt Helena is another example: she stands in contrast to Lady Bruton who frets about “what a tragedy it was – the state of India” [MD, 1925: 153], but old Miss Parry “had no tender memories, no proud illusions about Viceroy, Generals, mutinies – it was orchids she saw, and mountain passes, and herself carried on the backs of coolies in the sixties” [MD, 1925: 151]. As such she stands at odds with the general historical sentiment one would expect her to hold regarding Britain’s imperial past. The other often mentioned example is of course Miss Kilman,

whose opinions contrary to the historical and political orthodoxy at the time of the war eventually cost her her career.

On a personal level history as the cause of grief also manifests itself in the lives of those characters who stand at odds with public history; they are involuntarily also influenced by the political history of the times they live in, yet they have no direct stake in it. So even old Miss Parry is affected by the war since it dropped “a bomb at her very door” [MD, 1925: 151] and of course it is Clarissa who feels that “this late age of world’s experience had bred in them all [...] a well of tears” [MD, 1925: 8], though she herself had no husband or son in the war. No-one stands unaffected. The legacy of the world’s historical experience is a well of tears for all. Eventually it also seems as if society’s attempts at clearing away the legacy and reminders of “the well of tears” – its victims – only claim more victims. Septimus is ultimately driven to suicide by the pressure society exerts in its attempt to erase the well of tears.

History as the cause of grief in *Mrs Dalloway* is ruthless. It spares no one; not even those who seem, on the surface of things, to be privileged. Already at the very outset of the novel we learn not only that Clarissa Dalloway occupies a position of privilege but also that despite her privileged position she has known deep personal grief. She bore “about her for years like an arrow sticking in her heart the grief, [and] the anguish” [MD, 1925: 7] of her failed relationship with Peter Walsh. Later we learn that her relationship with her daughter is not what it is supposed to be and she feels that through some coldness in her spirit “she had failed” [MD, 1925: 27] her husband. Her mother had died young and she had seen her “sister killed by a falling tree” [MD, 1925: 66]. And now, despite her love of it, she feels that there is “an emptiness about the heart of life” [MD, 1925: 26]. Compared to the direct trauma that Septimus lived through during the war, Clarissa’s life seems sheltered. But on comparing the full scope of their lives it becomes clear that she too has experienced a number of traumatic events. What seems even more ruthless about history is that once a certain course of action has been selected its effects cannot be reversed any more. So, for instance, Septimus’ decision to join the war sets in motion an irreversible chain of events leading up to his death, whilst Clarissa’s decision to break with Peter Walsh and to marry Richard Dalloway steers her life in a direction from which she can no longer deviate, and she reflects on seeing Peter

again that “if I had married him, this gaiety would have been mine all day” but now “it was all over for her. The sheet was stretched and the bed narrow” [MD, 1925: 40]. As such then, through her decision to perform the role of Mrs Richard Dalloway, she has no other choice but to continue with the performance however empty it may be.

This idea of the irreversibility of decisions leads on to the final instance of history as the well of tears: history as the inexorable pressure to repeat and to relive. For just as Clarissa has no other choice now but to repeat for performance after performance her act as the perfect hostess, Peter Walsh seems doomed to be caught up in difficult love affairs again and again. On hearing of his return Lady Bruton and her guests immediately guess, correctly, that he is “in trouble with some woman” [MD, 1925: 91]. Peter is also not allowed ever to forget that he wanted to marry Clarissa, being reminded of it again he is almost “overcome with his own grief” and he thinks irritably to himself “why go back like this to the past? Why make him think of it again? Why make him suffer” [MD, 1925: 36]. Yet, inevitably, that is what happens; for the rest of the day his early visit to Clarissa sparks off memories of his youth and his past, all leading back to the same source – Clarissa. In the same way Septimus is haunted by Evans, being confronted with his great guilt that he cannot feel, and being forced to relive his trauma. As has been pointed out, the boy soldiers marching up Whithall are a poignant reminder of how history repeats itself; already a new generation is being geared towards war. But the young soldiers are also a reminder of the fallen soldiers of World War One, a reminder which forces everyone who beholds them to relive something of the trauma of the war and so it is repeated. History is the main source of determinism and its agents, and victims, are human beings. Forbes states that “Clarissa continually refers to Elizabeth as ‘my Elizabeth’ as if Elizabeth is Clarissa's possession to mold and shape” [Forbes, 2005: 46]. This statement hints at the great danger present in all relations between generations, namely that the older generation will somehow lead the next towards repeating their mistakes.

But history and the past in *Mrs Dalloway* are not only dividing factors, they are also unifying factors. History and the past are all-inclusive. They span all individuals, all classes and all generations. In the scope of this one novel we meet both Rezia Warren Smith and Lady Bexborough, the one a humble working class hat-maker, the other a great

English Lady; yet both of them stand affected by the same historical event. Along the same lines “the European War” had “utterly ruined the cook’s nerves at Mr. Brewer’s establishment at Muswell Hill” [*MD*, 1925: 73] whilst Clarissa’s Uncle William “had turned on his bed one morning in the middle of the War. He had said, ‘I have had enough’” [*MD*, 1925: 9]. And of course the covert similarities between Septimus and Clarissa have been pointed out by numerous critics but one of the most prominent is certainly the fact that they are both haunted by their respective pasts and strive to come to terms with this. As such then even the past as the well of tears is a unifying factor.

The past is a further unifying factor therein that knowledge gained about another individual’s past can actually foster sympathy for him or her. So, for instance, Woolf makes her audience enter a love-hate relationship with Miss Kilman. On the one hand the audience experiences her through Clarissa Dalloway as a difficult and self-righteous individual. On the other hand, because Woolf provides her audience with a glimpse of Miss Kilman’s past, she actually fosters sympathy for her despite her insufferable self-righteousness. This is a powerful indication that knowledge of the past can lead to a better understanding of the present. One can then never separate the individual from his or her past and individuals can only be fully appreciated against the backdrop of their past. Thus, even though Lady Bruton is perhaps doing damage through her obsession with emigration to Canada, she is nevertheless partially redeemed through her past. Peter Walsh reflects on seeing Hugh Whitbread “intimating for all the world to see that he was privileged to say [...] something private to Lady Bruton as she passed” that “she had her toadies [...] who ran about putting through little jobs on her behalf [...] But she derived from the eighteenth century. She was all right” [*MD*, 1925: 147]. Therefore, the fact that Peter Walsh feels Lady Bruton derives from an era which he perhaps finds more loveable or in which her behaviour would have seemed more in keeping with the spirit of the times, softens his judgement of her.

History forms the basis for all human relationships. As such then it is closely intertwined with life as the relationships between classes and genders are all based on history; as has been pointed out earlier, in the way these relationships become manifest through power and the formal governing structures of society, history has the potential to be the cause of a well of tears. But human relationships built on a shared past also have a

particular richness to them. It is this portrayal in *Mrs Dalloway* that provides the novel with a very haunting, melancholy and yet deeply satisfying quality. Especially towards the end of the novel, at Clarissa's party, when she reflects on seeing Peter and Sally talking that "with the two of them (more even than with Richard) she shared her past; the garden; the trees; old Joseph Breitkopf singing Brahms without any voice; the drawing-room wallpaper; the smell of the mats. A part of this Sally must always be; Peter must always be" [MD, 1925: 154]. Indeed, it would seem that what Woolf is implying is that looking back on the past is the only way human relations can be fully appreciated. Thinking back on all the years he had known Clarissa Peter Walsh muses that actually meeting Clarissa in person was often "horribly painful [...] yet in absence, in the most unlikely places, it would flower out, open, shed its scent, let you touch, taste, look about you, get the whole feel of it and understanding, after years of lying lost" [MD, 1925: 130].

In *Mrs Dalloway*, however, it is not only those characters who share a direct historical connection which forge a bond. Many of the characters in the novel remain strangers to one another, yet the fact that they partake of the same events on the same day, forming part of the same enormous organism – society – and share in the same history for at least this one day, forges a bond between them. So, for instance, Clarissa feels a particular connection with the old lady living opposite her in Westminster: "they had been neighbours ever so many years" [MD, 1925: 108], yet they are actually perfect strangers, and Clarissa does not even know her name. Just the meagre historical fact that they had lived in the same neighbourhood for so many years already forges a bond. However, some of the connections the passing of time forges between characters in this novel are more intangible. Peter Walsh falls asleep on the bench in the park sitting next to an elderly grey nurse who is busy knitting [MD, 1925: 48]. Irena Ksiezopolski points out that this knitting figure can be associated with the knitters of fate in Greek mythology, the Moirae. She states that

the unnamed nurse is a mysterious presence which guards over Peter's sleep [...] She seems to preside over life, with the baby asleep in its perambulator next to her. She is incidentally the one who weaves the threads together, Peter and Rezia exchange glances while she soothes the crying girl. Seeing one of the Moirae in a dream was believed to be a warning of death, either of the dreamer or his close friend or relative. Peter wakes up with the sentence of death on his lips - "the

death of the soul" - which seems curiously unconnected with the dream itself, and which he immediately interprets as referring to Clarissa. Yet the warning might just as well be meant for Septimus, somewhere in the next seat, who is about to go to the specialist and receive his death sentence. The nurse binds the fates of the four characters in a complex pattern, though they remain unaware of the connection. [Ksiezoploski, 2004: 24].

This interpretation of the grey nurse and her presence in the park opens up even more possibilities for the bond that shared experience creates between characters. By existing in the same temporal and physical milieu, Peter Walsh and Septimus forge a connection, through the passage of time, of which they are not even conscious. Yet keeping Ksiezopolski's explanation in mind that the Moirae warns of the death of a close relative or friend, it seems that Woolf may be implying that their overlapping historical existences render individuals in society mutually responsibly for each other to the extent usually only reserved for immediate friends and family. Peter's dream as a warning of Septimus' fate is also a reminder that through history and the great adder-on to the past – mortality – we are united in fraternity. Clarissa's transcendentalism also ties in with the bond that overlapping lives – even only in the temporal sense – forge. She had “odd affinities [...] with people she had never spoken to, some woman in the street, some man behind a counter – even trees or barns” because “she believed [...] our apparitions, the part of us which appears, are so momentary compared with [...] the unseen part of us, which spreads wide” [*MD*, 1925: 130] and as a result we “live in each other, she being part [...] of the trees at home; of the house there [...] of people she had never met” [*MD*, 1925: 8]. In effect then, if we live in each other, Clarissa's belief implies that we are carried on into the future by history in the making, that death is somehow overcome by our shared experience of existence and that human life is the physical embodiment of history.

Thus history in *Mrs Dalloway* is also a source of assurance for the continuation of life. In this regard London features very strongly, since it is a place where successive generations of people have lived and where so much history has taken place. Virginia Woolf loved London: in her diary of 1920 she states she is “often overcome by London” and that she even thinks “of the dead who have walked the city” [*The Diary*, Vol. 2: 47]. So she relates in much detail the hustle and bustle of this great city and with great care

she provides her audience with connotations from all eras of English history through street names, businesses and place names. But, though Woolf finds London impressive in its ability to sustain life, her depiction of history as a source of assurance for the continuation of life does not depend on the city's existence. Clearly Woolf can imagine a time before the existence of London “when the pavement was grass, through the age of tusk and mammoth” [MD, 1925: 69] or “the country as the Romans saw it [...] and the hills had no names and rivers wound they knew not where” [MD, 1925: 21]; and a time after it has perished “when London is a grass-grown path” [MD, 1925: 14]. Yet the fact that life always continues, and with it history, is what she draws assurance from. On the basis of this assurance Woolf then also exhibits a stoical stance with regard to death in *Mrs Dalloway*. Since life, in general, will always continue, death does not necessarily have to hold a threat for the individual. Clarissa thinks to herself: “did it matter that she must inevitably cease completely; all this must go on without her; did she resent it; or did it not become consoling to believe that death ended absolutely? but that somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived” [MD, 1925: 8]. Woolf's allusion to Shakespeare's dirge *Fear no more the heat o'the sun* further emphasises this viewpoint. The main idea of this song is that there is nothing to fear in death any more, including death itself. In the light of the refrain of the song – “golden lads and girls all must/ as chimney sweepers come to dust” – history proves to be the ultimate equalizer through death.

Thus, since Woolf celebrates the continuation of life through the continuation of history and since she makes it clear that the death of the individual is not to be feared, in *Mrs Dalloway* she also celebrates history as the agent of change. In this regard Peter Walsh takes note on his return to England of the social change that has been brought about in the five years between 1918 and 1923 because “people looked different. Newspapers seemed different” [MD, 1925: 61]. He also notes the change in social attitudes towards relationships between the sexes. When Clarissa and he were young it seems that society regarded frivolous flirtation as far too dangerous an aspect of relations between the sexes to be allowed. Yet, on his voyage out to England “there were lots of young men and girls – Betty and Bertie he remembered in particular – carrying on quite openly; the old mother sitting and watching them with her knitting, cool as a cucumber

[...] And they weren't engaged: just having a good time; no feelings hurt on either side" [MD, 1925: 61]. This example forms part of those "intangible things you couldn't lay your hands on" like "the words of a girl" or "a housemaid's laughter" which makes him suspect a "shift in the whole pyramidal accumulation which in his youth had seemed immovable" [MD, 1925: 137]. Thus the passing of time grants a gradual gift of change, of relief, constantly stripping society of its obsolete forms. If the past is an agent of change, that change is in some instances more concrete than just a housemaid's laughter or a girl's words. Civilisation is another gift of the past to the present. And although it has been pointed out that Woolf does not necessarily regard all the trappings of civilisation in a positive light, most notably power structures, there are instances in *Mrs Dalloway* where possible admiration for the intricate and refined social structure of a highly evolved society is expressed. So, for instance, Peter Walsh also reflects that "disliking India, and Empire, and Army as he did), there were moments when civilisation, even of this sort, seemed dear to him as a personal possession; moments of pride in England; in butlers; chow dogs; girls in their security" [MD, 1925: 47]. Later on he observes the progress of an ambulance and thinks it "one of the triumphs of civilisation [...]. It struck him [...] the efficiency, the organisation, the communal spirit of London" [MD, 1925: 128].

It is this triumph of civilisation, this joy in the communal spirit of London, that *Mrs Dalloway* opens with. At the very outset of the novel the joy in the triumph of life is juxtaposed with history as the well of tears. The joy that Clarissa experiences in the morning of the day the novel is set, thinking "what a lark! What a plunge! For so it had always seemed to her when [...] she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air" [MD, 1925: 3], contains at the outset all the elements of history as the well of tears, invariably recalling Peter and their failed relationship, and history as the triumph of life, since her very joy in existence testifies to the fact that life has continued despite her youthful well of tears. As Clarissa walks in London, she loves this "here, now, in front of her; the fat lady in the cab" [MD, 1925: 8], and again the bond between strangers living on the same moment in the process of becoming the past is emphasised, still, as she walks she remembers her youth and her youthful disappointment in love, she remembers the war and she ponders her daughter's strange relationship with

Miss Kilman. Yet Clarissa deliberately turns her back on the well of tears, with the words “Nonsense! Nonsense” [*MD*, 1925: 11] flung in the face of her morbid reflections, she enters the florist’s; she deliberately chooses life, beauty and joy over the well of tears.

Where Clarissa makes a deliberate choice in favour of life, life spontaneously thwarts the stifling historical power structures. For though political systems, firmly rooted in historical justifications, attempt to mould and control society, “the most dejected of miseries sitting on doorsteps (drink their downfall) [...] can’t be dealt with” because “they love life” [*MD*, 1925: 4]. In the same sense, although the powerful historical symbol of political power in the grey car interrupts the normal activity of everyday life, eventually even that agent of the well of tears is held up by “the British middle classes sitting sideways on the tops of omnibuses with parcels and umbrellas” [*MDI*, 1925: 14] and has to burn its way through “by force of its own lustre” [*MD*, 1925: 15]. Moll Pratt, an old and poor flower seller, has not been conquered by poverty and the supposed tragedy of her private past; joyfully she would have “tossed the price of a pot of beer – a bunch of roses – into St James’s Street” but the “constable’s eye [was] upon her” and so the historical symbol of authority “discourage[es] an old Irishwoman’s loyalty” [*MD*, 1925: 16], yet essentially her joy in life is undiminished. Sitting in a park, surrounded by life, Septimus and Mrs Dempster are both victims of the well of tears. Yet it is because Septimus is so very sensitive to life – “Men must not cut down trees. There is a God [...] Change the world. No one kills from hatred” [*MD*, 1925: 21] – that he is so very aware of the well of tears. In Mrs Dempster’s case, though she has “had a hard time of it” and thinks that romance and roses are “all trash m’dear”, she still loves life, often eating her lunch in Regent’s Park and saving her crusts for the squirrels and she enjoys the sea and the aeroplane; thus despite all her misgivings about her past life triumphs in the end [*MD*, 1925: 25-26]. In all this there is a great sense of community, which Peter finds so impressive of civilisation; but which is also a by-product of history. And despite the onslaught of history as the well of tears, the community as a group, but also as individuals, triumphs over it by continuing life. From establishing Clarissa and Septimus, her two main characters, in their community, Woolf goes on to explore each character’s individual triumph over the well of tears.

As Clarissa returns to her house the news that her husband will be lunching out without her causes her to experience the full impact of her isolation and of the ravages of time. She makes a foray into her past and relives the events that would eventually lead her to make the decision that would cause her to end up in the position she finds herself in, in the present. At that moment she feels that “the icy claws had the chance to fix in her” [MD, 1925: 31]. What “icy claws”? They are icy claws belonging to the passage of time, to the consciousness of mortality and to the past that lies behind her. Immediately she decides to counteract this negative sensation by plunging “into the very heart of the moment”; in other words to concentrate on life. Through this she gains victory over those icy claws, takes her party dress, a symbol of the triumph of life, from the cupboard and gains calm, thinking “fear no more, says the heart [...] committing its burden to the sea” [MD, 1925: 34].

No sooner has Clarissa reached this state of equilibrium, than she is confronted face to face with her past, her personal well of tears, in the form of Peter Walsh. This is a painful meeting for them both as it confronts them with the question of what they had done with their lives. For Clarissa there is the realisation that “it was all over for her. The sheet was stretched and the bed narrow” [MD, 1925: 40]. For Peter there is again the realisation that “Clarissa refused [him]” [MD, 1925: 42]. Yet both of them triumph over their respective well of tears.

Peter Walsh dares to fall in love again despite the ravages of time. For even though Clarissa’s immediate reaction to the revelation is one of horror, thinking it dreadful “that he at his age should be [...] sucked under by that monster” [MD, 1925: 38], she has to admit that it is in some sense an enviable state, a vigorous proof of life. Peter himself has his doubts about this latest development in his life, thinking that it “might be happier [...] that she should forget him” [MD, 1925: 134]. Yet the very fact that he has had the courage to entangle himself in love again is a triumph of life.

Clarissa also triumphs over the well of tears in her own right. At first, on seeing Peter again, she feels the loss of youth and youthful love keenly. She feels deserted by her husband, the man she chose above Peter. Yet Richard Dalloway returns from Lady Bruton’s lunch party, bearing roses for his wife. At that moment Clarissa’s choice is vindicated. For she reflects that “there is a dignity in people; a solitude; even between

husband and wife a gulf; and that one must respect [...] for one would not part with it oneself [...] without losing one's independence, one's self-respect – something after all, priceless" [MD, 1925: 101]. This she could never have had with Peter because with him "everything had to be shared; everything gone into [...] she had to break with him or they would have been destroyed, both of them ruined" [MD, 1925: 7]. Clarissa is also not rebuffed by illness or accusations of frivolity from pursuing her own personal form of creativity, which is bringing people together at her parties. She regards this as a perfectly valid contribution to life. Her party at the end of the novel is symbolic of the final triumph of life over the well of tears. As such it can be said that Clarissa is the main symbol of the triumph of life. At her party she unifies not only the living – divided by their private pasts in life – Hugh Whitbread, Peter Walsh and Sally Seton are all there, but the living and the dead are also united. Clarissa reflects on hearing about Septimus' suicide from Lady Bradshaw that "in the middle of [her] party, here's death" [MD, 1925: 156]. Yet instead of casting a shadow, Septimus' death is perceived by Clarissa to be a triumph, for she reflects that "death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate [...] There was an embrace in death" [MD, 1925: 156]. Septimus is further vindicated by Clarissa as a symbol of life in that she correctly blames Dr Bradshaw for his death and she feels, as a symbol of society, that somehow it was also "her disaster – her disgrace" [MD, 1925: 157]. Thus in death there remains a connection between Clarissa and Septimus who had lived on the same day, in the same city; and thus shared a basic historical bond.

Thus even though Septimus as a character is mainly symbolic of the victims of the well of tears, he is also a champion of the triumph of life. For even on the verge of committing suicide he thinks, "he did not want to die. Life was good. The sun hot" [MD, 1925: 127]. His suicide can be read as an act of defiance against the coercive hold of history and society, but at the same time, paradoxically, his death is an emphasis on the precious quality of life. Thus through Septimus' death, Woolf emphasises the dual quality of history – consisting of human lives – as both the well of tears and the triumph of life. Finally it seems as if Woolf found this paradox to be an integral aspect of the value we attach to the cognisance of the passage of time and the life of the individual; for she ends her novel with a final illustration of her dual vision. As Sally Seton and Peter Walsh

prepare to depart from Clarissa's party, without having had the opportunity to re-establish their old connection with her, Peter thinks "what is this terror? What is this ecstasy? [...]. What is it that fills me with extraordinary excitement?" and as he gazes on his past he finds an answer: "it is Clarissa [...]. For there she was" [*MD*, 1925: 165].

To the Lighthouse: The triumph of life is a balanced portrayal

In her chapter on “Womanhood and Discourse: *To the Lighthouse*”, Linden Peach quotes Hermione Lee’s description of *To the Lighthouse* as a “ghost story” [2000: 119]; and indeed this would seem to be a fitting description of this nostalgic novel which deals with its author’s private past and at the same time serves as a response to an influential preceding era in the national past of Britain. This chapter will attempt an exploration of Virginia Woolf’s use of fiction to regain a balanced and sincere view of the past, both on a national and a personal level. Her attempts to challenge traditional notions of historic delineation and of what is historically significant will also be discussed as well as her views on the nature of historical transcendence in the light of the ephemeral nature of life.

The statement that in *To the Lighthouse* Virginia Woolf explores and responds to her own personal past, needs no more justification than the creator of Mr and Mrs Ramsay provides herself. In her diary of November 1928 Woolf notes that it is

Father's birthday he would have been 96, yes, today; & could have been 96, like other people one has known; but mercifully was not. His life would have entirely ended mine. What would have happened? No writing, no books; - inconceivable. I used to think of him and mother daily; but writing *The Lighthouse*, laid them in my mind. And now he comes back sometimes, but differently. (I believe this to be true - that I was obsessed by them both, unhealthily; & writing of them was a necessary act). He comes back now more as a contemporary [*The Diary*, Vol. 3: 208].

Recollecting her creative impulse Woolf writes in "A Sketch of the Past" that

one day walking round Tavistock Square I made up, as I sometimes make up my books, *To the Lighthouse*, in a great apparently involuntary rush. One thing burst into another. [Like] blowing bubbles out of a pipe... What blew the bubbles? Why then? I have no notion. But I wrote the book very quickly and when it was written I ceased to be obsessed with my mother.[...] I suppose I did for myself what Psycho-analysts do for their patients. I expressed some very long felt and deeply felt emotion. And in expressing it I explained it and laid it to rest [*MoB*, 1976: 81].

What was this “long felt and deeply felt emotion”? In the light of Julia Stephen’s untimely death it was probably some impossible mixture of love and admiration and frustration at the loss of a mother at a vulnerable age; but it was also the frustration of a

daughter who held radically differing views regarding the role of women in society and strove after other ideals in living a worthwhile life than her mother did. Woolf's father also evoked conflicting reactions from her. For proof of this one only needs to compare the earlier quotation from her diary about Sir Leslie's birthday with her remark made in a letter written in January 1904, a month before her father's death: "It amazes me how much I get out of my father still [...] he is the most delightful of people" [*The Letters*, Vol. 1: 123].

The conflicting emotions Woolf experienced regarding her parents differed, however, in nature. She was twenty-two when her father died in February 1904 and, although this too is a young age to lose a parent, she was already old enough to have experienced her father in a more mature light. On the other hand she had lost her mother at a much more confusing and impressionable age, having been only thirteen when Julia died. Writing in her diary in May 1924 she recalls: "This is the 29th anniversary of mother's death. [...] I was 13 & could fill a whole page or more with my impressions of that day, many of them ill received by me, & hidden from the grown ups, but very memorable on that account: how I laughed, for instance, behind the hand which was meant to hide my tears, & through the fingers saw the nurses sobbing" [*The Diary*, Vol. 2: 300]. Twenty nine years after her mother's death one still picks up a vague feeling of guilt and remorse and bewilderment in Woolf's description of her reaction to the event.

If the young Virginia Stephen personally experienced her mother's death as confusing, the effect it had on her family, as a whole, was even more bewildering. "With mother's death", she writes in "A Sketch of the Past", "the merry, various family life which she had held in being shut for ever. In its place a dark cloud settled over us; we seemed to sit all together cooped up, sad, solemn, unreal, under a haze of heavy emotion. It seemed impossible to break through. It was not merely dull; it was unreal. A finger seemed laid on one's lips" [*MoB*, 1976: 93].

Much of this feeling Virginia Stephen experienced of being shut-up, both verbally and physically, unfortunately sprouted from Sir Leslie's reaction to Julia's death. Writing "Reminiscences" for her sister Vanessa's baby son, Julian, Woolf recalls that "your grandfather had in him much of the stuff of a Hebrew prophet; something of the amazing vigour of his youth remained to him, but [...] all his devotion for many years had

concentrated itself upon his home. and now that against all his expectations his wife had died before him, he was like one who, by the failure of some stay, reels staggering blindly about the world, and fills it with his woe” [MoB, 1976: 41]. Certainly, had their father reacted differently, the Stephen children might have come to terms with their mother’s death more readily; as things were, however, “the tragedy of her death was not that it made one, now and then and very intensely, unhappy. It was that it made her unreal, and us solemn and self-conscious” [MoB, 1976: 95].

What added to the process of making Julia unreal to her children was the very document which Sir Leslie compiled for the benefit of their memory of her, the *Mausoleum Book*. In this work he tended to “idealise his recollections of her” [Newman, 1999: 3]. Quentin Bell states about his grandfather’s portrayal of his grandmother that Sir Leslie “has drawn the portrait of a saint and because she is a saint one cannot believe in her” [Bell, 1973: 17-18]. This was part of the conflict of emotion that Woolf experienced regarding her mother: Sir Leslie’s hagiography and the intense emotion surrounding her death had removed Julia’s memory from the sphere of reality, yet Woolf was old enough at the time of her mother’s death to recall later in life that her mother was not a saint. Somewhere in Woolf’s memory, unspoken of and unexplored, the real Julia Stephen lived and haunted her truth-seeking daughter. Something of this is revealed by her remark in her diary of March 1923, “We had the photographs out. Lytton [Strachey] said ‘I don’t like your mother’s character. Her mouth seems complaining’ & a shaft of white light fell across my dusky rich red past” [The Diary, Vol. 2: 239].

Woolf’s experiential recollection of her father, on the other hand, was only too real; but this reality posed its own challenge: how to reconcile all the conflicting impressions of one man into a coherent, balanced whole and how to deal with all the conflicting emotions which those impressions created. For Sir Leslie Stephen was a highly contradictory individual. On the one hand he was a “Hebrew prophet” lamenting the death of his wife with abandon and straightjacketing his children into doing the same, whilst on the other hand he was the one who could “suddenly brush aside all our conventional relationships, and show us for a minute an inspiring vision of free life, bathed in an impersonal light. There were numbers of things to be learnt; books to be read, and success and happiness were to be attained there without disloyalty” [MoB,

1976: 46-47].

Noel Annan points out that there was another draft, with a description of her father, which Woolf never incorporated into “A Sketch of the Past”. According to him, in this draft, she

categorized Sir Leslie as three fathers; the sociable father; the writer father and the tyrant father. She realised that her feelings about him were formed at an age when she could know little of the sociable father; though as a child she 'had many a shock of acute pleasure when he fixed his very small blue eyes upon me and somehow made me feel that we were in league together'. ... The image of the writer father was stamped on a steel engraving captioned 'Cambridge Intellectual' [Annan, 1984: 132].

Unfortunately “the father she remembered all too well was the tyrant father” [Annan, 1984: 133]. After the loss of his wife, Sir Leslie became increasingly difficult to live with. In “A Sketch of the Past” Woolf states about her father that: “at the age of sixty-five he was almost completely isolated, imprisoned. Whole tracts of his sensibility had atrophied. [...] not only had he no conception of what he himself did and said; he had no idea what other people felt [...] No one could enlighten him. He suffered. We suffered” [MoB, 1976: 126]. Annan also quotes a more personal description by Woolf of what life with her father was like:

It was like being shut up in the same cage with a wild beast. Suppose I, at 15, was a nervous gibbering little monkey, always spitting or cracking a nut and shying the shells about, and mopping and mowing, and leaping into dark corners and then swinging in rapture across the cage, he was the pacing, dangerous, morose lion; a lion who was sulky and angry and injured; and suddenly ferocious, and then very humble and then majestic; and then lying dusty and fly pestered in a corner of the cage [Annan, 1984: 133].

In writing *To the Lighthouse* then, Woolf endeavours to recreate a whole image of her parents. This does not mean that her portrayal of Sir Leslie as Mr Ramsay and of Julia as Mrs Ramsay was meant to be completely realistic and factual. Indeed, as Gillian Beer points out, “Virginia Woolf attempts to honour her obligations to family history and yet freely to dispose of that history” [Beer, 1989: 184]. Her portraits were true enough, though, to prompt Vanessa Bell to respond, after reading *To the Lighthouse* for the first time, that Woolf had “given a portrait of Mother which is more like her to me than anything I could ever have conceived of as possible. It is almost painful to have her so

raised from the dead. You have made me feel the extraordinary beauty of her character [...] It was like meeting her again with oneself grown up and on equal terms” [Appendix, *The Letters*, Vol. 3: 572]. About the portrayal of Sir Leslie she states: “it seems to me to be the only thing about him which ever gave a true idea” [ibid]. What enables Woolf to create these impressively lifelike portraits of her parents is her choice to write fictionalized biography and not biography in a conventional sense of the word.

On one level then her intention with the portrayal of her parents in *To the Lighthouse* is very similar to what her aim was in portraying Kitty Maxse in *Mrs Dalloway*. But where she made use of Kitty’s character as a model for her main character in the fictionalised plot of *Mrs Dalloway*, the characters of Mr and Mrs Ramsay only re-enact a thinly disguised plot based on the real biographical tragedy of Woolf’s early family life. Thus in a sense Mr and Mrs Ramsay are intended to be far more biographically accurate than Clarissa Dalloway. Virginia Woolf wanted to portray her real parents, but the only way in which she could actually render a true likeness was through fiction.

In “A Sketch of the Past” Woolf explains that “one of the memoir writer’s difficulties – one of the reasons why [...] so many are failures” is due to the fact that “they leave out the person to whom things happened. The reason is that it is so difficult to describe any human being. So they say: ‘This is what happened’; but they do not say what the person was like to whom it happened. And the events mean very little unless we know first to whom they happened” [*MoB*, 1976: 65]. In fictionalising her parents Woolf creates a space where they can be set in natural motion once more and thus her audience has the opportunity to get to know them. In *To the Lighthouse* we can see Mrs Ramsay going about her business; we share her thoughts and are charmed by her grace and beauty; and frustrated by her indulgence of her demanding husband. And that is why the reader experiences genuine shock and sympathy when Mrs Ramsay dies so suddenly. Something of the real impact of Julia Stephen, in life and death, is captured through Woolf’s use of this technique. Woolf realised that it was more important for her as a writer to give a true *idea* of what her parents were like than to create a factual account of their lives which fails to involve her audience. She had realised the subtle danger of factual biography which eventually leaves the real portrait incomplete already in 1920

when she remarks in her diary about Lytton Strachey's Queen Victoria: "I doubt whether these portraits are true – whether that's not too much the conventional way of making history" [*The Diary*, Vol. 2: 65].

But in fictionalising her parents and incorporating all the conflicting impressions into one whole, Woolf also attempts to strip away the hagiography and biased impressions of adolescence and retrieve something of their real being from the past through a balanced portrayal; in the process she finally managed to come to terms with each of her parents respectively. For her portrayal of her mother, as Mrs Ramsay, is certainly not that of a saint. Lily Briscoe experiences Mrs Ramsay as "alarming [...] in her way, high handed" [*TtL*, 1927: 65]; "presiding with immutable calm over destinies which she completely failed to understand" [*TtL*, 1927: 69]. Paul Rayley and Minta Doyle count amongst those in whose lives Mrs Ramsay meddles; Paul, having asked Minta to marry him, thinks afterwards that "Mrs Ramsay was the person who had made him do it" [*TtL*, 1927:106]. And years later Lily reflects about the Rayleys that "the marriage had turned out rather badly" [*TtL*, 1927: 233] and in the light of this fact "she had felt she could stand up to Mrs Ramsay – a tribute to the astonishing power that Mrs Ramsay had over one. Do this, she said, and one did it. Even her shadow at the window with James was full of authority" [*TtL*, 1927: 238]. Lily herself "had only escaped by the skin of her teeth" [*TtL*, 1927: 237] for "Mrs Ramsay had planned" for her and William Bankes to be married, "perhaps, had she lived, she would have compelled it" [*TtL*, 1927; 236]. And Lily is "angry with Mrs Ramsay" for "Mrs Ramsay had given. Giving, giving, giving, she had died and left all this" [*TtL*, 1927: 203]. It is not for her death, though, that Lily blames Mrs Ramsay; she blames her for the fact that "all this desire of hers to give, to help, was vanity. For her own self-satisfaction was it that she wished so instinctively to help, to give, that people might say of her, 'O Mrs Ramsay! Dear Mrs Ramsay...Mrs Ramsay, of course!'" [*TtL*, 1927: 58].

Through her portrait of Mrs Ramsay, Woolf manages to achieve more than just to point out some of Julia's flaws; she actually manages to capture something of Julia's many-faceted character. She captures "the sternness at the heart of her beauty" [*TtL*, 1927: 88], the fact that she "was aloof [...] in her beauty, in her sadness" [*TtL*, 1927:89], and on the other hand that she could be "full of gaiety" and vivacious "like a girl of

twenty” [TtL, 1927: 157] and on realising that the circus is in town exclaims impulsively “let us all go” [TtL, 1927: 18]. Her warmth, spontaneity and naturalness, despite her great beauty and grace, are captured by Mrs Ramsay’s running “across the lawn in galoshes to snatch a child from mischief” with “a deer-stalker’s hat on her head” [TtL, 1927: 42] and her great love for her children is suggested in the comment that Mrs Ramsay “would have liked always to have had a baby” [TtL, 1927: 80]. But then she could also be accused of being “tyrannical, domineering, masterful” [TtL, 1927: 80] and is “formidable to behold” [TtL, 1927: 11].

As a biographical portraitist Woolf is very just. It would have been easy to idealise Mrs Ramsay at the cost of Mr Ramsay, Julia at the cost of Sir Leslie. Yet Woolf states about her parents’ relationship in “A Sketch of the Past” that her “mother, too much obsessed with his health, his pleasure, was too willing, I think now, to offer us up for sacrifice on that altar, leaving thus a legacy of dependence on his side which became a terrible imposition after her death” [MoB, 1976: 114]. And indeed during the last section of *To the Lighthouse* one does get the impression that Mr Ramsay’s pitiable state is due, at least partly, to Mrs Ramsay’s conduct. She deliberately fostered his dependence on her by indulging him and sheltering him from the realities of life. But then, in the portrayal of her father, Woolf also had an imbalance to correct. Leslie Stephen idealised Julia, and he in turn was idealised by his official biographer, F. W. Maitland. In Woolf’s opinion Maitland gave no true idea of what it was really like to live with the elderly Sir Leslie. Her father’s immense self-pity and irrational outbursts “were never indulged in before men” [MoB, 1976: 125], which explains why Maitland “resolutely refused to believe [...] that Leslie had a temper” [MoB, 1976: 125]. Thus if Woolf attempts to recover something of the true character of her mother in *To the Lighthouse*, her attempt at recovering something of her father’s true nature is no less magnanimous. For although it might be easy to denounce her portrait of Mr Ramsay as unsympathetic, a close reading of the text reveals a far more consciously balanced portrayal of her father than Woolf is generally credited with.

All three categories into which she placed her father are present in her portrayal of Mr Ramsay. The sociable, approachable father is remembered by his friend William Bankes for stopping on a Westmorland road, pointing his stick at “a hen straddling her

wings out in protection of a covey of little chicks” and saying ““Pretty-Pretty””; which William realised was an odd “illumination into his heart [...] which showed his simplicity, his sympathy with humble things” [TtL, 1927: 30]. Mr Ramsay also has the habit of making “favourites of girls like Minta”, simple, unintellectual girls, who “might cut his hair for him, plait him watch chains, or interrupt him at his work, hailing him [...] ‘come along, Mr Ramsay, it’s our turn to beat them now’, and out he would come to play tennis” [TtL, 1927: 134]. The Cambridge intellectual father is portrayed in Mr Ramsay’s unbending pursuit of truth: “he was incapable of untruth; never tampered with a fact; never altered a disagreeable word to suit the pleasure or convenience of any mortal being” [TtL, 1927: 8]. He is even brutally honest about his own abilities: “He had not genius; he laid no claim to that: but he had, or might have had, the power to repeat every letter of the alphabet from A-Z accurately in order” [TtL, 1927: 197], the alphabet being used as a metaphor for the academic pursuit in this instance. The third part of the novel is dominated by the tyrant father, “marching up and down the terrace in a rage” [TtL, 1927: 197] and forcing his children to go to the lighthouse: “speak to him they could not. They must come; they must follow. They must walk behind him carrying brown paper parcels. But they vowed, in silence, as they walked, to stand by each other and carry out the great compact – to resist tyranny to the death” [TtL, 1927: 220].

However, if *To the Lighthouse* is an attempt to salvage something of her parents’ real characters from the already constructed past, Woolf is not naïve about the fact that even that attempt at portraying the past remains a human construct. This is reflected by her choice to divide the impressions formed of Mr and Mrs Ramsay amongst their children and Lily Briscoe. Lily is closely involved with the family, but represents something of the more objective observation of an outsider. The Ramsay children, most notably Cam and James, who can be closely associated with Virginia and Adrian Stephen respectively, are subjectively involved and are more biased in their attitude towards their parents. Lily, as outsider, represents the views of maturity. On the one hand she is also a victim of Mr Ramsay’s “immense self-pity, his demand for sympathy” [TtL, 1927: 207] and is struck with the upsetting notion that in his grief “he was acting [...] this great man was dramatising himself” [TtL, 1927: 206]. On the other hand she realises that he is “a figure of infinite pathos” [TtL, 1927: 209], having to raise a large young family alone as

an elderly man: “he tied knots. He bought boots. There was no helping Mr Ramsay on the journey he was going” [*TiL*, 1927: 209]. Thus the moment he stops demanding sympathy and acts in a normal way, at a “completely inappropriate moment, when he was stooping over her shoe”, Lily is “so tormented with sympathy for him that, as she stooped too, the blood rushed to her face, and, thinking of her callousness (she had called him a play actor) she felt her eyes swell and tingle with tears” [*TiL*, 1927: 209]. Lily represents the dilemma of the conflicting emotions regarding her father that Woolf would experience throughout her mature life. Lyndall Gordon states that “near the end of her life she could still see her father from two angles at once: ‘As a child condemning; as a woman of 58 understanding – I should say tolerating. Both views true?’”[Gordon, 1984: 17].

Although Lily feels oppressed by Mr Ramsay as a patriarchal figure, she represents – to some extent – the tolerating, understanding view, despite the realisation of Mr Ramsay’s flaws. In the same way, she is from the outset much more realistic about Mrs Ramsay and her influence than any other character in the novel. From a mature distance Lily realises about Mrs Ramsay that “there must have been people who disliked her very much. People who thought her too sure, too drastic. Also her beauty offended people probably. How monotonous, they would say, and the same always. They preferred another type – the dark, the vivacious. Then she was weak with her husband [...] then she was reserved” [*TiL*, 1927: 264].

Cam and James, in contrast, experience the extremely confusing pull of their father’s personality much more directly. The two children “had vowed, in silence, as they walked, to stand by each other and carry out the great compact – to resist tyranny to the death” [*TiL*, 1927: 220]. For “they had been forced; they had been bidden. He had borne them down once more with his gloom and his authority, making them do his bidding, on this fine morning, come, because he wished it [...] take part in those rites he went through for his own pleasure in memory of dead people” [*TiL*, 1927: 223]. Cam is torn between the compact she has made with her brother and her conflicting emotions regarding her father. Much as she wants to honour the compact with the former, her father poses an “extraordinary temptation. [...] for no one attracted her more; his hands were beautiful to her and his feet, and his voice, and his words, and his haste, and his temper, and his oddity, and his passion, and his saying straight out before everyone, we

perish, each alone, and his remoteness” [TtL, 1927: 229]. Yet what enrages her about her father is his “crass blindness and tyranny” which make her tremble with rage as she remembers some “command of his, some insolence: ‘Do this’, ‘Do that’, his dominance: his ‘Submit to me’” [TtL, 1927: 229]. Clearly Cam is attracted to her father’s personality in general yet there are aspects of his personality which enrage her. His inability to perceive his own actions as unreasonable or coercive leaves her feeling ambivalent towards him. Furthermore James “had always kept this old symbol of taking a knife and striking his father to the heart. Only now, as he grew older, and sat staring at his father in an impotent rage, it was not him, that old man reading, whom he wanted to kill, but it was the thing that descended on him – without his knowing it perhaps – that fierce sudden black-winged harpy [...] that struck and struck at you [...] and then made off, and there he was again, an old man, very sad, reading his book” [TtL, 1927: 248]. Although James does not seem attracted to his father in the same way that Cam does, it is clear that he has an appreciation for his father’s basic humanity as “an old man, very sad, reading a book”; yet it is exactly because his attacks on others, comparable to “a blackwinged harpy”, come as unexpected in the light of his humanity, that they are so damaging. As such James considers that perhaps his father is unaware of this dark aspect of his being. As such James separates what he perceives to be his father’s real nature as the sad old man, from the “thing that descended on him”. However, this leaves a contrasting and confusing impression of his father in his mind.

Where Lily has distance and maturity to help her compose Mr Ramsay in her mind, so that she eventually perceives him as a “very distinguished, elderly man, who had no need of her whatsoever” [TtL, 1927: 209] and regrets her inability to provide him directly with the sympathy that he wants, the children, on the other hand, are caught up with him in the same space directly and are subjected to his whimsical changes from tyrant to being “most lovable, [...] most wise” [TtL, 1927: 256]. These sudden changes leave the children confused and unhappy and mar their relationship with their father.

If the children’s relations with their father are distorted because of their close proximity to him, the distance that the passage of time has created between them and their mother also distorts her in their minds. James reflects about his mother that “she alone spoke the truth; to her alone could he speak it. That was the source of her

everlasting attraction for him, perhaps; she was a person to whom one could say what came into one's head" [*TtL*, 1927: 252]. The word "perhaps" indicates James' uncertainty about his mother's true character and indeed, although not entirely mistaken, he is idealising her. For the very fact that Mrs Ramsay is more compromising in her approach means that she also compromises the truth. She regards it as a "horrible [...] outrage of human decency" to "pursue [the] truth with [...] [a] lack of consideration for other people's feelings" [*TtL*, 1927: 45]. In the process though, she is being less than honest; from Mr Ramsay's viewpoint she "flew in the face of facts, made his children hope what was utterly out of the question, in effect, told lies" [*TtL*, 1927: 45]. Mrs Ramsay is also not entirely approachable either, for she leaves in the minds of her elder children, especially her daughters, "a mute questioning of deference and chivalry, of the bank of England and the Indian Empire, of ringed fingers and lace" [*TtL*, 1927: 11-12]. Their questioning is mute, because Mrs Ramsay's children are neither allowed to articulate their questioning nor to underestimate her support of the status quo; clearly one could not always speak one's mind freely in the presence of Mrs Ramsay.

The distortion of Mrs Ramsay in the minds of her younger children is a prime example illustrating one of the main themes that Woolf explores in *To the Lighthouse*, namely the influence that the passage of time has on our knowledge and perception of individuals and events. Lily Briscoe reflects "looking at the sea which had scarcely a stain on it" that "so much depends [...] upon distance: whether people are near us or far from us; for her feeling for Mr Ramsay changed as he sailed further and further across the bay" [*TtL*, 1927: 258]. It seems that the idea Woolf is trying to convey is that the representation of the past is seldom fixed, not because the events change, but because the perceiver's perception changes.

For Woolf the past is a highly subjective construct. Writing "A Sketch of the Past" she points out that "these [...] are some of my first memories. But of course as an account of my life they are misleading, because the things one does not remember are as important; perhaps they are more important [...]. Unfortunately, one only remembers what is exceptional. And there seems to be no reason why one thing is exceptional and another not" [*MoB*, 1976: 69-70]. To reconstruct the past on the basis of personal memory or even experience is completely subjective, since what is deemed to be

important by one individual might not necessarily be deemed important by another. Woolf's remark, quoted earlier, suggests that her distrust of traditional biography writing, but also history writing, was deep-seated and founded on the idea that the reason why some events are deemed to be more important than others is based on a cultural and personal construction, but that there is very little objective reason to regard one event as more important than another. Already in June 1903 she draws into question the traditionally accepted and respected beacons of life when she states in a letter that she is "sure the facts of life – the marryings and bearings and buryings are the least important and one acts one's drama under the hat" [*The Letters*, Vol. 1: 79-80]. What is then regarded to be the really important event, by the individual, is often hidden from the public eye.

In *To the Lighthouse* as a whole, but especially in the "Time Passes" section, Woolf deals with the idea of history as a human construct on various levels. On one level she undermines traditional notions of what is regarded as historically important, on another she deliberately portrays major historical transitions and events from an awkward angle in order to undermine accepted conventions regarding their portrayal in literature. On a third level "Time Passes", but also *To the Lighthouse* as a whole, asks profound questions about the nature of transcendence and the ephemeral in the context of human life.

In his essay "*To the Lighthouse* and the Great War", James M. Haule quotes an extract from a 1919 *Times Literary Supplement* review by Woolf. In this review she states "the history of the war is not and never will be written from our [feminine/civilian] point of view" because "no one who has taken stock of his own impressions since 4 August 1914, can possibly believe that history as it is written closely resembles history as it is lived, but as we are for the most part quiescent, and, if sceptical ourselves, content to believe [what] the rest of mankind believes, we have no right to complain if we are fobbed off once more with historians' histories" [Haule, 1991:165]. This statement clarifies, to some extent, Woolf's choice to depict the First World War as "two old women cleaning a house and saving it from irreparable ruin" [Hargreaves, 1997: 136].

The characters of Mrs Bast and Mrs McNab, just like Septimus Warren Smith in *Mrs Dalloway*, enable Woolf to deal with the war on a basis closer to her own personal experience. Hargreaves points out that “Woolf’s ambivalence towards the working classes is well known – even a cursory look through her diaries reveals a panoply of conflicting feelings of culpability, sympathy and alienation as she both laments and celebrates working people as other” [Hargreaves, 1997: 139]. Woolf’s identification with Mrs Bast and McNab is therefore not complete, but they are vehicles that allow her to express something of the war impressions of women and civilians whose wartime experiences are considered to be negligible because they stand outside the official historical sphere of action. In addition, precisely because they are working class women, Mrs Bast and McNab are suggestive of Woolf’s attitude towards the eventual signing of peace and the end of the War. Writing in her diary of July 1919, Woolf records that she

ought to say something about Peace Day, I suppose, though whether it’s worth taking a nib for that purpose I don’t know [...] The servants had a triumphant morning. They stood on Vauxhall bridge & saw everything. Generals and soldiers and tanks and nurses and bands took 2 hours in passing. It was, they said, the most splendid sight of their lives. Together with the Zeppelin raid it will play a great part in the history of the Boxall family. But I don’t know – it seems to me a servant’s festival; something got up to pacify and placate ‘the people’” [*The Diary*, Vol. 1: 292].

Thus in Woolf’s view the eventual signing of the peace was an event removed from reality and the spirit of the event was tacky, shabby and commonplace. It is fitting then that Woolf should depict the war and its aftermath through the actions of two servant women; not only was the very nature of the peace aimed at pacifying and placating the working class, but by portraying the war through their actions of housecleaning, Woolf also anchors her depiction of the event in a reality which she regarded as more solid and sincere than official historical fictions portraying the war in heroic terms. Thus, through her portrayal, Woolf also undermines the importance of the war as a recorded historical event. For Mrs McNab clearly has very little capacity for reflection or historical construction: “she was witless, she knew it” [*TtL*, 1927: 177]. Whilst the visionary, walking the beach, obtains answers to the questions “What am I? What is this?” that kept him or her “warm in the frost” and “provided comfort in the desert” [*TtL*, 1927: 179] and is later disturbed by the “silent apparition of an ashen-coloured ship” disappearing and

leaving “a purplish stain upon the bland surface of the sea as if something had boiled and bled, invisibly, beneath” [TtL, 1927: 182], Mrs McNab “continued to drink and gossip as before” [TtL, 1927: 179], the only awareness of the war entering the reality of the house being the sound of war, “ominous sounds like the measured blows of hammers on felt” [TtL, 1927: 181]. Mrs McNab’s limited and subjective historical consciousness is symbolised by her unconscious humming of a popular tune, “something that had been gay twenty years before on the stage perhaps, had been hummed and danced to, but now, coming from the toothless, bonneted, caretaking woman, was robbed of meaning, was like the voice of witlessness” [TtL, 1927: 178]; her historical consciousness’ furthest reach is her recollection of the Ramsays when they still came to the house, especially Mrs Ramsay, whom she could still remember “with one of the children by her in the grey cloak” [TtL, 1927: 185].

Mrs McNab only considers the immediate effect of the war on her own world, and she does this in a strangely dispassionate way, thinking that “many things had changed since [Mrs Ramsay’s time] many families had lost their dearest, [Mrs Ramsay] was dead; and Mr Andrew killed; and Miss Prue dead too [...] but everyone had lost someone these years. Prices had gone up shamefully, and didn’t come down again neither. She could well remember her in her grey cloak” [TtL, 1927: 185]. There is no overt patriotic sentiment in her overview of the war years; the only vague sentiment that she does reveal is for the Ramsays as a family. But Mrs McNab’s immediate concern is not for the empire or for those dying in glory in the trenches, it is for the cost of living and how the changes wrought by the war have affected her personally. Woolf’s portrayal of the war through Mrs McNab clearly reveals the experience of an ordinary individual who is uninvolved in and oblivious of any overt patriotic or historical sentiment. This stands in contrast to official historical fictions that draw on the supposedly widespread experience of patriotic and historical sentiments only to instil those very sentiments in their intended audience.

It is interesting to note how Mrs McNab changed in Woolf’s conception. Haule points out that Woolf published a preliminary and different version of the “Time Passes” section in the Parisian periodical *Commerce*; in his essay “*To the Lighthouse and the Great War*” he compares the published “Time Passes” section with the original typescript

and holograph. In the original draft Mrs McNab is “presented as a brake to the destructive power of war. [...] She is an ancient, one who is beyond history, whose ‘humble’ occupation rescues the things of the world from human destruction”, but she is also “a mystic” who “has a message to the world” [Haule, 1991: 169-170]. In the published final draft, Mrs McNab has been stripped of her visionary and mystic qualities and instead Woolf introduces the visionaries who “pace the beach and ask of the sea and sky what message they reported or what vision they affirmed” [*TtL*, 1927: 182]. The visionaries are the ones who see the “ashen coloured ship” and “this intrusion into a scene calculated to stir the most sublime reflections and lead to the most comfortable conclusions stay[s] their pacing” [*TtL*, 1927: 182]. As a result of this upsetting intrusion they realise “that dream, then, of sharing, completing, finding in solitude on the beach an answer, was but a reflection in a mirror” [*TtL*, 1927: 182]; thus the visionaries come to the disheartening conclusion that their vision has no base in external reality. As such their sought after vision is an unreal ordering of a chaotic universe; they cannot order the here and now into a coherent whole because of the upsetting intrusion of an unforeseen historical cataclysm. The senselessness of this historical intrusion interferes with their vision and it leaves them “despairing, yet loth to go”, with the intractable realisation that “to pace the beach was impossible, contemplation was unendurable, the mirror was broken” [*TtL*, 1927: 182-83]. The visionaries and their disillusion are an illustration of the destructive power that history wields, of its unpredictability and its chaotic nature. In an unforeseen act of destruction and chaos it destroys the visionaries’ world ordering system of philosophy/mysticism/religion. Of course it is not only the war that is implied as a senseless historical intrusion through this portrayal, but also the unexpected deaths of Mrs Ramsay, Andrew Ramsay and Prue Ramsay. Thus history has the same senseless destructive capacity in both the public and the private sphere.

Albeit stripped of her spiritually elevated qualities, Mrs McNab does retain her qualities as a brake to destruction and as a transcendent character who is beyond history, precisely because of her unreceptive stance to it. She illustrates the idea that human life and society’s main staying power do not necessarily depend on the heroes and the enlightened, but rather on those who have the ability to overcome and deal with life’s many obstacles on a daily basis. Her voice is the voice of “persistency itself, trodden

down but springing up again [...] It was not easy or snug this world she had known for close on seventy years. Bowed down she was with weariness” but perhaps “she had her consolations, as if indeed there twined about her dirge some incorrigible hope [...] to twist her face grinning in the glass and make her [...] mumble out the old music hall song” [*TtL*, 1927: 178]. As such, Mrs McNab has much in common with the old beggar woman singing near Regent’s Park Tube station in *Mrs Dalloway*: both are symbols of the continuance of human life despite the onslaught of history and time. Indeed, Mrs McNab seems to be almost an extension of the “insensibility of nature” [*TtL*, 1927: 187]. Though she is eventually the one to stay the rot and corruption of the house, she seems strangely in harmony with nature. As a source of natural life she is the one who tears “the veil of silence” [*TtL*, 1927: 177] which has descended on the man-made, unnatural house; it is she who “broke in and lurched about, dusting, sweeping, looked like a tropical fish oaring its way through sun-lanced waters” [*TtL*, 1927: 181]. At last she is also the one who decides that the house “was too much for one woman” and abandons it “locked, alone” [*TtL*, 1927: 186] to nature.

The moment Mrs McNab abandons the house, nature systematically starts destroying the physical evidence of human history; all artificial human barriers, instilled by tradition and historical knowledge, are removed: “The swallows nested in the drawing-room; the floor was strewn with straw; the plaster fell in shovelfuls; rafters were laid bare [...]. Poppies sowed themselves among the dahlias; the lawn waved with long grass; giant artichokes towered among roses [and] a fringed carnation flowered among the cabbages” [*TtL*, 1927: 187].

The “Time Passes” section deals extensively with the passage of time in the natural world and its influence on the Ramsays’ holiday house. Contrasted with the processes Woolf describes, first of Mrs McNab’s attempts to stay the influence of nature on the house, then of her abandonment of the house to nature, are bracketed pieces of information regarding the Ramsays and some of the guests they entertained in the first part of the novel. The content of these bracketed information sections ranges from the simple action of Mr Carmichael “who blew out his candle” [*TtL*, 1927: 173], to the following unexpected and dramatic image: “Mr Ramsay stumbling along a passage stretched his arms out one dark morning, but Mrs Ramsay having died rather suddenly

the night before [...] they remained empty” [*TtL*, 1927: 175]. Thus very mundane (albeit perhaps symbolic) to very dramatic human actions are emphasized and contrasted with the processes of nature. Banfield points out that “it is striking that in the version of ‘Time Passes’ that Charles Mauron translated [into French] in 1926 [...] these sentences are missing. Their possibly late addition *en bloc* suggests that they encapsulate for Woolf the passage of time the section as a whole represents, recording irreversible events [...] One wedding, three deaths, three insignificant acts, flattened in an arbitrary series. Death is revealed to be as inevitable as the weather” [Banfield, 2000: 50]. The fact that these events are portrayed as inevitable, like processes of nature, draws attention to the fact that the meaning attached to specific happenings, thus also history, is essentially a human construction and that historical consciousness is thus a uniquely human attribute. The happenings described in brackets make no difference to the processes of nature, but to a human reader some of the events stated in brackets, for instance Mrs Ramsay’s death, carry dramatic meaning and as such make a significant difference to the narrative. Thus Woolf seems to be questioning the real significance of human history in the greater scheme of things, and she seems to be suggesting that history is a human device employed to order a threateningly chaotic natural world.

Mrs McNab’s abandonment of the house to nature suggests that the past cannot be materially preserved, but also that the past is not necessarily dependent on material preservation. Woolf’s inspiration for the physical milieu in which *To the Lighthouse* is set was largely drawn from the childhood holidays which her family spent in St. Ives, Cornwall. In April 1914, during a holiday there, she notes in a letter that “we crept into Talland House itself yesterday, and found it wonderfully done up and spick and span, and all the gardens brimming with flowers and rock-gardens – very unlike it was in our day” [*The Letters*, Vol. 2: 48]. Clearly she realised that although the holiday house of her childhood had remained physically intact, it was not the same house any more that her family had filled with life all those years ago. Yet she could, and did in “A Sketch of the Past”, describe that house of her childhood, and the impressions it left in her, in detail. As such Woolf realised that the physicality of the past, the attempt at its material preservation, is not as important as the continuing influence of the impression it leaves; and the description of that influence is the really important preserve of history.

The idea that history is a human construct and that it is internal and spiritual, rather than external and material, is vital to a satisfactory reading of *To the Lighthouse*. When Lily Briscoe asks Andrew Ramsay what his father's books are about, he answers "Subject and object and the nature of reality" and "when she said Heavens, she had no notion what that meant" he tells her "think of a kitchen table when you're not there" [*TtL*, 1927: 33]. Gillian Beer opens her essay on "Hume, Stephen and Elegy in *To the Lighthouse*" with a quote from David Hume's *A Treatise on Human Nature*, in it Hume states that "when my perceptions are removed for any time, as by sound sleep; so long am I insensible of myself, and may truly be said not to exist. And were all my perceptions remov'd by death, and cou'd I neither think, nor feel, nor see, nor love, nor hate after the dissolution of my body, I shou'd be entirely annihilated, nor do I perceive what is further requisite to make me a perfect non-entity" [Beer, 1989: 184]. She goes on to explain that "in *To the Lighthouse* the fictitiousness of the separation between object and subject, the question of where to draw the line, is passionately explored [...] by the entire narrative process" [Beer, 1989: 184]. If our perceptions constitute our reality, then as long as those perceptions exist the external reality that formed them continues to exist in some form, albeit in the individual in whom these perceptions are lodged. This idea has dramatic bearing on the past and our notions of how the past is delineated from the present, but also how the past is represented. Woolf seems to emphasize that the past is constantly present in the present.

This idea is all encompassing; it is not only true of individuals, but also of ideologies and science. As a theory of transcendence it has bearing on both Mr and Mrs Ramsay. As Victorians who had lost their faith, and thus also their primary source for a belief in transcendence, Mr and Mrs Ramsay are both acutely aware of the passage of time and the ephemeral quality of life. Though Mrs Ramsay still has an instinctive inclination towards religion and thinks in an unguarded moment "we are in the hands of the Lord" [*TtL*, 1927: 86], she rationally rejects this notion with the question "how could any Lord have made this world?" for there is "no reason, order, justice: but suffering, death, the poor" [*TtL*, 1927: 87]. Furthermore she associates the sounds of nature with "a ghostly roll of drums" that "remorselessly beat the measure of life" and "made one think of the destruction of the island and its engulfment in the sea, and warned her whose day

had slipped past in one quick doing after another that it was all ephemeral as a rainbow” [TiL, 1927: 24]. Like many Victorians, Sir Leslie Stephen had lost his faith through a very literal reading of the scriptures. As a follower of the Utilitarian ideas of Mills and Bentham, he found it necessary to “apply the strictest Utilitarian factual principles of verifiability to the Bible stories. When he had done so, he discovered that he had never had any ‘faith’ to give up” [Wilson, 1999: 10]. Sir Leslie was in no sense deviant in this regard: Wilson points out that this “literalism and idolatrous [...] attitude to ‘science’ are characteristic of the Victorians who lost their faith” and furthermore “so too is their terrible, pitiable unhappiness, their sense of metaphysical isolation” [Wilson, 1999: 12]. This seems to provide an explanation for Mr Ramsay’s morbid remark: “looking at the land dwindling away, the little island seemed pathetically small, half swallowed up in the sea. ‘Poor little place’, he murmured with a sigh” [TiL, 1927: 94]. His remark seems to suggest that he projects his feelings about the smallness and inconsequentiality of human life, in a godless universe, on to the land being overwhelmed by the ocean. This ties in with the idea that “the triumph of the new materialism (represented by worldviews like utilitarianism, positivism and naturalism) failed to provide the emotional security that religion had offered, leaving [Victorian sceptics] desirous of some other source of spiritual comfort” [Gaipa, 2003: 4]. Gaipa reads the “Time Passes” section as Woolf’s response to Victorian materialism. Indeed from the evidence which he provides this interpretation seems very relevant. Woolf apparently makes use of imagery and examples that are taken directly from Sir Leslie Stephen’s essay “What is materialism?”. The image of a table that Andrew uses to illustrate his father’s work seems to draw on Sir Leslie’s equivalent example from the essay and furthermore

towards the end of the essay, Stephen recounts how [...] Adolf Harnack, in his work [...] the *History of Christian Dogma* ‘compares the history of religion to the fairy-story of the mortal to whom it was granted to become whatever he wished, and who rose through successive stages to be king, Kaiser, and pope, and then wished to become God, when he fell back to his original misery’. The story Stephen describes is clearly a version of the Grimms’ fairy tale that Mrs Ramsay reads to James – and which Woolf quotes extensively from – in ‘The Window’ [Gaipa, 2003: 6].

According to Gaipa, Woolf responds to Sir Leslie’s assertion that “there are necessary limits to what we can know, and that we ‘land [...] into insuperable

difficulties' when we presume to step beyond them. [...] Stephen contends that there is every reason to distrust what we have to take on faith, and that the progress of humankind largely comes from 'materialists', heeding what the empirical sciences reveal about the world" [Gaipa, 2003: 6]. In "Time Passes" Woolf strives to "overrule the empirical limits [Sir Leslie] advises us to observe" [Gaipa, 2003: 6]. As such, in "Time Passes", Woolf seems to attempt a counter argument to the empiricist approach to history. She seems to suggest that such an approach to history is far too limited and that as a result, history might be robbed of its true significance. Woolf questions her father's empirical limits not only in "Time Passes" but in *To the Lighthouse* as a whole, through her portrayal of history and the past as a presence in the present; indeed she seems to be implying that material transcendence over death and destruction brought about by the passage of time is limited, but that the spiritual legacy of humankind provides an opportunity for transcendence across the coming and going of ages that is more lasting. Keeping this idea in mind, she seems to suggest that what we value as historically significant should be focused less on the quantifiable, verifiable material legacy of the past and more on its qualitative, spiritual legacy.

The above statement is illustrated by Mr and Mrs Ramsay's differing responses to the idea of the passage of time leading to their own eventual demise. Mr Ramsay is constantly concerned about his work, whether it will survive the onslaught of time or whether it will perish. In effect he is worried about whether something of him will transcend death. He is very pessimistic about the actual possibility of this since time and nature are destructive of all history: "the very stone one kicks will outlast Shakespeare. His own little light would shine, not very brightly for a year or two and would then be merged in some bigger light, and that in a bigger still" [*TtL*, 1927: 50]. Despite the fact that Mr Ramsay seems to realise that any meaningful contribution to civilization survives through being internalised in succeeding civilizations, he is robbed of the comfort that this holds because of his egotism. He longs to be singled out as an individual in history on the basis of the material legacy that he leaves behind, his work.

Mrs Ramsay, in contrast, takes comfort in spiritual transcendence because of her variety of egotism. With regard to her matchmaking between Paul and Minta she thinks:

it flattered her where she was most susceptible to flattery, to think how, wound about in their hearts, however long they lived she would be woven; and this, and this, and this, she thought going upstairs, laughing, but affectionately, at the sofa (her mother's) at the rocking chair (her father's); at the map of the Hebrides. All that would be revived again in the lives of Paul and Minta [...] that community of feeling with other people which emotion gives as if the walls of partition had become so thin that practically ... it was all one stream, and chairs, tables, maps, were hers, were theirs, it did not matter whose, and Paul and Minta would carry it on when she was dead [*TtL*, 1927: 153].

Mrs Ramsay does not need the assurance that her memory will survive on the basis of her material contribution to history; she trusts in the contribution she makes to the emotional and spiritual life of people on a small scale, thus on private recollection, to perpetuate her memory. She has accepted the fact that she will die and that in death individual identity is lost, but she trusts in the great stream of life to carry on something of her contribution in the lives of others. As such she views even our private ownership of material possessions as irrelevant because the material past only has meaning as long as its spiritual core continues.

Clearly both Mr and Mrs Ramsay desire some form of transcendence and find different outlets for this desire, befitting their respective gender roles within their specific social context: Mrs Ramsay finding her opportunity for transcendence within the sphere of the private and Mr Ramsay hoping to find his opportunity for transcendence in the public academic sphere. It seems, though, as if Woolf reinforces the validity of Mrs Ramsay's hope of a spiritual transcendence over mortality. For the physical and the material in *To the Lighthouse* are subjected to death, ruin and loss: Mrs Ramsay dies, the house decays and Minta loses the brooch inherited from her grandmother. Yet, because she is remembered by Mrs McNab – not for her work, but for her kindness – Mrs Ramsay is spiritually present, though “faint and flickering, like a yellow beam at the end of a telescope” [*TtL*, 1927: 186], whilst Mrs McNab, ineffectually, tries to stay the onslaught of time and nature on the material world that Mrs Ramsay inhabited. Recalled from death by Mrs McNab's memory of her, Mrs Ramsay stands “stooping over her flowers” and goes “wandering over the bedroom wall, up the dressing-table, across the washstand” [*TtL*, 1927: 186]. In “The Lighthouse” section of the novel Lily also awakes in the Ramsays' holiday house once more, only to find that “the house, the place, the morning, all seemed

strangers to her” because “she had no attachment there” [TtL, 1927: 198]. Thus the material place where she spent a happy summer years ago is not capable of supplying her with connection or continuity because of the spiritual absence of her historical connection to the place, Mrs Ramsay. It is only after Lily experiences the spiritual presence of Mrs Ramsay that she is finally able to create continuity, both in her painting and with the physical world around her - the place and its present inhabitants.

Woolf’s apparent suggestion that the past is more spiritual than material and as such also still present in the present, entails that the past cannot easily be delineated and set aside. In *To the Lighthouse* she deliberately unsettles the humanly constructed barriers between the past and the present. Mrs Ramsay’s ghostly return that completes Lily’s composition and Mr Carmichael, albeit humorously, “looking like an old pagan God, shaggy with weeds in his hair and the trident [...] in his hand” [TtL, 1927: 280] are examples of the past in the present. In the case of the description of Mr Carmichael it is an illustration from the novel of the spiritual survival of the heritage of preceding civilisations to be found in the present civilisation, in this case a reference to the spiritual debt owed to the great pagan civilisations of antiquity.

Lily’s reaction to Mrs Ramsay’s ghostly presence is significant – “Mrs Ramsay! Mrs Ramsay’ she cried, feeling the old horror come back – to want and to want and not to have. Could she inflict that still?” [TtL, 1927: 272]. This is a vivid depiction of the great hold the past has on the present exactly because it extends into the present through its spiritual legacy, but with the frustrating consequence that it cannot be physically recalled. The past as a spiritual entity is ungraspable and is dependent on imagination. This dependence is portrayed through Lily’s remembrance of the personal history of her acquaintances, the couple matched by Mrs Ramsay, the Rayleys: “Her impressions of the Rayleys [...] appeared to her in a series of scenes” [TtL, 1927: 233]. She constructs these scenes on the basis of scraps of information that she gleaned from their life, yet she realises that “not a word of it was true; she had made it up” and she realises that “this making up scenes about them, is what we call ‘knowing people’, ‘thinking’ of them, ‘being fond’ of them” [TtL, 1927: 234]. If this is the case for those people still inhabiting the physical world, what are the implications for those who now inhabit the realm of the spirit? This is partly why Lily murmurs “Oh the dead! [...] One pitied them, one brushed

them aside, one even had a little contempt for them. They are at our mercy” [*TtL*, 1927: 235-6]. The ones who inhabit the realm of memory are not physically present to defend themselves any more against false portrayal and incorrect impressions. In Mrs Ramsay’s case she has “faded and gone” and now the living “can over-ride her wishes, improve away her limited, old-fashioned ideas. She recedes further and further from us” [*TtL*, 1927: 236].

What Woolf seems to be implying is that the living have a responsibility when remembering the dead. The memory of the dead and their portrayal should be handled with caution because they cannot counter the impressions created by the living any more. But the dead should also not be idealised – that is an equally unfair portrayal – because it results in their becoming unreal, and thus in effect, in the death of their true memory. Yet the problem the living face when dealing with the dead is the same as the problem facing them when dealing with the living, since so much of our knowledge of the perceived object seems to be the product of speculation. In “A Sketch of the Past” Woolf recalls a saying of her mother’s referring to her first marriage: “I have been as unhappy and as happy as it is possible for a human being to be” [*MoB*, 1976:89]. She explains that it came to her “from Kitty Maxse. [...] Kitty remembered it, because though she was very intimate with my mother, this was the only time in all their friendship that she ever spoke about what she had felt for Herbert Duckworth” [*MoB*, 1976: 89]. This poses a dual frustration for Woolf: not only did Julia die without Woolf ever having had the opportunity to attempt an exploration of her mother’s past with the living person, but the long years since Julia’s demise had stripped her of physical reality to such an extent that Woolf had to admit, “what my mother was like when she was as happy as anyone can be, I have no notion” [*MoB*, 1976: 89].

Lily faces the same problem regarding Mrs Ramsay: she makes up scenes about the Ramsays’ personal history on the basis of little scraps of information gleaned from others. “Once something led” William Bankes, for instance, “to talk about the Ramsays and he had said how when he first saw her [Mrs Ramsay] she had been wearing a grey hat; she was not more than nineteen or twenty. She was astonishingly beautiful” [*TtL*, 1927: 239]. “Through William’s eyes”, Lily tries to regain her impressions of Mrs Ramsay, how she would sit “peaceful and silent, with downcast eyes” and she realises

that “I must have seen her look like that, but not in grey; nor so still, nor so young, nor so peaceful” [*TtL*, 1927: 239]. This image of beauty comes readily enough, though it too is already slightly vague; yet Lily wonders “what was the look she had [...] when she clapped her deer stalker’s hat on her head, or ran across the garden, or scolded Kennedy, the gardener? Who could tell her? Who could help her?” [*TtL*, 1927: 240].

Through Lily, Woolf articulates the problem of rendering a balanced portrait of the object belonging to history – an integral concern and aim of her whole novel. Just as Lily realises that there is some “disproportion” in the view of the bay that upsets “some harmony in her own mind”, she realises that the same is true of her painting: “she had been wasting her morning. For whatever reason she could not achieve that razor edge of balance between two opposite forces [...] There was something perhaps wrong with the design [...] She must try to get hold of something that evaded her. It evaded her when she thought of Mrs Ramsay; it evaded her now when she thought of her picture. Phrases came. Visions came. Beautiful phrases” [*TtL*, 1927: 260-61]; yet beauty is not enough. What Lily is looking for, in both her painting and in her recollection of Mrs Ramsay, is that “very jar on the nerves, the thing itself before it has been made anything” [*TtL*, 1927: 260-61]. Lily is in search of a truthful, direct representation that has not been skewed by stylising for the sake of beauty. Thus even in the first part of the novel as William Bankes realises with shock that Lily’s picture of Mrs Ramsay has reduced “Mother and child [...] objects of universal veneration [...] to a purple shadow without irreverence” [*TtL*, 1927: 72], Lily explains that “there were other senses, too, in which one might reverence them. By a shadow here and a light there, for instance”; her picture, as a tribute, “took that form” [*TtL*, 1927: 72]. Lily’s tribute is a balanced representation based on an impression of the whole. In her representation, both of mother and child and indirectly in her mind of Mrs Ramsay, she strips her object of the traditional clutter of sentiment and stylising that surround it. Her tribute takes the form of incorporating the object into a broader framework of balance and attempts to capture the essence of the object through form. Thus in her painting she reduces Mrs Ramsay and James to their essence of form, as a purple shadow, to contrast with a lighter shade of colour used; whereas, in her imaginary reconstruction of Mrs Ramsay, she attempts to find a balance between Mrs Ramsay’s

positive and negative qualities to enable her to reconstruct in her mind what she was essentially like.

In the third part of the novel, then, Lily realises that in both her pursuit of the balanced truth regarding Mrs Ramsay's character and in her pursuit of balance in her painting one got "a glare in the eye from looking at the line of the wall or from thinking she wore a grey hat" [*TtL*, 1927: 261], thus concentrating too much on minute factual detail warps one's vision. Woolf seems to be advocating a balanced impressionistic portrayal of the historical object, relying less on cluttered factuality and more on a broad sweep of recollection and impression combined with imagination. Lily's eventual response to the daunting task of constructing a realistic whole memory of Mrs Ramsay is to rely on her impressions and imagination to revive her memory, thinking "let it come [...] if it will come" [*TtL*, 1927: 261]. And indeed, through this approach Lily manages to evoke Mrs Ramsay substantially enough for her to be able to complete her painting, enabling her to achieve a measure of balance and unity between the past and the present. In the process Lily also provides the past with staying power through artistic representation – recalling Mr Carmichael's imagined answer that "'you' and 'I' and 'she' pass and vanish; nothing stays, all changes; but not words, not paint" [*TtL*, 1927: 242]. Yet the past will only survive through art if the work of art manages to capture the spirit of the past, thus once more the emphasis falls on the spiritual transcendence of the historical object and not its material survival of the destruction brought about by time. Furthermore, even if Lily's painting is then "hung in the attics" or "destroyed" [*TtL*, 1927: 281], the effect that it has wrought in her life on a personal level – establishing a bridge between the past and the present and coming to terms with loss through representation – will remain; as such Woolf once more emphasises the subjective nature of historical representation and also the intensely personal motivations that drive the artist in representing the past in art. Art then, for Woolf, is a vehicle that enables her to facilitate reconciliation between, and a bridging of, the past and the present. Furthermore it is a vehicle that spans both the public and the personal with far greater ease than she perceived traditional history writing to do.

Thus, through creating a balanced portrayal of the past, Woolf not only manages to establish contact and continuity with her own personal history but also with the wider

historical context in which that personal history is set, early twentieth century and especially late nineteenth century Britain. As such, the Victorians feature prominently in *To the Lighthouse*. By setting the first part of her novel in the late Victorian era, the era of her childhood and adolescence, Woolf manages to engage once more with a cultural epoch that would have a profound and lasting influence on her life. Her ambiguous feelings for her parents reflect her ambiguous feelings towards the era in which she grew up. In one sense, Woolf realised that she was privileged to have been born “into a very communicative, literate, letter-writing, visiting, articulate, late nineteenth century world” [MoB, 1976: 65]; in another she resented the fact that the era was still very restrictive toward women in general, and the house she grew up in was not particularly progressive in this regard. Unfortunately, because of the great difference in age between her father and his children – “we were not his children, but his grandchildren” – the Stephen siblings “could see the future” but were “completely in the power of the past” [MoB, 1976: 126], and that past was Victorian in nature. Woolf explains in “A Sketch of the Past” that in 22 Hyde Park Gate (the Stephens’ London home) “round about 1900 there was to be found a complete model of Victorian society. If I had the power to lift out a month of life as we lived it about 1900 I could extract a section of Victorian life” [MoB, 1976: 127]. Woolf’s early life, up to her father’s death, was dominated by the male members of the household; her “father himself was a typical Victorian” and her elder half-brothers “were unspeakably conventional. So that while we fought against them as individuals we also fought against them in their public capacity” [MoB, 1976: 127].

Naturally one wonders whether this would have been the case had Julia Stephen lived, but in all probability the answer to that question is a yes. Ironically enough, Julia and Leslie Stephen held radically different views regarding female education and Sir Leslie was by far the more liberal of the two. Noel Annan quotes a letter from Sir Leslie to Julia in which he declares that women should be “as well educated as men [...] I hate to see so many women’s lives wasted simply because they have not been trained well enough” [Annan, 1984: 119]. Julia’s reply is telling: she informs her husband that his letter “depressed her utterly”, that she believes “to serve is the fulfilment of woman’s highest nature” and that, because she herself is so “utterly uneducated”, it “requires all my faith in you to believe with such views on female education you can care for me”

[Annan, 1984: 120]. Julia's conservatism was also not only limited to female education, but extended to female emancipation in general. Jane Marcus points out that Julia Stephen "signed the ardent anti-suffragist Mrs Humphrey Ward's petition" thus "joining the ranks of middle-class mothers who were the worst foes of women's freedom" [Marcus, 1981: 14]. Marcus quotes an apt extract from a letter by George Meredith in which, referring to the Stephens, he mockingly states: "Enough for me that my Leslie should vote, should think. Beautiful posture of the Britannic wife! But the world is a moving one and will pass her by" [Marcus, 1981: 14]. And indeed it did: not only would the First World War bring the society which Julia and Leslie Stephen knew to a swift and dramatic end; but of the ideal Julia held for her daughters of a life of service to the community came an unforeseen result – if one considers art a service to the community, then both Virginia and Vanessa lived up to their mother's expectation.

However, one doubts whether Julia would have viewed her daughters' professions in this light and Woolf doubted it too. In her essay "Professions for Women", Woolf describes "The Angel in the House" – quite probably Julia's ideal both for her own life and for the lives of her daughters – thus: she was "intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily. If there was chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draught she sat in it – in short she was so constituted that she never had a mind or a wish of her own, but preferred to sympathise always with the minds and wishes of others" [*Collected Essays*, Vol. 2: 285]. This was the perfect model for the life of service, but to Woolf it was intolerable; the angel would caution: "Be sympathetic; be tender; flatter; deceive; use all the arts and wiles of our sex. Never let anybody guess you have a mind of your own"; but Woolf "turned upon her and caught her by the throat. [...] Had I not killed her she would have killed me. She would have plucked the heart out of my writing. For [...] you cannot review even a novel without having a mind of your own, without expressing what you think to be the truth about human relations, morality, sex. And all these questions, according to the Angel of the house, cannot be dealt with freely and openly by women; they must charm, they must conciliate, they must – to put it bluntly – tell lies if they are to succeed" [*Collected Essays*, Vol. 2: 285-286].

From the above quotations it becomes clear that Virginia Woolf and Julia Stephen would most probably have clashed in life, but the confrontation was made more complex by Julia's early death. What Woolf, as a mature woman, was grappling with was a conflict of perceptions and loyalties; on the one hand she was actively working against her mother's ideal for the lives of her daughters, yet on the other she did not dislike or despise her mother. In fact, it seems as if she idealised her mother earlier on in her life and perhaps because of that also to some extent the era in which Julia had lived. Writing to Lady Nelly Cecil in October 1915 she asks, "Do you find any charms in the 1860's?", and goes on to explain her question: "They seem – my mother's family I mean – to float in a wonderful air – all a lie I daresay, concocted because one forgets their kitchens and catching trains and so on" [*The Letters*, Vol. 2: 69]. This quotation aptly illustrates Woolf's ambivalent perceptions of her mother's generation: on the one hand they "float in a wonderful air", while on the other there is the grim reality of their lives as suggested by: "kitchens and catching trains".

Furthermore Woolf was also very conscious of the change in society and the individual that the passage of time brings about. As such she feels that writing about a person's life and character one needs to analyse "the invisible presences who after all play so important a part in everyday life. This influence, by which I mean the consciousness of other groups impinging upon ourselves; public opinion; what other people say and think; all those magnets which attract us this way to be like that, or repel us the other and make us different from that" [*MoB*, 1976: 80]. In *To the Lighthouse* then, Woolf not only responds as an adult to her personal past, but she also responds to the past of the society that formed her. Beer states that "in *To the Lighthouse* Virginia Woolf still tried to hold within a single work what Lawrence had eventually had to separate: the experience of family life and culture before and after the First World War" [Beer, 1989: 186]. Woolf achieves this unity through a unity of place, the Ramsays' holiday house, and by showing the characters' direct experience of the Victorian era in the first part of the novel in contrast to the post-war experience of the same characters in the third part of the novel. This unity of place and character enables Woolf to achieve a balance in her portrayal of the Victorians; not only is her critique of the era convincing because it is

relived through the characters but it is balanced out by the extraordinary allure that some of the central characters in her portrayal provide – most notably Mrs Ramsay.

Mrs Ramsay forms the central focus of the first part of the novel and her absence forms the central focus of its third part. Through her interaction with Lily, her husband, children and other guests, Woolf explores gender relations and the home as the basis of politics in the pre-war era. Jane Lilienfeld explains that critical views on Mrs Ramsay, her marriage and her influence on the next generation can be divided into two opposing groups. The first group “well represented by Bernard Blackstone, David Daiches, Lord David Cecil and Roger Poole sees her [Mrs Ramsay] as the motherly, all-giving Angel of the House. To these critics she has no flaws and is thus unable to ward off harassment by her desiccated husband, to whom she lovingly sacrifices herself” [Lilienfeld, 1981: 148-149]. The second group, represented by critics like Glenn Petersen and Mitchell Leaska, “find that Mrs Ramsay – feather brained self satisfied manipulator – is actually the reason for her husband’s unhappiness and her son’s failure to reach the lighthouse” [Lilienfeld: 1981: 149]. Lilienfeld goes on to point out that these opposed viewpoints rest on the common assumption that the “Ramsays’ marriage is the eternal union of the male and female principle” [Lilienfeld: 1981: 149]. In effect, though, the portrayal of the Ramsays’ marriage is far more complex than this view permits. Lilienfeld shows that “Woolf’s vision of the Ramsays’ marriage is a mature, sharp critical examination not only of the relation between her own parents, but also of the destruction wreaked by the Victorian social arrangement on human capacities for freedom and growth” [Lilienfeld, 1981: 149]. Far from being a portrayal of timeless gender relations, the Ramsays’ marriage is, she argues, “time-bound” and “founded on middle-class Victorian roles and values” [Lilienfeld, 1981: 149]. What becomes clear from both schools of thought regarding Mrs Ramsay, and from Lilienfeld’s response, is that Woolf portrays historically accepted gender roles as destructive; Mrs Ramsay as the Angel of the House contributes to tyranny because she does not offer effective opposition to her husband’s unreasonable behaviour, whilst as manipulator she succeeds because of her clever use of her gender role and neither Mrs Ramsay nor Mr Ramsay benefits entirely from living up to their respective gender roles. The fact that the former has “the whole of the other sex under her protection” [*TiL*, 1927: 10] leaves both her and them at a disadvantage. Mr Ramsay, for

all his academic factuality and apparent realism, never develops an independent sense of worth and self-esteem but remains dependent on female praise and sympathy which he demands with great dramatic force. He also needs to exaggerate his wife's "ignorance [and] simplicity", "for he liked to think that she was not clever, not book-learned at all" [TiL, 1927: 163] and this gives him a false sense of superiority. Mrs Ramsay also does not have an independent sense of self-worth but takes on herself the responsibility of shielding her husband from reality, thus she can seldom be completely at ease and natural with him, since she is compromised in her sincerity, "not being able to tell him the truth, being afraid, for instance, about the greenhouse roof and the expense it would be [...] afraid that he might guess, what she a little suspected, that his last book was not quite his best book (she gathered that from William Bankes) and then to hide small daily things and the children seeing it and the burden it laid on them..." [TiL, 1927: 55]. Eventually these factors undermine the harmony of the Ramsays' marriage: they diminish "the entire joy, the pure joy, of the two notes sounding together, and let the sound die on the ear with a dismal flatness" [TiL, 1927: 55].

On a broader social plane the coercive impact of Victorian gender roles is portrayed through Charles Tansley and Lily Briscoe. Charles Tansley has an inferiority complex rooted in his social background; as such he is very self-centred: "he would go to picture galleries [...] and he would ask one, did one like his tie" [TiL, 1927: 13]. The Ramsay children complain that "when they talked about something interesting" he was never satisfied "until he had turned the whole thing around and made it somehow reflect himself and disparage them" [TiL, 1927: 13]. The reason why Tansley constantly needs to assert himself is because he can only obtain a sense of self-worth through obtaining the external recognition bestowed by Victorian society - "his Professorship or [...] his wife" [TiL, 1927: 143] - as symbols of the successful male; since he has not yet obtained society's recognition, he asserts his maleness through his excessive and arid scientific reasoning, and as such he personifies the negative aspect of the Victorian scientific obsession and male learning. The other device which Tansley uses to assert himself is to disparage the opposite sex, stating for instance that "women can't write, women can't paint" [TiL, 1927: 116]. Lily is not deceived by this method, but realises that "it was not true to him but for some reason helpful to him"; yet despite this realisation "her whole

being bow[s], like corn under a wind, and erect[s] itself again from this abasement only with great and rather painful effort” [TtL, 1927: 117]. Lily is victimized by the coercive influence of Victorian society that demands adherence to accepted gender roles. Mrs Ramsay does not take Lily’s painting seriously, for as a Victorian woman Lily’s highest aspiration is supposed to be marriage and not art; she also prevents Lily from taking her revenge on Tansley “by laughing at him” [TtL, 1927: 117], because as a male Tansley is supposed to be flattered and deceived no matter how unpleasant he is personally. Thus, instead of allowing Lily to make Tansley aware of his flawed egotism, Mrs Ramsay brings to bear on her the full force of Victorian social convention – so aptly symbolised by the dinner party – forcing Lily to “renounce her experiment” about “what happens if one is not nice to that young man there” [TtL, 1927: 124]. Mrs Ramsay is fully aware of the fact that Tansley is unpleasant; yet as “the angel of the house” she sees to it that Lily offers him the opportunity to indulge his egotism. Neither Lily nor Tansley really benefits from this outcome though, since it only perpetuates the imbalance in harmony between the two sexes. Furthermore Mrs Ramsay’s action exacts a high toll; on seeing Mrs Ramsay’s relief after Lily has renounced her experiment and fallen back into social convention – thus also artificial social harmony – Lily reflects rather bitterly: “what haven’t I paid to get it for you? She had not been sincere” [TtL, 1927: 125].

Woolf thus criticizes the insincerity of Victorian social convention and gender roles. Her critique is of specific interest though, since she pays special attention to the coercive role played by women in the power politics of the nineteenth century. Mrs Ramsay’s interest in Lily’s marital status is more than just a benevolent interest in her personal happiness; it reflects the role played by political interest in the domestic arrangements of nineteenth century Britain. Janet Winston has shown how during Mrs Ramsay’s visit to town she “stood for a moment silent [...] quite motionless [...] against a picture of Queen Victoria” [TtL, 1927: 21] and thus “in effect the text displaces the Queen’s image with that of Mrs Ramsay. Through this process of representational displacement, Mrs Ramsay metonymically assumes the role of Queen Victoria, emblem of Empire” [Winston, 1996: 41]. The values and views that Mrs Ramsay holds can therefore be strongly, albeit indirectly, associated with the values and views which informed British imperialism. This ties in closely with Woolf’s view, which she would

later clearly expound in *Three Guineas*, that all politics starts with gender relations in the private home. As such Mrs Ramsay and her views form the first bulwark of Empire. Mrs Ramsay's respect for the opposite sex based on their "chivalry and valour, for the fact that they negotiated treaties, ruled India [and] controlled finance" [*TtL*, 1927: 11], implies that because of the convictions she holds Mrs Ramsay feeds a masculinist/ imperialist ideology. Her respect for the opposite sex based on their "chivalry and valour", is an indirect reference to war; her respect for the fact that they "negotiated treaties [and] ruled India" is a covert reference to empire as well as her respect for the male ability to "control finance" which can be read as a subtle reference to the economic concerns that inform imperialism. Seen in this light, Mrs Ramsay, as representative of the Victorian female, carries an indirect responsibility for war and imperialism and the perpetuation of both these phenomena. She wants to instil her views in her daughters and therefore they are not allowed to question "deference and chivalry", "the bank of England" or the merit of "the Indian Empire" [*TtL*, 1927: 11]. The real power base of the British Empire thus rested in the private home and in motherhood.

Viewed in this light Lily's decision to remain unmarried has far-reaching consequences. Not only does it afford her the scope to develop self-worth outside the gender paradigm, but it is also an act that undermines the political status quo and imperial ambition. As such Lily makes a conscious choice to challenge the manipulative hold of Victorian family life and society. Her decision is not merely the result of her inability to procure a husband (if she had allowed it she would probably have been married off to William Bankes) but is a deliberate autonomous choice. Thus Lily chooses not to perpetuate the insincerity of Victorian marital relations; furthermore, as a result of her choice to remain unmarried she declines the opportunity to strengthen the empire through motherhood or to instil and perpetuate the accepted political status quo in the following generation.

Through Lily, Woolf makes it clear that personal happiness can only be attained through accepting responsibility for our own personal destinies by consciously evaluating the legacy that the preceding generation wishes to instil. It is exactly because Paul and Minta allow their destinies to be determined by the inherited conventions of society that they initially end up unhappy; they only attain happiness once they create a form of

marriage in which they feel comfortable and in the process discard the social conventions of the preceding generation. For the Rayleys “were [no longer] ‘in love’ [...] he had taken up with another woman” yet “far from breaking up the marriage, that alliance had righted it. They were excellent friends” [*TiL*, 1927: 235]. This statement would have been impossible in the context of Mr and Mrs Ramsay’s marriage and Lily reflects about the implications of this for Mrs Ramsay’s world view that “one would have to say to her, It [sic] has all gone against your wishes. They’re happy like that; I’m happy like this. Life has changed completely”. And at that all Mrs Ramsay’s “being, even her beauty, became for a moment, dusty and out of date” [*TiL*, 1927: 236].

However, if *To the Lighthouse* contains a warning not to accept the legacy of the past without conscious evaluation it also cautions not to reject the past without evaluation. Woolf not only criticizes the Victorians but also, in keeping with the spirit of her novel, strives to provide her readers with a just portrayal of her Victorian experience. The positive characteristics of the Victorians are thus also portrayed alongside the negative. If Charles Tansley is the negative image of the Victorian academic pursuit, William Bankes serves as his positive scientific counterpart and also as a contrasting figure to Mr Ramsay’s insatiable egotism. Lily reflects that Bankes is the “finest human being” that she knows and she respects him “in every atom” because he is “not vain” and he is “entirely impersonal”; “praise would be an insult to” him, being such a “generous, pure-hearted, heroic man” [*TiL*, 1927: 34-35]. In his impersonality, Bankes does not first consider Lily’s gender before he considers her work, as Tansley does; instead he considers her work “scientifically in complete good faith” acknowledging honestly that “all his prejudices were on the other side” [*TiL*, 1927: 73] and yet he is truly interested in Lily’s explanation of her experiment. Furthermore, unlike Mr Ramsay, he does not need the praise of the opposite sex to sustain him. As such he provides an opposite balance to some of the male portraits from the Victorian era in the novel. Along the same lines Mrs Ramsay is also not only an emotional and social manipulator, but is in many respects sincerely selfless in her concern for her fellow human beings. The beautiful manners that Victorian social conventions produced, as well as the grace and dignity that the practitioners of those conventions possessed, are captured along with the underlying insincerity.

Thus, in portraying the present in contrast to the past in one novel, Woolf not only enables her audience to experience the difference in society before and after the First World War, but she also re-establishes a connection between the two societies in seeking to create a balanced portrayal of the preceding era that the audience reading in the present era can associate with. In portraying what society has lost, both the positive and the negative, she helps it to come to terms with the loss on the one hand, and to appreciate what has been gained on the other. In the light of this view, *To the Lighthouse* can be read as another depiction of the triumph of life over the well of tears that the passage of time and history creates. At the end of the novel, though one is aware of Mrs Ramsay's death, there is an appreciation of life because her memory continues through the living. Along the same lines, though the society after the war might have been the poorer for the great losses it suffered both in the loss of human life and in the change of culture, it also gained much in the way of choice, sincerity and social freedom. At the end of the novel, for instance, Lily is allowed to pursue her choice to paint with a larger amount of freedom from societal pressure than she enjoyed whilst Mrs Ramsay was still alive. This can be read as a portrayal of the gradual breakdown of accepted gender roles and the change this brought about in society as a whole pertaining to the choices individuals have regarding their careers and future options. And thus, Mrs Ramsay's ghost has been laid – “she looked at the steps; they were empty; she looked at her canvas; it was blurred” - and Lily/Woolf is able to find the balance between the past and the present, to draw “a line there, in the centre”, and to be able to say, both as an artist and as an individual responding to history and the past, “I have had my vision” [*TiL*, 1927: 281].

Between the Acts: Art challenges the well of tears

Between the Acts is the last novel Virginia Woolf wrote. Before it could be published – as the editor’s explanation at the end of her diary matter-of-factly explains – she drowned herself in the river Ouse [*The Diary*; Vol. 5: 359]. As such, *Between the Acts* holds a special place amongst her novels since it leaves the reader wondering whether it contains some explanation for her suicide or some final ideas about her art and career as a novelist. She herself had decided that the book “was too silly and trivial” and that publication should be postponed until she could revise it [*The Diary*; Vol. 5: 359]. Yet, despite its author’s judgement, this novel – though light-hearted at times – is far from silly and trivial. It is, rather, a profound illustration of her theories about how family life, firmly rooted in ideas about power relations inherited from the past, has the capacity to create a society that is prone to war. Furthermore *Between the Acts* also explores the idea that in the face of major historical forces, possessing annihilating potential, art possibly holds a greater capacity for ultimately surviving historical cataclysms and preserving the past (including the national past) in some form, than power politics has.

By the late nineteen-thirties European politics was in a state of intensifying turmoil. Due to Leonard Woolf’s involvement with the League of Nations, Virginia Woolf was well aware of the implications of the political developments in Europe; furthermore her nephew, Julian Bell, was killed in the Spanish Civil War whilst driving an ambulance for the Republican forces [*BtA*, 1941: xli]. In her diary of March 1938, she notes after a visit to Maynard and Lydia Keynes: “Lydia like a peasant woman, wringing her hands, on a stool. Oh why was I born in this age? It is a terrible age. This refers to the Russian spy trials, which reflect the middle ages. A veil of insanity everywhere: & whats [sic] to be done, save keep pegging round one’s little plot?” [*The Diary*, Vol. 5: 129]. Later in that same week she duly records, “Hitler has invaded Austria [...] The Austrian national anthem was heard on the wireless for the last time. We got a snatch of dance music from Vienna. This fact, which combines with the Russian trials, like drops of dirty water mixing, puts its thorn into my morning” [*The Diary*, Vol. 5: 129].

On the eve of the Second World War, Woolf had to come to terms with the intractable realisation that history, in the form of war and destruction, was repeating itself and Britain would soon be involved in the act of repeating history. If one reads through the last volume of her compiled diaries, it becomes clear that though she had been able to explain rationally in *Three Guineas* that the origin of tyranny – and thus also war – is to be found in the private home, firmly rooted in the domination of one sex by the other, the fact that modern civilization could be blind enough to end up following the road to the same catastrophe it had ended twenty years before was such a harsh realisation, that she could not immediately bring herself to face the reality of it. Writing in her diary of September 1938 she notes that:

Its [sic] odd to be sitting here, looking up little facts about Roger [Fry] and the M[etropolitan] M[useum] in New York, with a sparrow tapping on my roof this fine September morning when it could be the 3rd Aug 1914 ... [her ellipsis] What would war mean? Darkness, strain: I suppose conceivably death. And all the horror of friends and Quentin [her sister Vanessa's younger son] ... [her ellipsis] All that lies over the water in the brain of that ridiculous little man. Why ridiculous? Because none of it fits. Encloses no reality. Death & war & darkness representing nothing that any human being from the Pork butcher to the Prime minister cares one straw about. Not liberty, not life ... merely a housemaids [sic] dream. And we woke from that dream and have the cenotaph to remind us of the fruits. Well I can't spread my mind wide enough to take it in, intelligibly [*The Diary*, Vol. 5: 166].

Up to this point, in her career as a novelist, Woolf, as we have seen, had made use of her art to come to terms with the aftermath of the past and historical events. The challenge facing her now was the threat that history in the making posed, not only for her person but also for her art and for the artistic tradition from which it sprouted. History in the making, Nazi invasion, threatened England as an entire historical and political entity, including its artistic heritage. Thus Woolf faced a supremely complicated position: as a self-proclaimed “outsider” who advocated an attitude of “complete indifference” to war waged on whatever grounds and who claimed that she had no country - “my country is the whole world” [*Three Guineas*, 1938: 309-313] – she clearly could not support the English war effort on patriotic or nationalistic grounds. On the other hand she was clearly also opposed to the ideology of the aggressor and she had vowed because of some “drop of pure, if irrational, emotion” or, in other words, “some love of England dropped into a

child's ears by the cawing of rooks in an elm tree, by the splash of waves on a beach, or by English voices murmuring nursery rhymes" to "give to England first what she desire[d] of peace and freedom for the whole world" [*Three Guineas*, 1938: 313]. In addition, the imminent war was a poignant reminder of the instability of life and its fleetingness, heightening Woolf's awareness of her longstanding preoccupation with the passage of time and her attempt to capture the quality of the moment in some enduring form. Having grown up in a house where her parents had renounced their Christianity, Woolf never knew the comfort of a system of belief that held out the promise of transcendence over death and thus guarantees the continuation of the personal life. Yet she was conscious of the fact, as has been illustrated in the preceding chapters on *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*, that the past echoes on in the present, that our actions and their consequences do not end with death, but have a definite influence on history in the making. Thus, in effect, the very nature of life and history, the fact that the one continues the other, ensures that something of our lives is carried on after death inevitably. In *Between the Acts* then, Woolf seems to be exploring different systems ordering our view of reality which inevitably govern the courses of action we follow; and thus she also explores the possible legacy these ordering systems might hold for posterity. In her exploration, I would suggest, she seems to be positing a very simple and at the same time, because of the depth in which she explores it, complicated pattern of actions and their historical outcome. In the process Woolf not only attempts to explain the cause of the historical tragedy that is unfolding as the novel runs its course, but she also provides some consolation and an alternative answer as to how catastrophes in history, like war on a massive scale, might be prevented from repeating once more.

The idea that Woolf is exploring some pattern that could possibly explain the historical nightmare staring her in the face, World War Two, surfaces in her essay "A Sketch of the Past". In this essay she recalls three incidents that would have a definite influence in developing her artistic consciousness. The first was a normal quarrel between siblings: she recalls that she and her elder brother Thoby had been pummelling each other when she suddenly thought, "Why hurt another person?". The second incident was her horror on hearing about the suicide of a man the family had known at their holiday house in St. Ives. In the third incident she was "looking at the flower bed by the

front door” and suddenly it seemed clear that “the flower itself was part of the earth; that a ring enclosed what wads the flower; and that was the real flower; part earth; part flower”; at that moment she realised that ““that is the whole”” [MoB, 1976: 71]. Woolf explains her differing reactions to these three events as the difference between satisfaction and despair. In the instances of her quarrel with Thoby and her realisation that an acquaintance had taken his own life, she states that “the sense of horror had me powerless” because she found herself “quite unable to deal with the pain of discovering that people hurt each other; that a man I had seen had killed himself ” [MoB, 1976: 72]. In the instance dealing with her realisation about the flower, though, she had “found a reason; and thus was able to deal with the sensation” [MoB, 1976: 72]. Woolf goes on to venture the explanation that

a shock is in my case at once followed by the desire to explain it. I feel that I have had a blow; but it is not, as I thought as a child, simply a blow from an enemy behind the cotton wool of daily life; it is or will become a revelation of some order; it is a token of some real thing behind appearances; and I make it real by putting it into words. It is only by putting it into words that I make it whole; this wholeness means that it has lost its power to hurt me; it gives me, perhaps because by doing so I take away the pain, a great delight to put the severed parts together. Perhaps it is the strongest pleasure known to me. It is the rapture I get when in writing I seem to be discovering what belongs to what; making a scene come right; making a character come together. From this I reach what I may call a philosophy; at any rate it is a constant idea; that behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern; that we – I mean all human beings – are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work of art. *Hamlet* or a Beethoven quartet is the truth about this vast mass that we call the world. But there is no Shakespeare, there is no Beethoven, certainly and emphatically there is no God; we are the words, we are the music; we are the thing itself. And I see this when I have a shock [MoB, 1976: 72].

In the light of this explanation it becomes clear that *Between the Acts* is Woolf’s attempt, in some sense perhaps a very ambitious attempt, to bring together as a whole her explanation for why the history of her times was unfolding in the shocking way it was. Through this attempt Woolf must certainly have hoped to attain the pattern that she sought after and that would enable her to cope with the intricacies of the historical situation she found herself in. In contrast or perhaps as realistic balance to the wholeness that she strives to attain in *Between the Acts*, stands Woolf’s emphasis on the true fragmentary nature of experience. In her novel she exposes civilisation and the

individual's striving towards achieving a rational, knowable whole view of reality through different ordering systems. The irony that she captures is that through the ordering of reality in an attempt to deal with it rationally, the real nature of reality is lost. What is more, when confronted with unmediated reality, the ordering systems employed by humanity ultimately stand powerless and suffer the threat of destruction.

The three most prominent ordering systems that Woolf explores in *Between the Acts* are religion, history and art. These three stand vitally connected in the novel and Woolf emphasises their common characteristics and illustrates that, to a certain extent, they share the same aim.

What Woolf emphasises about religion, art and history is their constructed nature. All three are employed by humanity to order experience and reality. In the case of history, the seemingly chaotic passage of time is ordered into a pattern of cause and effect; in the case of religion, life is arranged and ordered according to the principles and dogmatic beliefs held by the believer; in the case of art, the experience of reality and the imagination are ordered in an attempt at representing reality or imagination. However, the underlying connectedness of these three ordering systems does not end there. The historical construction of cause and effect is to a large extent an extension of the world view of the historian creating the construction, thus religion can shape historical construction; but the construction of political history also influences questions of religious dogma and belief; and since art is invariably involved with the world view of the artist, the representation of experience and reality attempted in art will be dramatically influenced by views on both history and religion. Furthermore, all three ordering systems are concerned with the passage of time. History records events in an attempt to stay the corroding effect of time on human memory – thus in order to preserve something of the past; religion deals with transcendence over time-bound mortality but also with the historical state and development of humankind; and art has the ability to capture and preserve something of the present, but it can also attempt to portray the future or to capture something of the past through representation.

In *Between the Acts*, then, Woolf seems to be making out a case for her own preferred ordering system – art. Since the focus of this dissertation falls on history and

the past, I will be exploring why Woolf views art as a better vehicle for preserving and constructing the past than either dogmatic religion or conventional history.

What seems to attract Woolf to sincere artistic representation is the ability art has to incorporate the most comforting aspects of both religion and history, their respective preservation of the past and transcendence over mortality, without the possible negative effects of these two ordering systems, violent conflict and tyranny. Of the three ordering systems emphasised, she seems to suggest that art is the only one that has the ability to be completely sincere about its illusory and constructed nature whilst it also has the ability to incorporate the present, the past and the timeless in a single whole.

The term “sincere” is specifically used to describe Woolf’s view of the ideal in artistic representation since *Between the Acts* can also be read as a protest against the exploitation of the arts by fascism and political movements in general. In her article “The Authority of Illusion: Feminism and Fascism in Virginia Woolf’s *Between the Acts*”, Patricia Klindienst Joplin notes that “as early as 1936 Walter Benjamin had observed the double truth of Nazi culture. Fascism made great art impossible. Instead, Benjamin observed, Hitler had succeeded in the ‘aesthetization of political life’” [Joplin, 1989: 93]. She goes on to quote a statement of Joseph Goebbels, Hitler’s Minister of Propaganda: “‘Politics too is an art, perhaps the highest and most far-reaching one of all, and we who shape modern German politics feel ourselves to be artistic people, entrusted with the great responsibility of forming out of the raw material of the masses a solid, well-wrought structure of a Volk’” [Joplin, 1989: 93]. Furthermore she explains that in order “to achieve the goal of creating this folk community (identified with structure) the Third Reich redefined every occasion which used to offer the people a taste of *communitas*, or release from official structure: folk celebration, religious ritual and art. For every major event in both the religious and the secular calendar the Nazis substituted ‘artificially created customs and staged folklore’ [...] For playwrights and audiences alike, participation in these ‘celebrations’ (which were performed for up to 60 000 at a time) was mandatory” [Joplin, 1989: 93]. This exploitation of art for propaganda purposes was by no means restricted to Germany, though: “in England, the radical Left also used theatre and performance [...] to the end of revolutionizing the state. [...] Their theatre was overtly political in form and content” [ibid]. In Woolf’s novel, then, the play “drawn

from our island history” [BtA, 1941: 70] is a far more spontaneous event than the forms of theatre employed for political purposes; furthermore in her work of art she seems to be criticising coercive politics, although she does this very subtly and covertly.

For one of Woolf’s gravest reservations about official and formal historical constructions seems to be the fact that they inevitably instil nationalism and overblown patriotism for political purposes. As she so aptly describes in *Three Guineas*, her potential outsider will probably “have imbibed, even from the governess, some romantic notion that Englishmen, those fathers and grandfathers whom she sees marching in the picture of history, are ‘superior’ to the men of other countries” [*Three Guineas*, 1938: 312]. Inevitably this false construction of history will lead to conflict and the justification of conflict in an attempt to prove it correct. But it can only last until “French historians” are compared “with English; German with French; the testimony of the ruled – the Indians or the Irish say – with the claims made by their rulers” [*Three Guineas*, 1938:312]. Clearly the comparison will not only reveal the prevalence of the same delusion of superiority in comparison with others, but it will also reveal the discrepancy between the justification offered by the oppressors for their past and present actions and the accusations of the oppressed aimed at the very same justified historical and recent acts.

Thus history constructed around and for the explanation of politics, in Woolf’s opinion, furthers conflict and leads to the division of humanity, not its unification. As such Miss La Trobe’s version of the history of England in *Between the Acts* emphasises its artistic and cultural history at the expense of political history. Kristina Busse notes that “the play mimics the novel as a whole in its strenuous attempt to leave out patriarchy, violence, imperialism, and war, all of which are at the very centre and thus constitutive of the British Empire” [Busse, 2001: 92]. Busse’s statement will be discussed in more depth later in this chapter; at this point it is crucial to note, however, that the only way in which Woolf can create a version of history which has the ability to omit all of the aspects Busse lists, is by using art as a vehicle for depicting and preserving what she views as worthy of commemoration in English history. What is startling to note, though, is that Woolf could hardly have been more successful in her protest against historical

constructions centred on politics that lead to conflict, if she dealt with it directly. Her conspicuous omission speaks loudly and clearly for itself.

Her chosen vehicle for historical representation, the pageant in the novel and the novel itself, is also significant in the sense that it draws conspicuous attention to its constructed nature, which historical construction – especially when used as a political source – tries to avoid by making specific causes and their effects seem inevitable. At several moments in the play the reality of the moment seems to threaten the success of the construction; in fact Miss La Trobe – the playwright and director – wants “to douche” her audience “with present-time reality”, making them aware of the constructedness of what they had just seen, but finds that “something was going wrong with the experiment. ‘Reality too strong’” [BtA, 1941: 161].

Yet Woolf does not condemn the interference of reality with the construction that is presented to the audience; reality in the form of nature actually rescues the production from failure. Just as Miss La Trobe thinks that “illusion had failed” because she has to have a scene change and nothing happens on stage, “the cows took up the burden [...] They tossed their heads high, plunged and bellowed [...] The cows annihilated the gap; bridged the distance; filled the emptiness and continued the emotion” [BtA, 1941: 126]. Later in the play it is nature that saves Miss La Trobe’s failed experiment in exposing her audience to reality as a quick rain shower falls “sudden, profuse”; Miss La Trobe, “wiping away the drops on her cheeks [sighs] ‘That’s done it’ [...] Nature once more had taken her part” [BtA, 1941: 162]. In the light of this it seems probable that what Woolf is hankering after is an organic union between the constructed reality of art (and in this case also then the re-construction of the past) and the reality of the moment. About this aspect of the pageant in the novel Joplin states that “for the first time in [Woolf’s] career, she seizes hold of the gap, the distance, the interval and the interrupted not as a terrible defeat of the will to continuity or aesthetic unity. Rather, she elevates the interrupted structure to positive formal and metaphysical principle” [Joplin, 1989: 89]. Thus the true fragmentary nature of reality and therefore also history, can be best portrayed through artistic representation.

What Woolf seems to be implying, both in the novel and in the play, is that formal historical construction has definite limitations, one of which is the threat that history in

the making holds for already constructed history; as Giles reflects in frustration as “they looked at what they knew”, the threat of history in the making – political tensions mounting on the continent providing the threat of imminent war – could “at any moment rake that land into furrows; planes splinter Bolney Minster into smithereens and blast the Folly” [*BtA*, 1941: 48-9]. History in the making does not hold a theoretical threat for already constructed art, unless it is physically destroyed; already constructed art can hardly be altered and reinterpretation is not a threat to art’s existence. But because of the nature of their construction, formal versions of history can be reinterpreted or recast and in the process be destroyed. Thus art stands a better chance of preserving an aspect of the past unspoiled than politicised history does. In addition history as a discipline, traditionally focussing on large historical events, finds it very difficult to chart what happens ‘between the acts’. Art, however, has the ability to chart what seems to fall outside the reach of history as a discipline. What Woolf seems intent on portraying in her novel is that what is really important in the lives of humanity often falls outside the formal historical construction because it happens ‘between the acts’. The private marital strife of Isa and Giles, literally taking place between the acts of the pageant and between the significant actions each of them performs as part of this strife, is a case in point.

The constructed nature of history that is foregrounded in the pageant and the novel also highlights the role played by imagination in historical construction. Mrs Swithin’s “favourite reading – an Outline of History” claims that once there were “rhododendron forests in Picadilly; when the entire continent [...] was all one; populated [...] by elephant-bodied, seal-necked, heaving, surging, slowly writhing, and [...] barking monsters; the iguanodon, the mammoth, and the mastodon; from whom presumably [...] we descend” [*BtA*, 1941: 8]. Lucy spontaneously gives free rein to her imagination and her vision of a “leather-covered grunting monster who was about [...] to demolish a whole tree in the green steaming undergrowth of the primeval forest” is so vivid that “it took five seconds in actual time, in mind time ever so much longer” [*BtA*, 1941: 8] to distinguish between the monster and the maid who comes into the room. Yet the book which inspires these wild flights of imagination clearly offers this information about pre-history as factual. Woolf seems to question where facts end and imagination begins when dealing with history. The conventions surrounding factual academic research make it

even harder for the historian to acknowledge that what is offered might be less than factual and that the discipline is partially dependent upon imagination. Art, on the other hand, openly acknowledges its dependence on imagination.

It is an interesting aspect of the novel that one of its central characters, Lucy Swithin, is a devout Christian who is portrayed sympathetically – especially in comparison to Woolf’s other well known Christian portrait, Doris Kilman. If one takes into account Woolf’s statement, quoted earlier in this chapter, that “certainly and emphatically there is no God” [*MoB*, 1976: 72], a statement she made in “A Sketch of the Past” which was written whilst she was also working on *Between the Acts*, one wonders why this portrait of faith is included in her last novel. At the outset it should be noted that in the light of Woolf’s statement quoted above there can be no doubt that she did not experience a late conversion. It does not seem improbable, though, that she did find certain qualities inherent to religious conviction attractive. Some attractive religious qualities that are portrayed through Lucy include sympathy with other human beings and other forms of life which fosters a communal feeling, access to a timelessness of vision and a resolved state of emotional calm even in the face of hostile historical developments.

The notion that Woolf is attracted to the qualities of religion rather than to its content is supported by her portrayal of the divisive effect of religion. As Lucy shows William Dodge the house he starts to feel that they are in league together. Yet the moment he becomes aware of her pendant cross he asks himself: “How could she weigh herself down by that sleek symbol? How stamp herself, so volatile, so vagrant, with that image?” and he comes to the realisation, “As he looked at it, they were truants no more” [*BtA*, 1941: 67-8]. Furthermore, Woolf pays no attention to the dogmatic contents of Lucy’s faith; instead she emphasises Lucy’s sympathy with all other living creatures and her community-creating actions. Lucy shows William the bed she was born in and reflects that “we have other lives, I think, I hope [...] We live in others [...] we live in things” [*BtA*, 1941: 64]. This statement seems more like an expression of Woolf’s own view of transcendence over death and the here and now, than a statement of dogmatic Christianity. Lyons notes that “there is no content given to Lucy’s vision beyond the affirmation of harmony and identity. The emotion of union, the ‘oceanic feeling’ which Freud discusses in *Civilization and its Discontents*, is the real substance of her religion”

[Lyons, 1977: 156]. In addition Lucy's negation of history, her stating that she doesn't "believe that there were ever such people" as "the Victorians" [BtA, 1941: 156], is borne out by her supposed vision of eternal life; Woolf's real purpose, however, in this regard seems to be an attempt to undermine the notion that human beings are fundamentally different in different eras. As such she emphasises the timelessness at the core of Lucy's outlook on life. Another illustration of this outlook of Mrs Swithin's is her reaction to the swallows in the barn: she believes that "the same birds" return "every year" following a seemingly unchanging pattern [BtA, 1941: 91]. The fact that it is specifically swallows that draw Lucy's attention has an even more poignant relevance seen in the light of a discussion regarding elements of timelessness, since Rahman points out that in mythology "swallows symbolise the feeling of pathos at the passing of time" [Rahman, 1984: 119].

It seems then that it is the timeless quality of a religious outlook that attracts Woolf. Yet because religious conviction usually also makes for a world view shared exclusively among the group that underwrites a particular dogma, or even creates an intensely personalised world view, it would seem as if religious timelessness fails to provide a comfort against the violent onslaught of history on a broader plain than just the exclusive or personal, exactly because it numbs the believer to the effects of history. So, for instance, as Mrs Swithin embarks on "a circular tour of the imagination" in which her religious conviction causes her to view "sheep, cows, grass, trees, ourselves" as one and reflects that this oneness is probably harmonious "to a gigantic ear attached to a gigantic head. And thus [...] the agony of the particular sheep, cow or human being is necessary", William Dodge and Isa smile their agreement "across her [that] if the thought gave her comfort [...] let her think it" [BtA, 1941: 157]. Thus those characters standing outside Lucy's religious sphere cannot share her timeless vision, suggesting that what Woolf is looking for as a counterpoint to rapidly changing and disastrous history is the element of timelessness in life as it is lived daily on a broad plain, by all men and women. This counterpoint she finds in art. The timelessness that is to be portrayed artistically has to reflect what is timeless about life as it is lived by everyone rather than just reflecting the timeless content of an exclusive dogma or personalised worldview, because it is dependent on audience recognition to be successful. All three extracts of plays

incorporated into the pageant, though they are set in eras centuries apart, deals on one level with the same timeless topics, human love and human struggles for and against power exerted over their own lives and exerted over the lives of others. In the Renaissance play the “crone, who saved the rightful heir” from those powers that wanted to destroy his life for their own purposes is re-united with the young prince she had saved as a baby, in time still to see his romantic union with “sweet Carinthia”, the young princess he has chosen for a bride [*BtA*, 1941: 80-4]. In the Restoration comedy that is performed Flavinda and her young lover have to outwit Flavinda’s greedy aunt who, using Flavinda’s inheritance from her father as a tool for coercion, wants to arrange a financially advantageous marriage between her niece and a wealthy nobleman [*BtA*, 1941: 113-133]. Finally, in the Victorian tableau, Edgar Thorold and Miss Eleanor Hardcastle fall in love on the basis of their shared desire to “convert the heathen”; their romance is hidden from Mrs Hardcastle though, who is trying hard to find out whether the new clergyman is married or not, because if he is not she would be more than willing to help him to one of her four daughters [*BtA*, 1941: 144-155]. Thus the pageant covertly depicts something of the ongoing power struggles between individuals in society through all ages.

The timeless quality of human effort pitted against circumstances and the environment is further emphasised by the chorus lines sung between the acts and effortlessly spanning different eras dealing with the same type of activity - “digging and delving, ploughing and sowing” [*BtA*, 1941: 111]; “digging and delving, hedging and ditching [...] Summer and Winter, Autumn and Spring return [...] All passes but we, all changes...but we remain forever the same” [*BtA*, 1941: 125]. Furthermore the timeless quality that Woolf wants to highlight is also embodied by the natural setting of the play: as Mrs Swithin remarks, even before the start of the play, what makes “a view so sad [...] and so beautiful” is that “it’ll be there [...] when we’re not” [*BtA*, 1941: 49]. The barn, where tea will be served in the interval, also seems to date from any epoch since it reminded “some people of a Greek temple, others of the middle ages, most people of an age before their own, scarcely anybody of the present moment” [*BtA*, 1941: 90].

What Woolf achieves, then, through depicting the timeless quality of life in art is a counterpoint on a broad plain to history in the making. The audience becomes aware of

the timeless quality that their own lives contain, since this awareness of timelessness is situated in life as they (and we) know it, it is not in the exclusive and personalised vision provided by religious conviction. Through art Woolf also manages to achieve the same communal awareness of all other living species that religion fosters without the divisive quality of religion – the believers pitched against the unbelievers – through her ability to emphasise not dogma, but humanity and shared human nature. Across time, social station, culture, gender and finally historical division, humanity always still has human nature in common. Mrs Manresa, for example, “deserted by the male sex”, scrambles up “putting her hands to her hair as if it were high time that she went too, though it was nothing of the kind and her hair was perfectly tidy. Cobbet in his corner saw through her little game. He had known human nature in the East. It was the same in the West [...] [he] observed the little game of the woman following the man to the table in the West as in the East” [*BtA*, 1941: 99].

As such Woolf seems to imply that the specific content of our constructed contexts, our religious convictions and dogma, our national histories, does not matter; what humanity has in common is stronger than that which divides it. Isa reflects that “the plot was only there to beget emotion. There were only two emotions: love, and hate. There was no need to puzzle out the plot” [*BtA*, 1941:82]. The plot here can be understood to represent our specific reality-ordering systems and constructions, the specific dogmatic content of our religions, the specific historic reasons posited as causes for other historic effects, but these specifics do not matter, what matters is the effect they have, either love or hate. What Woolf is suggesting is that the reality-ordering systems we choose have the capacity to evoke unity or division; of the three – history, religion and art – dealt with extensively in *Between the Acts*, art seems to have the least capacity to evoke hate and division: the play, for instance, brings the community together. In contrast, of the three, history seems to have the greatest potential to evoke division or hate, even on a personal level, since Giles turns Mrs Swithin and William Dodge into pegs on which to hang his frustration at his inability to prevent disastrous history. Yet what Woolf deplores or advocates is not the practice of art or history or religion in itself, what she condemns and wants to communicate is the way in which these ordering systems are usually employed by humanity, for it is the manner in which they are used

that leads to division or unity. Woolf seems to be advocating a greater amount of integration between the three ordering systems; if art could be taken as seriously as religion or history, if history could centre less on the national past and more on the artistic past and if religion could concentrate not on dogmatic purity but on the inherent humaneness underlying artistic vision, division and hate can be replaced by love and unity.

Woolf partially illustrates her vision of how history can be altered by means of the influence and emphasis on art, through her depiction of Miss La Trobe. She has all the makings of a petty dictator: “‘Bossy’ they called her privately [...] Her abrupt manner and stocky figure; her thick ankles and sturdy shoes; her rapid decisions barked out in guttural accents – ‘all this got their goat’” [BtA, 1941: 58]. Yet instead of directing her vast energy towards power politics and conquest on the battlefield, she has to face the challenges posed by a far doughtier opponent than a political enemy – Miss La Trobe has to impart her artistic vision to an audience. “A vision imparted was relief from agony ... for one moment” [BtA, 1941: 88]; Miss La Trobe’s endeavour to impart her vision is described in fairly violent, warlike terms as she “gnashe[s] her teeth” [BtA, 1941: 109] at the possibility that the audience might escape, as she leans against the tree “paralysed. Her power had left her” because “illusion had failed” and she murmurs “This is death” [BtA, 1941: 126]. Later as her experiment with reality fails she reflects that “audiences were the devil [...] But here she was fronting her audience. Every second they were slipping the noose [...] Grating her fingers in the bark, she damned the audience. Panic seized her. Blood seemed to pour from her shoes. This is death, death, death, she noted in the margin of her mind; when illusion fails” [BtA, 1941: 161]. It seems as if Miss La Trobe suffers the same agonies as any soldier on the battlefield – death, panic and emotional risk – through her attempt to communicate her artistic vision. But there are also moments when she experiences the joy of victory over her enemy, the audience, as “she seethes wandering bodies and floating voices in a cauldron, and makes rise up from its amorphous mass a recreated world. Her moment was on her – her glory” [BtA, 1941: 137]; still later, after the play is over, she reflects that “glory possessed her – for one moment [...] It was in the giving that the triumph was” [BtA, 1941: 188]. Miss La Trobe’s aim is then not a material victory, gaining land and power, but a spiritual victory

when she manages to make her audience share her vision. Finally, after she had “nicked the lock and hoisted the case of heavy gramophone records to her shoulder [...] she crossed the terrace and stopped by the tree where the starlings had gathered. It was here that she had suffered triumph, humiliation, ecstasy, despair – for nothing” [*BtA*, 1941: 189]. Yet Miss LaTrobe’s sense of failure is not a permanent state of mind, nor does it discourage her from another attempt at communicating her artistic vision to an audience. Towards the end of the novel it becomes clear that she is already imagining another play and thus also a possible further attempt at communication.

Through the character of Miss La Trobe Woolf suggests that instead of pouring out their vast energy into political actions on the stage of the battlefield, that might ensure their passage into history, people should rather turn towards the stage of art as a challenge and make their audience see their vision through art rather than through violence. Miss La Trobe’s bloody shoes are a direct echo of Giles’s bloody shoes. They are symbolic of action and virility; but instead of having real blood (in his case, the blood of other living creatures) on her shoes, Miss La Trobe’s bloody shoes serve as an image to convey the intensity of her battle with her audience – the action she engages in is fierce indeed but not physically violent.

What is more, through the pageant Woolf depicts the idea that art possesses the same capacity for ensuring historical fame that politics does. If the extract from the Renaissance play had been an extract from a Shakespeare play, the play and its author could have rivalled the Virgin Queen for historical fame, on purely artistic grounds. Indeed, purely on the basis of his art rather than famous heroic political deeds, Chaucer has given his name to a whole age. As it is the author of the play is unknown; and yet it is a testimony to the enduring nature of art, of our constructive actions as opposed to our destructive actions, that this anonymous play could survive its author and perpetuate something of his or her vision into the future.

This contrast between destructive, violent and hateful actions that ensure historical fame or survival, and constructive, peaceful and loving actions with an equal, if not greater potential for historical fame and continuity, stands central to the ideological design of *Between the Acts*; and it is directly linked to the explanation for tyranny and war posited by Woolf in *Three Guineas*. Writing in June 1938 after the publication of

Three Guineas she states “thats [sic] the end of six years floundering, striving, much agony, some ecstasy: lumping *The Years* and *Three Guineas* together as one book – as indeed they are” [*The Diary*, Volume 5: 148]. What Woolf never mentioned herself, but what becomes clear after a thorough reading of both *Three Guineas* and *Between the Acts*, is that the latter is also a continuation of the former, in a sense perhaps far more effectively so than *The Years*, since there is a clarity and a conciseness about *Between the Acts* that *The Years* lacks. In *Three Guineas*, then, Woolf shows how patriarchy (since this was the dominant system prevalent in the private home) is linked to any other form of tyranny through the basic tenet of the domination of one group of people by another. Those who uphold such a status quo she names “insiders”. On the basis of her advice that the only way finally to do away with this system, and in effect then also the repetition of war, is to re-direct one’s energy and to work “outside your society, not within” it [*Three Guineas*, 1938: 309], she terms those visionaries who support a world where war will be no more “outsiders”. In *Between the Acts* Woolf seems to group her characters and the ordering system they support along the lines of “outsiders” who “maintain an attitude of complete indifference” towards power politics and war [*Three Guineas*, 1938: 310]; and “insiders”, who either want to make war to “gratify a sex instinct” which “outsiders” “cannot share” [*Three Guineas*, 1938: 313] or insider women who must accept insiders’ views “and fall in with their decrees because it was only so that [they] could wheedle [men] into giving [them] the means to marry or marriage itself” [*Three Guineas*, 1938: 207] because marriage was the only profession open to [them]” [*Three Guineas*, 1938: 206]. Woolf’s division is simple and yet complex. It is simple because the “insiders” choice of ordering system will have the result that history repeats itself with violence and destruction, whilst the “outsiders” are clearly striving for a change in society and the outcome of history, unity and love instead of war and destruction. Her division becomes complex, though, in the differing degrees and overlapping capacities in which characters are both “insiders” and “outsiders”, or only partially “insider” or “outsider”.

To return briefly to Kristina Busse’s statement that “the pageant mimics the novel as a whole in its strenuous attempt to leave out patriarchy, violence, imperialism, and war, all of which are at the very centre and thus constitutive of the British Empire” [Busse, 2001: 92]: this statement is only true in so far as one considers that which is

presented overtly in *Between the Acts*. The covert subtext is, however, very much inclusive of patriarchy, violence, imperialism and war. Joplin states that “Virginia Woolf nursed no easy sense that England represented the force of civilization over and against Germany – to her mind, the crisis was at once less clear and more sinister, fascism was not alien to England or any culture” [Joplin, 1989: 95]. It is this covert threat of fascism and of history repeating itself through fascism and war that Woolf portrays through her subtext.

At the very outset of the novel three examples illustrating the root cause of tyranny are included in the novel in rapid succession, laying the foundation for the subtext of the novel throughout. The first is Bart Oliver’s scaring his grandson, George, as the latter sits staring at a flower; when Bart’s game fails to have the desired effect – “George stood gazing” [*BtA*, 1941: 11] – he gives a show of impressive masculine ability “as if he were commanding a regiment” to “bawl and make a brute”, in this case his Afghan hound Sohrab, “obey him” [*BtA*, 1941: 11]. After his fright by “a terrible peaked, eyeless monster moving on legs, brandishing arms” [*BtA*, 1941: 11], George finds this display of brute force even more upsetting and he “burst out crying” [*BtA*, 1941: 12], a display of emotion in a boy which the old man finds utterly unacceptable: “he was angry [...] The boy was a cry baby” [*BtA*, 1941: 12]. Later on Bart says to Isa that her boy is “a coward” [*BtA*, 1941: 17]; in response “she frowned. He was not a coward, her boy wasn’t. And she loathed the domestic, the possessive; the maternal. And he knew it and did it on purpose to tease her” [*BtA*, 1941: 17]. Finally “as her father-in-law had dropped *The Times*, she took it and read: [...] The troopers told her the horse had a green tail; but she found it was just an ordinary horse. And they dragged her up to the barrack room where she was thrown upon a bed. Then one of the troopers removed part of her clothing, and she screamed and hit him about the face” [*BtA*, 1941: 18]. What is it that these scenes have in common? They all portray gender-based conditioning and power relations. As such they illustrate the assertion made by Woolf in *Three Guineas* that “the public and private worlds are inseparably connected; [...] the tyrannies and servilities of the one are the tyrannies and the servilities of the other” [*Three Guineas*, 1938: 364]. George’s reaction is unacceptable to his grandfather because the notion about manhood inherited by Bart from the past is that a man is not supposed to express emotion that can be read as

a sign of sensitivity or weakness; males must be trained from infancy to master, to dominate. Bart teases his daughter-in-law with the statement that her boy is a cry-baby because he knows how she loathes “the domestic [...] the maternal” [BtA, 1941: 17], but he wants to remind her constantly that that is her position, her role in life and society; this is how both he and his son, whom she thinks of as “the father of my children” [BtA, 1941: 13], make Isa submit to their domination. Bart and Giles’s use of domesticity to dominate Isa echo Hitler’s words quoted in *Three Guineas*: “The woman’s world is her family, her husband, her children, her home”; Woolf goes on to state that whoever asserts this speaks with the voice of the dictator “whether they speak English or German” [*Three Guineas*, 1938: 229]. The rape scene, to which Isa’s mind wanders back throughout the day, is a symbolic action illustrating how gender domination leads to tyranny and violence – in effect a violent sex instinct that leads to the repetition in history of political rape, war. This rape scene, however, also has bearing on Isa’s life since a related gender domination that is implied by the rape is present in her own life, and thus also the same potential for disastrous history in the making.

Patricia Cramer states that

in *Between the Acts* Woolf sees the family as key to the origins of civilization and public acts and history as collective re-enactments of family roles. Freud posited a myth of the murder of an all powerful father by his jealous sons as the origin of civilization, and he described past and contemporary history as a continuing struggle for power among guilty sons who wish to take the father’s place and imitate his tyrannical behaviour. Woolf also recognised the father-son struggles for power as the core of patriarchal history, but unlike Freud, she did not accept patriarchal reality as the only possible model for human society [Cramer, 1993: 1].

Although there is little evidence of any animosity portrayed between Giles and Bart Oliver in *Between the Acts*, in fact the affection that they hold for each other is noted in several instances in the novel – “Bartholomew [...] loved him” [BtA, 1941: 44] and Giles exempts “his father, whom he loved, [...] from censure” [BtA, 1941: 49] – the family relations portrayed in the novel do indeed hold the key to Woolf’s criticism of her society and the answer she posits as to how the repetition of history can be avoided.

Cramer notes that “Woolf read Ruth Benedict’s *Patterns of Culture* at the time she was composing *Between the Acts*” and that “Woolf’s admiration for Benedict’s work

seems to have been reciprocated”; what both these authors have in common “is their interest in patterns and types” [Cramer, 1993: 2]. Thus Benedict’s views most probably had an influence on Woolf’s own views expressed in *Between the Acts*. One of the likely influences most noticeable in the novel is the way the relationship between the father and son is portrayed. For Giles and Bart seem to form a unified front, tying in directly with Benedict’s assertion that “external controls have far less effect on determining group formation than internal controls” [Cramer, 1993: 4]. Cramer quotes her as stating that “what really binds men together is their culture – the ideas and standards they have in common” [Cramer, 1993: 4]. This idea would explain Bart’s disappointment in George’s reaction; the little boy acted outside the cultural historical paradigm established by his male ancestors. It would also explain Giles’s unhappiness about the position he finds himself in, forced to sit and look at views over coffee with “old fogies [...] when the whole of Europe - over there - [bristled] like [...] [a] hedgehog [...] with guns, poised with planes” [*BtA*, 1941: 49] and his irrational irritation with his aunt. Giles feels himself to be “manacled to a rock [...] and forced passively to behold indescribable horror” [*BtA*, 1941: 55]; the fact that he has to behold the horror passively is what pains him because within the cultural historical paradigm of his gender he is supposed to take dramatic physical action to oppose whatever threatens him and his own. This is also why Lucy angers him since she exhibits no understanding of his dilemma; she personifies passive indifference, her only active contribution to history “was to marry a squire, now dead” and to have ‘borne two children, one in Canada, the other, married, in Birmingham” [*BtA*, 1941: 49].

Thus Lucy and Giles are representative of two radically opposed viewpoints, that of the “insider” as opposed to the “outsider”. Giles is an insider because of his unquestioning acceptance of gender roles and the entitlements conferred by patriarchy. He is the inheritor and active agent of patriarchy, the heir to Pointz Hall as a symbol of traditional English culture and economy: “Given his choice he would have chosen to farm. But he was not given his choice” and had to take a job in the city and spend his life “buying and selling – ploughs? glass beads [...] or stocks and shares? – to savages who wished most oddly [...] to dress and live like the English” [*BtA*, 1941: 43]. Thus he is also representative of the empire, the virile male hero who now finds himself eager, yet

powerless, to counter the historical monster created by his ancestors. Lucy is an outsider. She is always threatening “to set up a house of her own; perhaps in Kensington, perhaps in Kew”; yet she has never done so and thus she owns no property to defend, not even her ancestral home belongs to her: much as she might love it she was barred from inheriting it because of her gender. As a widow she is freed from the marital bonds linking her to patriarchy and thus also free to involve herself in whatever interests her and to disengage from whatever does not interest her; she is passive yet in her passivity possesses the power to “defy Bart and the weather” [*BtA*, 1941: 22].

Although Giles seems to be the only character overtly aware of the threat of history emanating from the continent, his insider status governs his choice of actions and as such he is the vehicle that wills the repetition of history since the same actions will lead to the same results, maintaining the status quo. His insider status brings him very little happiness, though; he reflects bitterly on the fact that he had no choice but to enter the imperial economic arena: “so one thing led to another; and the conglomeration of things pressed you flat; held you fast like a fish in water” [*BtA*, 1941: 43]. Lucy’s cheerful disposition, in contrast to the rest of her family, is commented on indirectly by Bart’s muttering the lines of verse, “O sister swallow, O sister swallow, How can thy heart be full of the spring?” [*BtA*, 1941: 104]; for the fact that Lucy is an outsider also grants her a happiness denied the insiders because she has, to a large extent, freedom of choice. Her happiness and freedom, in contrast to Giles, also sprout from the fact that she has gained, through her outsider status, what Woolf termed to be “the fourth great teacher of the daughters of educated men” – “freedom from unreal loyalties” [*Three Guineas*, 1938: 267]. Woolf explains that freedom from unreal loyalties entails the following: “freedom from loyalty to old schools, old colleges, old churches, old ceremonies and old countries” [*Three Guineas*, 1938: 267]; furthermore “by freedom from unreal loyalties is meant that you must rid yourself of pride and nationality in the first place; also, of religious pride, college pride, school pride, family pride, sex pride and those unreal loyalties that come with them” [*Three Guineas*, 1938: 271]. The fact that Lucy is a devout Christian might at first seem problematic when considering her freedom from unreal loyalties, yet, as has been discussed previously, it would seem as if Woolf’s portrayal of Lucy does not really involve the content of her religion as much as the

spiritual qualities it contains. Lucy as a character can hardly be accused of rabid nationality or of bigoted Christianity. Even more light is shed on the content of her freedom from unreal loyalties by considering the example Woolf uses from the *Antigone* by Sophocles: Woolf considers Antigone's statement on the distinction between the laws and the Law as "a far more profound statement on the duties of the individual to society than any [of] our sociologists can offer us" [*Three Guineas*, 1938: 272]. In the explanatory notes to Part Two of *Three Guineas* the following translation is given of Antigone's statement: "It is not my nature to join in hating, but in loving", to which King Creon replies "Pass, then, to the world of the dead, and, if thou must needs love, love them. While I live, no woman shall rule me" [*Three Guineas*, 1938: 396]. This is an illustration of the idea that the laws of society are often at odds with the law dictated by our shared humanity – that we shall love one another; as such the insiders uphold the laws of society at the expense of humanity, whilst the outsiders will uphold the law of humanity even at their own expense.

A better summary of the differences instilled in Lucy and Giles by their difference in social positioning can hardly be asked for. History aiming at instilling national pride and patriotism, but also family pride, religious pride, college pride or any other form of pride that will inevitably lead to conflict, instils unreal loyalties; whereas Lucy's freedom from unreal loyalties instilled through history (in the form of gender role conditioning, patriotism, nationalism, class) offers her the choice rather to join in loving than in hating. A case in point, illustrating this difference, is their differing reactions to the character of William Dodge. On the basis of what has been historically instilled as the hallmarks of manhood, Giles judges William Dodge harshly, thinking him "a toady; a lickspittle; not a downright man of his senses; but a teaser and twitcher; a fingerer of sensations; picking and choosing; dillying and dallying; not a man to have straightforward love for a woman" [*BtA*, 1941: 55]. Mrs Swithin, on the other hand, instils trust in Dodge because "old and frail she had climbed the stairs. She had spoken her thoughts, ignoring, not caring if he thought her, as he had, inconsequent, sentimental, foolish. She had lent him a hand to help him up a steep place. She had guessed his trouble. [She had sung] an old child's nursery rhyme to help a child" [*BtA*, 1941: 65]. Thus Lucy has not rejected Dodge, despite the fact that he is pretending to uphold a social code of which he is not convinced.

Her acceptance of him, her open acknowledgement of the humanity that they have in common, encourages Dodge to trust her and evokes in him a desire to be honest with her (though he does not eventually take her into his confidence) which leads to a form of unity, not separation, a form of love, not hate.

Lucy and Giles's differing natures and roles are hinted at even in their names. "St Giles is the patron saint of cripples" [Rahman, 1984: 127] and there is a church in London dedicated to St Giles. The name Lucy is derived from the Latin "Lucia", meaning light or bringer of light [Rule, 1986: 84], whilst more than one association with St Swithin is to be found in *Between the Acts*. Traditionally it was held that "if it rains on St Swithin's day (July 15) it will rain for forty days after"; furthermore St Swithin is associated with drunkenness but it is also popularly believed that "diseases of the eye were cured by him and thus he is associated with clearing the vision" [Rahman, 1984: 126]. It is clear from Woolf's intentional references to the associations with St Swithin, in *Between the Acts*, that she was well aware of all the connotations the name held. The whole question of whether it will be "wet or fine" [*BtA*, 1941: 20] clearly has a connection with the popular belief regarding the influence of St Swithin's day on the weather. There is a reference to St Swithin's association with drunkenness in Mrs Swithin's trailing thought pattern skipping "from yeast to alcohol; so to fermentation; so to inebriation; so to Bacchus; and [she] lay under purple lamps in a vineyard in Italy" [*BtA*, 1941: 31]. This leads one to deduce that Woolf must have been aware of the third, and perhaps most important, association with the name of St Swithin. As such it would seem as if Lucy's name suggests that she is an enlightened visionary, one who brings light and clarity of vision, whereas Giles's name might suggest that Mrs Manresa's "sulky hero" [*BtA*, 1941: 96] might also be an emotional cripple because of his bondage to unreal historical loyalties.

This contrast between Mrs Swithin and Giles is further explored by the characters who are attracted to each respectively. Patricia Cramer notes that "in *Between the Acts* Woolf investigates the 'values and ideas' which draw people toward Giles in order to pinpoint the qualities which contribute to war and to expose 'the collective habits and customs binding us to social patterns that perpetuate war'. She studies cultural patterns by contrasting patriarchal and matriarchal configurations centred on Giles and Lucy

respectively” [Cramer, 1993: 4]. Characters who can be associated with Lucy and her outsider status are William Dodge, Isa Oliver and Miss La Trobe; whilst Bart Oliver and Mrs Manresa are associated with Giles and the notion of the insider.

Through William Dodge and Isa, Woolf portrays those who hanker to be outsiders but are trapped inside the status quo; as such they fail to change the course of history. Mrs Manresa introduces William as “an artist”, but he corrects her stating that he is “a clerk in an office”; at this Isa thinks that she has “her finger on the knot which had tied itself so tightly, almost to the extent of squinting, certainly of twitching, in his face” [*BtA*, 1941: 35]. Dodge does not have the courage to move outside the known confines of the current social system; yet his position brings him little happiness, which ironically enough gives him something fundamentally in common with Giles. Isa is in much the same position. She writes poetry in a “book bound like an account book” [*BtA*, 1941: 14] to hide it from her husband. Mrs Giles Oliver experiences what Stuart Christie describes, quoting Nietzsche, as “the ‘oversaturation of an age with [its] history ... the belief that one is a late-comer and epigone’ to the historical process” [Christie, 2002: 157]. Trapped inside an unsatisfactory marriage she feels herself the inheritor of a system that has overburdened her with inherited baggage from the past; she thinks, rather poetically, “how am I burdened with what they drew from the earth; memories, possessions. This is the burden that the past laid on me, last little donkey in the long caravanserai crossing the desert. ‘Kneel down’ said the past. ‘Fill your pannier from our tree. Rise up, donkey. Go your way till your heels blister and your hoofs crack” [*BtA*, 1941: 139]. This is a direct echo of the imagery Woolf uses to describe “the procession of the sons of educated men” in *Three Guineas*: “a procession, like a caravanserai crossing a desert [...] One was a bishop. Another a judge. One was an admiral. Another a general. One was a professor. Another a doctor” [*Three Guineas*, 1941: 240-1]. Woolf goes on to explain that now the daughters of educated men can also join that procession but they first have to ask themselves certain questions before joining: “do we wish to join the procession or don’t we? On what terms shall we join the procession? Above all where is it leading us, the procession of educated men?” [*BtA*, 1941: 243].

What Woolf shows in both *Three Guineas* and in *Between the Acts* is that the procession of the sons of educated men, so historical in nature – heavy with the burden of

tradition – leads straight to the repetition of history; and the repetition of history inevitably means the repetition of oppression and eventually of war. Thus she illustrates how the legacy of the past can be unhappiness. Trapped in a system which Woolf views as outdated and malfunctioning, William Dodge, Isa and Giles have the same thought waiting for the scene change, symbolic of the change so urgently needed in society: “‘I’m damnably unhappy’. ‘So am I’, Dodge echoed. ‘And I too’ Isa thought” [BtA, 1941: 158]. As Schneider notes, “All long to escape the restrictions that lock them into an outworn narrative, to break out of the straightjacket of the past, and to prepare to build a new, sane future” [Schneider, 1989: 106].

Miss La Trobe is portrayed as the ultimate outsider. In her life she has contravened all the social conventions laid on her gender by the past: “rumour said that she had kept a tea shop at Winchester; that had failed. She had been an actress. That had failed. She had bought a four-roomed cottage and shared it with an actress. They had quarrelled. Very little was actually known about her”. Even her name and physical appearance seem out of the ordinary: “with that name she wasn’t, presumably, pure English. From the Channel Islands perhaps?”; she is also suspected of having “Russian blood in her” and “outwardly she was swarthy, sturdy and thick set; strode about the fields in a smock frock; sometimes with a cigarette in her mouth; often with a whip in her hand; and used rather strong language – perhaps then she wasn’t altogether a lady?” [BtA, 1941: 53]. As outsider, free from unreal loyalties, she has the ability to change the way history and the national past are perceived, treating accepted historical convention with disdain, skipping “two hundred years in less than fifteen minutes” [BtA, 1941: 141], leaving those members of the audience who view the world through politicised historical lenses astounded – Colonel Mayhew for instance, asking “Why leave out the British Army? What’s history without the army, eh?” [BtA, 1941: 141]. She also criticizes the empire in no uncertain terms through the Victorian policeman’s statement: “Cripplegate, St Giles’s, Whitechapel; the Minories. Let ‘em sweat at the mines, cough at the looms; rightly endure their lot. That’s the price of Empire” [BtA, 1941: 146]. Thus Miss La Trobe as outsider literally makes use of the opportunity to change history through changing the way history is portrayed.

In contrast to Miss La Trobe, who is “an outcast. Nature had somehow set her apart from her kind” [BtA, 1941: 190], and as such is perhaps truly wild, stands Mrs Manresa. The latter desperately wants others to believe that she is a “wild child of nature” [BtA, 1941: 41], yet this is not the reality of her being, it is a role she acts. Mrs Manresa is a fine example of the insider woman, as Woolf explains in *Three Guineas*: the insider woman is forced “to use whatever influence she possessed to bolster up the system which provided her with maids; with carriages; with fine clothes; with fine parties [...] she must use whatever charm or beauty she possessed to flatter and cajole the busy men [...] she must accept their views, and fall in with their decrees” [*Three Guineas*, 1938: 207]. This idea is reflected in the approval Mrs Manresa gains from both Giles and Bart, “a thorough good sort she was. She made old Bart feel young” [BtA, 1941: 39], and the lengths she is willing to go to please them, even going as far as to gratify Giles’s aggressive sex instinct through infidelity to her husband. It becomes clear that far from challenging the system, her wild child claims are just a ruse to make those already in the system comfortable with her attempt to enter it. Georgia Johnston explains that

Mrs Manresa constructs an elaborate game with her hosts in order to make them more conscious of class construction and more accepting of her. Her status – as one of the ‘newcomers...bringing the old houses up to date’ – explains why creating awareness of class construction but then postulating it as essentialist would be in her interest. By exposing class as a cultural construction, she undermines prejudice against her ‘newcomer’ status. Simultaneously, she diverts anxiety away from herself as interloper and toward a possible breakdown of the system [Johnston, 1997: 63].

Thus Mrs Manresa is not an agent of change, not a breath “of [...] fresh air that blew in” [BtA, 1941: 37], but an agent of the status quo, stating for instance “it’s all my eye about democracy” because “the people looked to them [the gentry]. They led; the rest followed” [BtA, 1941: 92], and therefore she is also an agent of historical repetition. Viewed in this light she becomes an accomplice to the repetition of war.

Cramer comments that “in *Between the Acts* Woolf connects the worship of ‘heroes’ like Giles with the adoration of dictators and military heroes in public life” [Cramer, 1993: 5]. She goes on to state that “while the hero with his lady on the stage beside him brags about his military conquests, the ‘lady-like’ Mrs Manresa trails behind the blood-stained Giles, shamelessly romanticising Giles’s brutality. Woolf intends us to

see Manresa's attraction to dominating and violent men as characteristic of women's contribution to war, and plots which eroticize conquest and romantic love as literature's war effort" [Cramer, 1993: 10].

Mrs Manresa is not the only character in *Between the Acts* who seems to be acting a role outside the pageant, though; all the characters in this novel give some version of a performance. Woolf probably makes use of this technique to highlight the effect of historical gender roles and power relations within society. William Dodge, for instance, plays the role society historically expects of him both in the public and the private sphere, holding a respectable position as a clerk in an office and being married with a child. Yet he longs to confess to Mrs Swithin, "my child's not my child, Mrs Swithin. I'm a half-man, Mrs Swithin; a flickering, mind divided little snake in the grass, Mrs Swithin; as Giles saw" [*BtA*, 1941: 67]. Isa is depicted as playing different roles befitting different personal relations: William notices that on seeing her little boy "her face change[d], as if she had got out of one dress and put on another"; moments later as her husband approaches "she changed her dress [again]. This time, from the expression in her eyes it was apparently something in the nature of a strait waistcoat" [*BtA*, 1941: 95]. Through the uneasy awareness created in her audience of the danger of insincerity contained within this role play, Woolf emphasises the outdated nature of traditional gender roles and power relations within the family. Marder notes that

Between the Acts creates a powerful impression of inner distance or alienation. Woolf achieves her effects mainly through the characters, none of whom is completely absorbed into his or her role. All stand away from themselves to observe the parts they are playing. This sense that ordinary life is merely a charade – more elaborately staged than the village play but not fundamentally different in kind – is woven into the collective consciousness throughout. [Marder, 1988: 425].

Furthermore "Miss La Trobe's pageant, with its amateur performances echoes and develops this theme by reminding the characters of the dubious roles assigned to them" [Marder, 1988: 426].

Our immersion in history often leaves us unaware of the true nature of our actions. By alienating her characters from the roles they play and by creating an alienation effect in her audience, Woolf seems to encourage her audience to stand back and re-evaluate the historically attributed roles we play as a part of our social

conditioning. Isa manages to breathe some emotional life into her marriage by resorting to clichés, addressing Giles alternately in her mind as “the father of my children” or “my husband” [BtA, 1941: 44]; yet it becomes clear that these clichés, inherited from the past, only mask the real emptiness of Isa and Giles’s traditional roles as marriage partners.

Woolf also undermines and questions character stereotypes inherited from the past. The idea of the brave, virile male hero is belied by Giles’s conduct; he stands as powerless as anyone else when confronted by the potential catastrophe that is history. Through her emphasis on evolution and pre-history in *Between the Acts*, Woolf also seems to question accepted notions of historical progress. At the same time she subverts formal versions of history constructed around progress brought about by important male political and pioneering figures. Lambert points out that “evolutionary theory also provides the contrasting notions of the male-hero and of the boundary-destroying drama. By placing humans within the animal world, Darwin had suggested that there are no heroes and there is no audience” [Lambert, 1993: 84].

Finally the juxtaposition of the play with the conduct of the characters outside the play suggests that all the roles we perform are amateur performances as well as being a form of historical repetition at the same time. Woolf wants to create an awareness in her audience of the role historical construction plays in our lives. A change in the repetitive pattern of history can only come about if our amateur performances, and the historically constructed entities delivering these performances, make a deliberate attempt to alter the way history is constructed. That is the significance of the last scene of the pageant, where the audience is confronted by any number of reflecting objects, catching “now Manresa. Here a nose ... [her ellipsis] There a skirt ... [her ellipsis] Now perhaps a face”; thus the audience is captured “as [they] are, before [they’ve] had time to assume ... [her ellipsis] And only too in parts ... [her ellipsis] That’s what’s so distorting and upsetting and utterly unfair” [BtA, 1941: 165]. Through this framebreaking device Miss La Trobe attempts to make her audience reflect on their own situatedness in history. She draws the audience into the play, with the result that they have to reflect on the roles they play in real life. But it also draws attention to the constructed nature of history and personal identity, how humankind needs to organise the “orts, scraps and fragments” [BtA, 1941:

169] of perception into a recognisable pattern through reality-ordering systems like religion, history or art in order to make sense of existence.

Thus the audience becomes aware of the fallibility of their chosen ordering systems when confronted with unmediated reality, reality not yet ordered by a system to interpret it, and hence a reality in which meaning breaks down. Woolf wants to foster an awareness of *how* we construct ordered patterns of reality, of which history is one, in order to encourage her readers to attempt to avoid incorporating the same fatal mistakes into their historical constructions, leading to the same unfortunate consequences. This idea also ties in with the scene of the pageant directly preceding the scene previously discussed. Mr Page, the reporter, notes, “with the very limited means to her disposal Miss La Trobe conveyed to the audience Civilization (the wall) in ruins; rebuilt [...] by human effort” [BtA, 1941: 163]. Woolf is, however, referring to more than just the League of Nations in this scene: she is also referring to the fact that in the light of history as a human construct, humanity is not just a victim of a basic unchangeable human nature, doomed to relive its history; we are the determiners of historical influence, we need to re-construct it in such a way that civilization can be rebuilt without the same repetitive disaster which broke it down in the first place – tyranny, which leads to war.

In her construction of a novel which also incorporates what she loves about England, Woolf makes very sure that it does not perpetuate what she loathes. Her construction of English history in the pageant deals with what she views as worth commemorating in English history, namely literary history; and undermines or even attacks what she views as historically negligible or deplorable - great victories on the battlefield and the supposed superiority of Britain in comparison to other nations. The pastoral setting of the novel, in the heart of England, could have lent itself to a different kind of sentimental patriotism; yet Woolf avoids this pitfall through her careful exposition of how the potential for fascism exists everywhere. Furthermore she undermines even the possibility of an overly sentimental depiction of the English countryside by inserting fantastic, but very effective flights of fantasy dealing with what England was probably like in pre-history.

The contents of Miss La Trobe’s pageant also reflect a conscious effort to provide a representation of English history that does not deliberately perpetuate some aspects of

its negative legacy: gender domination, imperialism, war and class divisions. Viewed in this context, the pageant's main focus seems to fall on literary and cultural history.

But the pageant, and Woolf's depiction of the audience's reaction to the Victorian tableau, also cause both the readers of the novel and the audience watching the play, to realise that there is often a discrepancy between the way history is experienced by those who actually lived through an era or a set of historical events, and the way that same era or set of events is portrayed in retrospect. Thus Etty Springett considers Miss La Trobe's satirical depiction of the Victorians to be "cheap and nasty" [*BtA*, 1941: 155] since she agrees with Mrs Lynn Jones that "there were grand men among" the Victorians; yet the pageant also throws Mrs Lynn Jones into doubt about her own perception of the era: "children [drew] trucks in mines [and] there was the basement; yet Papa read Walter Scott after dinner; and divorced ladies were not received at Court. How difficult to come to any conclusion" [*BtA*, 1941: 147]. Clearly then Woolf questions whether it is possible ever to do justice to the past through a single construction. Furthermore, considering the excerpts from Renaissance drama and Restoration comedy, one is prompted to question what the audience response to these excerpts would be if the audience consisted of people who had lived in the Renaissance or Restoration. Would they be satisfied with the way their respective societies were portrayed or not? Yet because there is no member of the audience who had experienced the formerly mentioned eras directly, the audience accepts their representation unquestioningly. Woolf seems to imply that humankind is too quick to accept representations of the past; but also that the real influence of the past is often underestimated and trivialised, because its relevance in and contribution to the context of the present are not realised. Finally the histrionic natures of all three excerpts suggest that history might ultimately prove to be comic, tragic and absurd rather than rational and meaningful.

Written as an attempt for its author to come to terms with the tragic and absurd historical developments of her own time, *Between the Acts* strongly exhibits the worrying influence of the political and social climate in which it was created. Schneider comments that "the emotional timbre of *Between the Acts*, like the content of her *Writer's Diary*, indicates that Woolf was unable to maintain her policy of deliberate indifference toward the coming war" [Schneider, 1989: 101]. The novel as a whole exudes an atmosphere of

bated breath, of expectation. Indeed the specific time-slot in which *Between the Acts* is set carries a very specific significance since “mid-summer 1939, the moment Woolf’s fiction represents, was the last interval of ‘normal’ life before Britain ceased to be a spectator and became an actor in the war” [Joplin, 1989: 92]. It was, however, not only the war that was making an impact on Woolf and creating, in her novel, a sense of profound change to come, contrasted with firmly rooted tradition.

In his dissertation *The Shrinking Island: English Modernism and the Culture of Imperial Decline*, Joshua D. Esty shows how the decline of Britain as an imperial power had an impact on English modernism especially during the 1930s. Esty argues that imperialism underwrote and informed the culture of high modernism according to three broad rubrics, namely: “cosmopolitanism, universalism and the critique of bourgeois modernity” [Esty, 1996: 31]. He explains that

in the late 1930s, with the empire disintegrating (and the threat of war growing), all of those features of modernist culture were thrown into doubt or crisis. Accordingly, the fading of English modernism can be tracked in relation to the following changes: from cosmopolitanism to insularity, from the projection of universal values to the re-establishment of local and communal discourse, and from an engaged aesthetic critique of bourgeois modernity to an imaginary disengagement from historical time” [Esty, 1996: 31].

This is clearly a relevant assertion in the context of *Between the Acts*. Set in the countryside of Britain it does not involve a large cosmopolitan metropolis, but a small community pageant, dealing specifically with English history and striving after the exploration of history and time as human constructs.

In the light of the above explanation, it is evident that the contrast between the archetypal and the individual, the seemingly timeless quality of certain aspects of history and the threat of rapid change forms a prominent characteristic of *Between the Acts*. Esty explains that the shift from perceiving themselves as living at the centre of an empire to coming to terms with a renewed insularity caused English authors to strive towards a “re-enchantment of England [...] as a compensatory mechanism for the loss of empire” [Esty, 1996: 37]. A component of this “re-enchantment” is what Esty terms to be “historical self-consumption [which] means the substitution of England’s own fetishized past for the quickly vanishing pleasures of colonial exoticism” [Esty, 1996: 65]. There is ample

evidence of this renewed interest in local history to be found in *Between the Acts*. The pageant is one very obvious example, but more subtle examples include Woolf's choice of setting, the names she uses which are associated with medieval saints, the prominence given to England's dominant religious tradition – Christianity, and even the references to Figgis's guide book - indicative of what Esty calls historical self-consumption - which "still told the truth. 1833 was true of 1933" [BtA, 1941: 48].

What further accounts then for the sense of expectation present in *Between the Acts* is Woolf's sense of the changing times as a result of changing history. One important instance of this sense of change involves the renewed interest in local history that she explores in *Between the Acts*. The problem that she seems to grapple with is the very question whether on turning inwards again there is a whole and coherent core historical identity to be found that is wholly English. She does not seem to posit a final answer to this; instead she captures the spirit of England and its history, as she perceives it at the moment of artistic creation. Her portrait of England and English history might be infused with inspiration and a love for the past but it is countered by her incorporation of her constant awareness of inevitable change, in nature and in society: "had Figgis been there in person and called a roll call, half the ladies and gentlemen present would have said: 'Adsum', I'm here, in place of my grandfather or great-grandfather" on the other hand "there were absentees when Mr Streatfield called his roll call in the church. The motor bike, the motor bus, and the movies – when Mr Streatfield called his roll call, he laid the blame on them" [BtA, 1941: 69].

Yet again she seems to question whether historical progress exists at all. Pre-history and barbarism still seem to lurk below modern civilization; Giles cannot answer in the affirmative to Mrs Parker's statement about Albert the idiot, "surely, Mr Oliver, we're more civilized" [BtA, 1941:100]. And as the audience disperses after the play one remarks: "It's true, there's a sense in which we all [...] are savages still. Those women with red nails. And dressing up [...] The old savage I suppose" [BtA, 1941: 179]. What is more, so-called progress seems to be destructive of what is worthy of preserving from the past. For Woolf, both as an author and as a reader deeply versed in the English literary tradition, the realisation that what she must have cherished most from the past of England, its literary inheritance, was being ousted from its cultural hegemony by modern

forms of popular entertainment must have been upsetting. What is true of those descendants absent from Mr Streatfield's church attendance register seems to be, albeit in a lesser degree, also true of them in the context of the library. Indirectly, diversions like "the motor bike, the motor bus" [BtA, 1941: 69], "the dogs" and "the pictures" [BtA, 1941: 179] leave the likes of Mrs Manresa feeling like "a barbarian" [BtA, 1941: 157] as Mrs Swithin starts analysing the play; in fact Mrs Manresa ends up attending the play, with its literary connotations, by accident and her real wish is to "curl in a corner with a cushion, a picture paper, and a bag of sweets" [BtA, 1941: 61]. Apstein points out the following interesting element of the role played by the library and its contents in the novel:

In *Between the Acts*, the [...] library is no longer a depository of culture and literary tradition, a place available for readers to establish connections with the past. When Bart Oliver enters the library it is only to sleep. Isa who joins him recalls the words of the foolish lady, 'the mirror of the soul, books were', but idly, without conviction, and she is unable to find a book to relieve her pain, her 'toothache', instead, she picks up the newspaper her father-in-law has dropped [Apstein, 1996: 124].

Taking Apstein's interpretation into account it would seem as if Woolf suspects modern life of having severed its ties with the wisdom received from the past. Instead of consulting the library for lasting enlightenment, Bart sleeps there and out of everything available to read Isa selects material that will only be relevant for the moment. Yet, in contrast, *Between the Acts* as a work of art is a confirmation of the discovery of new forms of artistic creation that do foster and acknowledge strong ties with the tradition from which they sprouted, though its format might be pioneering in its combination of a play and a novel into one literary work.

Finally Woolf summarises her dilemma and her answer to the question of the timeless quality and changing nature of reality – and as such of history – in the final scene of her novel. This scene incorporates all the characteristics and questions surrounding time and the nature of history and reality, progress and timeless repetition that have been interwoven throughout the novel. It is at once the present, yet, at the same time, it evokes the very distant past, pre-history and the archetypal - "it was night before roads were made, or houses. It was the night that dwellers in caves had watched from

some high point amongst rocks” [BtA, 1941: 197]. As we have seen, Giles and Isa also represent types, with Giles representing the insider whilst Isa exhibits a leaning towards the idea of the outsider. In addition Giles represents a traditional supporter of patriarchy, whilst Isa, as a mother and wife, is trapped in the patriarchal system; yet she clearly longs to escape its bonds. Thus Giles unquestioningly performs a role inherited from history, whilst Isa is trapped into performing an historically inherited role; yet neither of the two experiences fulfilment or happiness as a result of the roles conferred upon them by the past. The idea that Giles and Isa are performing roles is strengthened by the fact that this scene echoes Miss La Trobe’s latest idea for a stage setting: “there was the high ground at midnight; there the rock; and two scarcely perceptible figures” [BtA, 1941: 191], and the final words of the novel: “the curtain rose. They spoke” [BtA, 1941: 197]. Alone together for the first time that day, alone on “stage”, Giles and Isa bare their “enmity” but “also love”; yet before they can sleep, before they can love, “they must fight, as the dog fox fights with the vixen, in the heart of darkness, in the fields of night” [BtA, 1941: 197]. As such, the final scene of *Between the Acts* suggests the confrontation between the representative viewpoints of the present and the past, between the loyalties to traditional social forms inherited from the past and history in the making, undermining and possibly discarding that inherited legacy. Ultimately, through the use of primeval imagery and what seems to be a reference to humanity’s uncharted primitive impulses – “the heart of darkness” – this scene is suggestive of the most basic struggle required to alter the course of history and the legacy that future generations will inherit from the past – the struggle against the human urge to dominate other human beings. Thus Isa’s attempt to engage in a confrontation regarding Giles’s superior assumption that he is afforded special liberties on the basis of his gender, in this case infidelity, represents what Woolf seems to regard as the starting point for social change and thus also historical change, the striving towards effecting a change in power relations in the private home first of all. Challenging the outdated confines of gender roles within the private home, Giles and Isa enter the unknown territory of redefined power relations within society, and thus the house seems to have “lost its shelter” [BtA, 1941: 197]. But the primeval and archetypal imagery is also suggestive of the fact that that struggle is perhaps also a timeless element, renewed with the advent of every succeeding generation.

In her final scene Woolf reiterates the same hopeful truth that is incorporated into *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse* as well: the truth that as long as there is history there is also life; history is an affirmation of life. From the destruction wrought by history, both the public and the private, “another life might be born” [BtA, 1941: 197]. This life, conceived after Giles and Isa have fought, holds the potential to change history, but it also holds the potential to repeat it. This fight before the embrace is necessary to end domination, to put up a resistance to modes of living both outdated and unjust – for humanity will only ever be rid of tyranny if the private home is rid of tyranny. Finally it is a confirmation of the principle that destruction can also be a form of creation and an expression of the fervent wish that life shall triumph over the well of tears.

Conclusion:

As a conclusion to a study of history and the past in selected novels of Virginia Woolf, it seems useful to reflect on the implications of the results of this study in the broader context of Woolf as both a novelist and a modernist. As a modernist, Woolf strove after the modernisation of inherited forms. The reasons for this focus on the modernisation of forms are many and varied; in general, many of them are rooted in the relationship between the artist and society and, as has been explained in the introduction, the fact that Woolf perceived inherited forms of expression to lack the ability to express the change that she perceived in society on a broad plane prompted her to advocate a change in the way novels are constructed. As a result, in the construction of her novels, Woolf chose to move away from the traditional opposition of protagonist and antagonist. Clearly she portrays some characters more sympathetically than others; yet, essentially, there are very few characters in Woolf's novels who can be termed "antagonists" in the traditional sense of the word. Keeping this aspect of her writing in mind, one then has to consider what exactly propels the plot in her novels.

In the light of this exploration of history and the past in three of Woolf's prominent works, I would suggest that the passage of time and the tragic aspect of history function as antagonists in her novels. Her plots are centred on the individual's striving to come to terms with history, also history in the making, and the past within a social context. Furthermore, because her characters reflect on their personal pasts and history, in their attempts to resolve some of the tensions and conflicts that arise from the former, the narrative of past experience forms an integral part of the technique Woolf employs to create character. The denouement of her novels usually then also centres on the probability of attaining a balance between the present and the past: Clarissa seems to find a form of balance between past and present by facing her past – Sally and Peter – and mortality – the death of Septimus – during the course of her party; Lily Briscoe manages to achieve some form of balance between the present and the past through her impressionistic representation of Mrs Ramsay; and Giles and Isa seem poised on the cusp between the past and the present, between the repetition of history and an alteration in its course.

Thus, it seems as if Woolf attempts to make her readers engage with history in a new manner. She breaks down the comfortable barriers between past and present in order to communicate to her audience the profound importance of history. Her characters' grappling with past experience, their partially successful integration of the past and the present or their possible failure to integrate it, seems to portray the notion that history and the past stand central to human beings' sense of identity, to their social adjustment in the present and to the future options possibly open to them. Furthermore, in her novels, the intermingling of the past and the present seems to suggest that Woolf wants to undermine traditional notions of delineation between history and the immediate moment. Her work implies that it is only through the integration of the past and the present, through engaging with the lived experience which lies in the past in the context of the experience of life as it is lived now, in the present, that the triumph of life can be effected over the well of tears. Her treatment of the past takes on almost a mystic quality, exhibiting a reliance on history as a source of assurance for the continuance of life; as such Woolf is a modernist author who strove, almost paradoxically, to establish a form of continuity between the past and the present.

Therefore it does not seem to be an exaggeration to state that Woolf's novels ought to hold a fair amount of broad social interest. Yet, although recent Woolf criticism has acknowledged much more fully the social and historical scope of her work, she has often been regarded as an author whose relevance is restricted to the personal and the purely subjective. Examples of the earlier, reductive approach include comments such as the following: "Woolf belongs to the second rank of twentieth century novelists" because "none of her novels has the stature or scope of Proust or of Conrad, of Joyce's *Ulysses* or of Lawrence's *The Rainbow*"; furthermore "her imaginative territory is strictly demarcated by her social environment, her intellectual inheritance, her mental instability and her sexual reserve" [Lee, 1977: 14]. In addition, modernism as a literary movement has often been accused of evading pressing political and social issues because of its focus on form. Stevenson, for instance, quotes George Orwell's critical view of modernism that what is noticeable about modernist writing is that

what "purpose" they have is very much up in the air. There is no attention to the urgent problems of the moment, above all no politics in the narrower sense [...] when one looks back at the 1920s [...] in "cultured" circles art-for-art's sake

extended practically to a worship of the meaningless. Literature was supposed to consist solely in the manipulation of words [Stevenson, 1998: 209].

Another influential piece of criticism, “The Ideology of Modernism” published in 1957 by Georg Lukàcs, claims that “modernism is limited by its characters’ existence in private worlds, detached from social reality” [Stevenson, 1998: 210]. Lukàcs goes on to state that through “the denial of history, of development, and thus of perspective” modernist authors inherently assume that “the objective world is inherently inexplicable” [Stevenson, 1998: 210] and thus no improvement or change of that world is possible. Lee explains that more recent criticism, pertaining specifically to Woolf as a novelist, has sprouted from “two centres of interest” namely “the women’s movement” and “fictionalized versions of the ethics of Bloomsbury”; she points out, though, that in the light of these centres of interest her novels are of “very limited significance” [Lee, 1977: 5-6].

The most important modernising change in the portrayal of history and the past evident in the work of Virginia Woolf seems, in the opinion of this author, to be her approach to history through the subjective perspectives of her characters rather than from an objective vantage point; thus she approaches history from within, not from without. This seems to be a fairly drastic modernisation of form when one considers the traditional striving towards a more objective view of history.

Indeed, from a critical perspective, it would seem valid to accuse Woolf of subjectivity. Yet, I would argue, an in-depth study of her novels reveals that she strives after an inclusive subjectivity in her novels. This notion entails that she attempts to portray many and varied subjective impressions in her novels in order to avoid portraying the subjective impressions of only one character. This might explain, to some extent, her choice not to make use of a pure stream of consciousness narrative technique, but rather to move from consciousness to consciousness between characters. This is clearly the case in all three novels under discussion in this dissertation. In *Mrs Dalloway* Woolf includes perceptions and consciousnesses as varied as Doris Kilman and Clarissa Dalloway; in *To the Lighthouse* the vantage points of Mrs Ramsay, Mrs McNab, Lily Briscoe and many others are conveyed; and in *Between the Acts* characters representing opposite points of view, like Giles and Lucy Swithin, are presented on the same plane. Although Woolf

approaches history then from the subjective viewpoint, she does not approach it from a single subjective viewpoint. Thus she undermines the idea that history and the past can be portrayed from a single, unified perspective. This does not mean, however, that she robs history of its meaning; it only means that she does away with the possible monopoly that a specific interpretation of history can hold.

When Woolf is criticised then for a lack of social realism, as a result of her choice to concentrate on the individual, one should consider whether her experimental approach does not afford her a version of social realism that is perhaps more relevant to how reality is experienced. Is reality always an unambiguous experience with a single fixed meaning? Or is it exactly the shifting nature of reality and impression that she captures so well through her focus on the perceptions and consciousness of the individual character? And does her focus on the individual necessarily mean that she loses touch with society completely? In the light of this study it must be concluded that she does not. It is evident that in the novels discussed she strives towards a multi-vantage point portrayal of society at a given moment.

Yet, as the work of recent scholars such as David Bradshaw and Anna Snaith has suggested, this does not mean that she fails to engage in depth with history and social issues or with specific themes incorporating the former aspects in her novels. Woolf manages to weave together many strands of consciousness and even many minor thematic strands into the larger thematic whole of her novels. The result might be ambiguous to a certain extent, but this ambiguity never overshadows her aims with the creation of the novel to such an extent that they are obscured. Surely the ambivalent reactions that Mrs Ramsay might evoke in the audience do not overshadow the effect of her absence in the third part of *To the Lighthouse* and this complex characterisation does contribute meaningfully to the impressionistic portrayal of the late Victorian era that Woolf attempts in this novel, in the sense that it allows her to illustrate conflicting and ambivalent qualities and impressions of the era.

Thus, though she never sacrifices her artistic ideals to “issues”, it becomes clear that Woolf certainly engages with themes of broad social and cultural relevance. Her aim in creating novels might have a personal component (then again, which author does not write partially from personal motivation) but it also holds relevance for society on a

broader plain. As has been illustrated, *Mrs Dalloway* deals with the effect of a major historical happening, like the First World War, on individuals; yet through her individual characters she also portrays the effect of such an historical event on society in general. Furthermore, she explores the meaning of history and the past in the human context. She does not deny history; but she does deny the representation of history in over-simplified terms.

In *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf uses literature to come to terms with certain aspects of her personal past. She does not explore that past only in terms restricted to the individuals whom she wanted to portray, though; she also explores the implications of the spirit of the era and a change in society through her characters. As such even her most biographical novel holds in a far greater significance, in general, for society than she has been credited with. Clearly she does not shirk social and political issues; she does deal with the politics of gender and she does respond to the Great War. If her own views on the construction of history induce her to undermine the significance of major historical events, that does not mean that she does not engage with such events; it means, in fact, that she attaches a different meaning to them and thus also approaches their portrayal differently.

Woolf's last novel, *Between the Acts*, clearly displays a concern with the reasons behind and implications of history in the making. Its subtext is unmistakably political. As has been shown, Woolf wants to communicate to her readers her views on the causes of repetitive disasters in history, like war on a massive scale. But she also wants to portray the dual nature of history, its changing and yet timeless nature.

It becomes clear then that the "issues" that Woolf addresses are relevant to humanity in general, thus it is a pity that her experimental narrative technique and developed subtlety seem to diminish the accessibility of her novels to a more general audience. Regarding literary modernism in general, Randall Stevenson identifies the above mentioned as possibly one of the main reasons for the decline of modernism: the next generation of authors, writing in the troubled 1930s, felt the need to communicate in a "lucid [...] style, with the supposed exactness and objectivity of a camera" in order to convey a message to their readers about "the threatening political problems of the time" [Stevenson, 1998: 207]. Clearly it is important for authors to reach their target audiences,

and as such Woolf might be accused of a form of social snobbery for writing with a more select audience in mind; yet her choice to stay true to her artistic instincts and to regard her creation of works of art (which still deliver social commentary) as of a greater importance than to create propaganda, seems on the whole, however, commendable. Furthermore, her choice to write about what she was familiar with does restrict her scope; but on the other hand it lends a particular vivaciousness to her writing and allows her to create truly convincing works of art, also, perhaps especially, convincing in their portrayal of the past.

Thus, far from being only relevant to the study of feminism or the ethics of Bloomsbury, Woolf's novels are particularly rewarding when studied within the context of the relationship between history, society and the individual. It would seem as if those critics dismissive of Woolf as too limited and subjective, robbing history of its meaning and ignoring social issues, have evaluated her work in terms of an outlook which is in itself, perhaps, too restricted: a fixed idea of what novels should be and what they should not, about how they should be constructed and about how they should not be constructed. Perhaps as an answer to the objections to Woolf's merits as a novelist one should reiterate the question she herself asks in "Modern Fiction": "Must novels be like this?" [*Collected Essays*, Vol. 2: 107].

As such the surge of interest in Woolf as a novelist during the previous two decades, across several fields of study within literature, seems to be justified. In this regard Jane Goldman points out that "Woolf and her work have been increasingly examined in the context of empire, drawing on the influential field of post-colonial studies; and stimulated by the impetus of new historicism and cultural materialism, there have been new attempts to understand Woolf's writing and persona in the context of the public and the private spheres, in the present as well as in her own time" [Goldman, 2006: 134].

Thus, although her relationship with and portrayal of history and the past in her novels are varied and complex, it can be concluded that her novels are profoundly historical in nature. In her creative work she expounds what amounts to a revision of the portrayal and significance of history and the past in the lives of individuals and in the influence they have on society. Through her novels she attempts to mediate the past and

the present and ultimately, in the context of the argument surrounding *Between the Acts* set out in this dissertation, through her art she seems to suggest an alternative course of action to be followed in order to avoid the negative repetitive cycle of history in which her society found itself. Finally to Woolf, an intense engagement with the passage of time and with history was the key to effecting the triumph of life, this moment in the present, here and now, history in the making, over the well of tears that lies already in the past.

Works Cited:

Primary Sources:

- Woolf, Virginia. 1919. *Night and Day*. (1992) Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 1922. *Jacob's Room*. (1992) Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 1925. *Mrs Dalloway*. (1992) Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 1927. *To the Lighthouse*. (1992) Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 1928. *Orlando*. (1992) Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 1929. *A Room of One's Own*. (1992) Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 1931. *The Waves*. (1992) Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 1937. *The Years*. (1992) Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 1938. *Three Guineas*. (1992). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 1941. *Between the Acts*. (1992). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 1966-1968. *Collected Essays by Virginia Woolf*. Volume 1-4. London: Hogarth.
- 1977-1984. *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*. Volume 1-5. Olivier Bell, Anne (ed.) London: Hogarth.
- 1993. *The Flight of the Mind, 1888-1912. The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, Volume 1. Nicholson, Nigel (ed.) London: Hogarth.
- 1994. *The Question of Things Happening, 1912-1922. The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, Volume 2. Nicholson, Nigel (ed.) London: Hogarth.
- 1977. *A Change of Perspective, 1922-1929. The Letters of Virginia Woolf*, Volume 3. Nicholson, Nigel (ed.) London: Hogarth.
- 1976. *Moments of Being: Unpublished Autobiographical Writings*. Schulkind, Jeanne (ed.) London: Chatto & Windus.

Secondary Sources:

- Ankersmit, Frank and Kellner, Hans (eds.) 1995. *A New Philosophy of History*. Chicago: University of Chicago.
- Annan, Noel. 1984. *Leslie Stephen: The Godless Victorian*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.
- Apstein, Barbara. 1996. Chaucer, Virginia Woolf and *Between the Acts*. In: *Woolf Studies Annual*, Vol. 2.
- Badir, Yasmine. 2001. The Two Narrators of *Mrs Dalloway*. In: Dalrez, Marc; Usakalis, Eriks (eds.) *Belgian Essays on Language and Literature*.
- Banfield, Ann. 2000. Tragic Time: The Problem of the Future in Cambridge Philosophy and *To the Lighthouse*. In: *Modernism/Modernity*, vol. 7 (1). Winter.
- Barnett, Louise K. 1976. John Bull and Noblesse Oblige: Doing and Not Doing One's Duty in *Mrs Dalloway*. In: *Studies in the Humanities*, vol. 5 (2).
- Barrett, Eileen. 1987. Matriarchal Myth on a Patriarchal Stage: Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*. In: *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 33 (1). Spring.
- Beer, Gillian. 1989. *Arguing with the Past: Essays in Narrative from Woolf to Sydney*. London: Routledge.
- Bell, Quentin. 1973. *Virginia Woolf: A biography. Vol. 1: Miss Virginia Stephen*. London: Hogarth.
- Bell, Quentin. 1973. *Virginia Woolf: A biography. Vol. 2: Mrs Woolf*. London: Hogarth.
- Bishop, Edward. 1989. *A Virginia Woolf Chronology*. Boston: G.K. Hall.
- Black, Jeremy and Macraird, Donald D. 1997. *Studying History*. New York: Palgrave.
- Bradshaw, David. 2000. The Socio-Political Vision of the Novels. In: Roe, Sue & Sellers, Susan (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*. Cambridge: Cambridge University.
- Bradshaw, David. 2002. "Vanished, like leaves": The Military Elegy and Italy in *Mrs Dalloway*. In: *Woolf Studies Annual*, vol. 8.

- Busse, Kristina. 2001. Reflecting the Subject in History: The Return of the Real in *Between the Acts*. In: *Woolf Studies Annual*, vol. 7.
- Christie, Stuart. 2002. Willing Epigone: Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts* as Nietzschean Historiography. In: *Woolf Studies Annual*, vol. 8.
- Clarke, Stuart. N. 2004. The Old Woman's Song in *Mrs Dalloway*. In: *Virginia Woolf Bulletin*, vol. 17. September.
- Coates, Irene. 2000. *Who's Afraid of Leonard Woolf?: A Case for the Sanity of Virginia Woolf*. New York: Soho.
- Corner, Martin. 1981. Mysticism and Atheism in *To the Lighthouse*. In: *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 13 (4). Winter.
- Cramer, Patricia. 1993. Virginia Woolf's Matriarchal Family of Origins in *Between the Acts*. In: *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 39 (2). Summer.
- Cuddy-Keane, Melba. 1997. Virginia Woolf and the Varieties of Historicist Experience. In: Rosenberg, Beth Carole & Dubino, Jeanne (eds.) *Virginia Woolf and the Essay*. New York: St Martin's.
- Curtis, Anthony. 1997. Kitty Maxse, the Real Mrs Dalloway. In: *PN Review*, vol. 24 (1).
- Daugherty, Beth R. and Barrett, Eileen (eds.) 1996. *Virginia Woolf: Texts and Contexts*. New York: Pace University.
- Diamond, Arlyn and Edwards, Lee R. (eds.) 1977. *The Authority of Experience: Essays in Feminist Criticism*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts.
- Edwards, Lee R. 1977. War and Roses: The Politics of *Mrs Dalloway*. In: Diamond, Arlyn; Edwards, Lee R. (eds.) *The Authority of Experience: Essays in Feminist Criticism*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts.
- Esty, Joshua. D. 1996. *The Shrinking Island: English Modernism and the Culture of Imperial Decline*. A dissertation submitted in the Department of English, Duke University.
- Forbes, Shannon. 2005. Equating Performance with Identity: The Failure of Clarissa Dalloway's Victorian "Self" in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*. In: *Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, vol. 38 (1). Spring.

- Froula, Christine. 2002. *Mrs Dalloway's Post-War Elegy: Women, War, and the Art of Mourning*. In: *Modernism/Modernity*, vol. 9 (1). Winter.
- Gaipa, Mark. 2003. An Agnostic's Daughter's Apology: Materialism, Spiritualism, and Ancestry in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. In: *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 26 (2). Winter.
- Goldman, Jane. 2006. *The Cambridge Introduction to Virginia Woolf*. Cambridge: Cambridge University.
- Gordon, Lyndall. 1986. *Virginia Woolf, A Writer's Life*. Oxford: Oxford University.
- Gualtieri-Reed, Elizabeth. J. 1999. *Mrs Dalloway: Revising Religion*. In: *Centennial Review*, vol. 43 (2).
- Hargreaves, Tracy. 1997. The Grotesque and the Great War in *To the Lighthouse*. In: Raitt, Suzanne; Tate, Trudi (eds.) *Women's Fiction and the Great War*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Haule, James. M. 1991. *To the Lighthouse and the Great War: The Evidence of Virginia Woolf's Revisions of "Time Passes"*. In: Hussey, Mark (ed). *Virginia Woolf and War: Fiction, Reality, Myth*. New York: Syracuse University.
- Hawthorn, Jeremy. 1975. *Virginia Woolf's Mrs Dalloway: A study in Alienation*. London: Chatto & Windus.
- Hewitt, Douglas. 1988. *English Fiction of the Early Modern Period*. London: Longman.
- Hoff, Molly. 2001. Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*. In: *The Explicator*, vol. 60 (1). Fall.
- Hoffman, Charles. G. 1956. The "Real" Mrs Dalloway. In: *The University of Kansas City Review*, vol. 22.
- Hussey, Mark (ed.) 1991. *Virginia Woolf and War: Fiction, Reality, Myth*. New York: Syracuse University.
- Johnston, Georgia. 1997. Class Performance in *Between the Acts*: Audiences for Miss La Trobe and Mrs Manresa. In: *Woolf Studies Annual*, vol. 3.
- Joplin, Patricia. K. 1989. The Authority of Illusion: Feminism and Fascism in Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*. In: *South Central Review*, vol. 6 (2). Summer.
- Kato, Megumi. 1999. The Politics/Poetics of Motherhood in *To the Lighthouse*. In: McVicker, Jeanette; Davis, Laura (eds.) *Virginia Woolf and Communities; Selected*

- papers from the Eighth Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf*, Saint Louis: Saint Louis University.
- King, James. 1995. *Virginia Woolf*. London: Penguin.
- Ksiezopolski, Irena. 2004. Props and Personages: The Significance of the Secondary Characters in *Mrs Dalloway*. In: *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*, vol. 66. Fall.
- Lambert, Elizabeth. 1993. Evolution and Imagination in Pointz Hall and *Between the Acts*. In: *Virginia Woolf: Themes and Variations; Selected Papers from the Second Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf*. Connecticut: Southern Connecticut State University.
- Lee, Hermione. 1977. *The Novels of Virginia Woolf*. London: Methuen & Co.
- Lee, Hermione. 1996. *Virginia Woolf*. London: Chatto & Windus.
- Lee, So-Hee. 1990. Madness, Marginalisation and Power in *Mrs Dalloway*. In: *The Journal of English Language and Literature*, vol.36 (4). Winter.
- Levenback, Karen. L. 1996. Virginia Woolf and Returning Soldiers: The Great War and the Reality of Survival in *Mrs Dalloway* and *The Years*. In: *Woolf Studies Annual*, vol. 2.
- Lilienfeld, Jane. 1977. "The Deceptiveness of Beauty": Mother Love and Mother Hate in *To the Lighthouse*. In: *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 23 (3). October.
- Lilienfeld, Jane. 1981. Where the Spear Plants Grew: The Ramsays' Marriage in *To the Lighthouse*. In: Marcus, Jane (ed.) *New Feminist Essays on Virginia Woolf*. London: Macmillan.
- Lumsden, Robert. 1998. Virginia Woolf's "As If" in *To the Lighthouse*: The Modernist Philosophy of Meaning in Absentia. In: Young, Robert; Ban, Kah C.; Goh, Robbie B. H. (eds.) *The Silent Word: Textual Meaning and the Unwritten*. Singapore: Singapore University.
- Lyons, Richard S. 1977. The Intellectual Structure of Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*. In: *Modern Language Quarterly*, vol. 38.
- Marcus, Jane. 1973. Some Sources for *Between the Acts*. In: *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*, vol. 6.

- Marcus, Jane (ed.) 1981. *New Feminist Essays on Virginia Woolf*. London: Macmillan.
- Marcus, Jane. 1981. Thinking Back Through Our Mothers. In: Marcus, Jane (ed.) *New Feminist Essays on Virginia Woolf*. London: Macmillan.
- Marder, Herbert. 1988. Alienation Effects: Dramatic Satire in *Between the Acts*. In: *Papers on Language and Literature: A Journal for Scholars and Critics of Language and Literature*, vol. 24 (4). Fall.
- Mcwhirter, David. 1993. The Novel, the Play, and the Book: *Between the Acts* and the Tragicomedy of History. In: *ELH*, vol. 60 (3). Fall.
- Megill, A. 1995. Grand Narrative and the Discipline of History. In: Ankersmit, Frank; Kellner, Hans (eds.) *A New Philosophy of History*. Chicago: Chicago University.
- Newman, Hilary. 1999. Mrs Stephen in *The Mausoleum Book* and Mrs Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*. In: *Virginia Woolf Bulletin*, vol. 2. Summer.
- Painter, Penny. 1990. Two New Notes on Woolf's Novels: The Summer of 1897: The Origins of Some Character and Place Names in Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*. In: *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*, vol. 35. Fall.
- Panichas, George. A. 2004. Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*: "a well of tears". In: *Modern Age*, vol. 46 (3). Summer.
- Peach, Linden. 2000. *Critical Issues: Virginia Woolf*. New York: St Martin's.
- Petric-Bajlo, Estella. 1997. Playing Roles (A Reading of Virginia Woolf's Novel *To the Lighthouse*). In: *Studia Romanica et Anglica Zagrabiensia*, vol. 42 (42).
- Poole, Roger. 1990. *The Unknown Virginia Woolf*. Cambridge: Cambridge University.
- Pridmore-Brown, Michelle. 1996. The Politics of Theatre: Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*. In: *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*, vol. 47. Spring.
- Rahman, Shaista. 1984. Names as History in Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*. In: *Literary Onomastics*, vol. 11.
- Raitt, Suzanne and Tate, Trudi (eds.) 1997. *Women's Fiction and the Great War*. Oxford: Clarendon.

- Rich, Charlotte. 1995. The Irony of Civilized Aggression in Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*. In: Wright, Will; Kaplan, Steven (eds.) *The society for the Interdisciplinary Study of Social Imagery. Conference*.
- Roe, Sue & Sellers, Susan (eds.) 2000. *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*. Cambridge: Cambridge University.
- Rosenberg, Beth Carole & Dubino, Jeanne (eds.) 1997. *Virginia Woolf and the Essay*. New York: St Martin's.
- Rule, Lareina. 1986. *Name Your Baby*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Sakamoto, Tadanobu. 2005. The Significance of the Old Woman and Her Song in *Mrs Dalloway*. In: *Virginia Woolf Bulletin*, vol. 20. September.
- Schlack, Beverley A. 1984. A Long Day's Journey into Night: The Historicity of Human Existence Unfolding in Virginia Woolf's Fiction. In: Tymienicka, Anna-Teresa (ed.) *The Existential Co-ordinates of the Human Condition: Poetic – Epic – Tragic*. Dordrecht: D. Reidel.
- Schneider, Karen. 1989. Of Two Minds: Woolf, the War and *Between the Acts*. In: *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 16 (1). Summer.
- Searls, Damion. 1997. Marbot's Memoirs and *Mrs Dalloway*. In: *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*, vol. 15. Fall.
- Snaith, Anna. 2000. *Virginia Woolf: Public and Private Negotiations*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Stevenson, Randall. 1998. *Modernist Fiction: An Introduction*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- Tosh, John. 2000. *The Pursuit of History*. London: Longman.
- Tratner, Michael. 1993. Figures in the Dark: Working Class Women in *To the Lighthouse*. In: *Virginia Woolf Miscellany*, vol. 40. Spring.
- Tymienicka, Anna-Teresa (ed.) 1984. *The Existential Co-ordinates of the Human Condition: Poetic – Epic – Tragic*. Dordrecht: D. Reidel.
- Uma, Alladi. 1987. "I Have Had My Vision": Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* and Anita Desai's *Where Shall We Go This Summer*. In: *The Literary Criterion*, vol. 22 (3).

- Usui, Masami. 1991. The Female Victims of the War in *Mrs Dalloway* In: Hussey, Mark (ed.) *Virginia Woolf and War: Fiction, Reality, and Myth*. New York: Syracuse University.
- Vallins, David. 2001. "Whose shape is that within the car? And why?": *Mrs Dalloway* and "The Triumph of Life". In: Berman, Jessica S.; Goldman, Jane (eds.) *Virginia Woolf out of Bounds: Selected Papers from the Tenth Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf*. New York: Pace University.
- Wilson, A. N. 1999. *God's Funeral*. London: Abacus.
- Wilson, A. N. 2003. *The Victorians*. London: Arrow.
- Wilson, Travis D. 2000. The Ghosts of War: Modernism, Conflict and Memory in the Twentieth Century. In: Wright, Will; Kaplan, Steven (eds.) *The Image of the Twentieth Century in Literature, Media, and Society: Selected Papers from the 2000 Conference of the Society for the Interdisciplinary Study of Social Imagery*. Pueblo: The Society.
- Winston, Janet. 1996. "Something Out of Harmony": *To the Lighthouse* and the Subject[s] of Empire. In: *Woolf Studies Annual*, vol. 2.

