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"Here was One Room; There Another:" The Tension between Subjectivity and Connection in Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway and To The Lighthouse

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by
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Abbreviations

CR	The Common Reader
MB	Moments of Being
MD	Mrs. Dalloway
TL	To the Lighthouse

Introduction

Clarissa Dalloway moves through a single day of hosting and preparing a party in Virginia Woolf's novel, Mrs. Dalloway. While Clarissa acts as a "meeting point" in her own eyes for other people with her parties, she sees her existence as part of a much larger network. Clarissa thinks about relationships to other things as she walks through the streets London:

> Did it matter then, she asked herself, walking towards Bond Street, did it matter that she must inevitably cease completely; all this must go on without her; did she resent it; or did it not become consoling to believe that death ended absolutely? but that somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being part, she was positive, of the trees at home; of the house there, ugly, rambling all to bits and pieces as it was; part of people she had never met; being laid out like a mist between the people she knew best, who lifted her on their branches as she had seen the trees lift the mist, but it spread ever so far, her life, herself. (MD 7-8)

Clarissa sees her self not only as a subject walking, but also as a person with connections to all sorts of people and things. These connections will allow her to "survive" her body's death as she remains a "part of" this network of interconnected entities. Clarissa presents a new conception of the subject as someone who exists within a network that spreads out like the branches of trees and protects her from the flux of the world on the ground. By being part of these branches, Clarissa's life too extends outward and becomes something more than a subject on its own. Clarissa's vision of interconnection parallels the ideas of another character in Mrs. Dalloway, Septimus Warren Smith. Although suffering from shellshock from his time in the Great War, Septimus too sees patterns of interconnection within the world around him, which "all taken together meant the birth of a new religion" (MD 23). In Mrs. Dalloway, as I will argue in this project, Clarissa's and Septimus' ideas form the basis for a new way of thinking about the subject and connection. But the fact that Virginia Woolf presents these theories in the text is not enough to determine these ideas as central to Woolf's work.

To understand how connection works in Woolf's fiction, we must both consider Mrs. Dalloway on the level of narration or narrative structure, as well as on the level of content. Further, we must draw from at least one other text to see how Woolf repeatedly returns to these ideas of the subject and connection. To the Lighthouse, Woolf's preceding novel, is an appropriate choice because its structure differs from the Mrs. Dalloway, but the novel still deals with social interactions and the interconnectivity of consciousness[1]. In my project, I will explore how the subject responds to aloneness and connection in these works, and will conclude by asking how the subject maintains connections beyond the bounds of time and space through imaginative projection and communion with the dead.

[1] Another similarity is that both texts address the ramifications of war on the subject. War is important to both Mrs. Dalloway and To the Lighthouse because it is one of the major forces that brings death in the lives of the characters. Christine Froula looks at Mrs. Dalloway in particular as a "postwar elegy" "fraught with agonizing social contradictions yet vibrating with the vital force of the future" (90). In my fourth chapter, I will address some of the "social contradictions" that the characters Septimus Warren Smith and Clarissa Dalloway allude to.

Part I: The Subject Alone and The Subject Connected

Chapter I: Subjectivity and Aloneness

Clarissa Dalloway, an upper class woman preparing for a party, sees her daughter away from her to follow another female mentor, Miss Kilman. In thinking about the idea of the religious and poor Mrs. Killman, Clarissa spitefully thinks: "hypocritical, eavesdropping, jealous, infinitely cruel, and unscrupulous dressed in a mackintosh coat, on the landing; love and religion" (MD 141). Clarissa's harsh words reflect her own "jealousy" more than Miss Kilman's. Her attack of the woman's simple rubber mackintosh in particular emphasizes how Clarissa is grasping at every aspect of Miss Kilman to hate her for stealing her daughter. To comfort herself, Clarissa looks through her window and into the window of her neighbor, an elderly woman. She observes the old lady moving around her room and thinks, "She was still moving about the other end of the room. Why creeds and prayers and mackintoshes? when... that's the miracle, that's the mystery; that old lady...She could still see her. And the supreme mystery...was simply this: here was one room; there another. Did religion solve that, or love?" (MD 143). The mystery that Clarissa hits upon here is the inherent separation between people. Although she would like to understand why her daughter falls for a self-righteous, impoverished woman rather than herself, Clarissa recognizes that Miss Kilman offers her own answer for interacting with people. Miss Kilman wants to convert and pray for those around her, while Clarissa sees herself as honoring the irreducible mystery and otherness that she sees. Indeed, Clarissa feels the strangeness of the other now as she looks at the woman within eye range, yet living in a completely different world than she does. The problem of being confined to one's own subjectivity is not as easily solved as physically moving from one room into another. Instead, Clarissa's tone implies that this woman, like her own

daughter, has her own world. There is no way to bridge the gap between their respective rooms. Clarissa's words can also be read as an acknowledgment of the separateness of people's conscious minds. For even if Clarissa were to talk to this woman and hear about all the aspects of her life, Clarissa would still be barred from knowing this other person completely because the subject can only feel its own relationship to particular actions and things. She will never feel or know how anyone else experiences such things apart from her own perspective.

The scene physically presents two women alone, with one wishing in her isolation to connect to the other. Clarissa Dalloway pictures this divide in spatial terms: she is one room, contemplating another room. The "rooms" concretize the singularity, the irreducibility of subjectivity. Even though Woolf does not let us into every "room" of every character in her novels, Mrs. Dalloway and To the Lighthouse attempt to let us into the worlds of Clarissa and other major characters like Septimus. In her essay "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" Woolf explicitly writes that she is a novelist who strives to "catch" the Mrs. Browns who haunt her, mysterious people because of, "the things she says and the things she does and her eyes and her nose and her speech and her silence have an overwhelming fascination, for she is, of course, the spirit we live by, life itself" (The Hogarth Essays 24). Woolf's love, and even her characterization of these "Mrs. Browns" as the spirit of "life itself," seems to spill into the character of Clarissa, who calls the woman she sees by chance a "miracle." I argue that the division and mystery between people is part of their "miraculous" nature. Clarissa finds it surprising to discover that while other people exist for her, she is barred from understanding them. James Naremore calls our attention to the "inner lives" of Woolf's characters, we see numerous figures reflecting on their identity from within their "own rooms" of subjective self-awareness. In this chapter, we will explore how Woolf's characters

experience their aloneness in moments of isolation. For Woolf, the individual subject confronts and constructs an awareness of subjectivity most intensely when alone, as we shall see.

I: Narration

In her essay "Modern Fiction," Virginia Woolf suggests that novels should come as close as possible to "life itself" (Naremore 63). She claims:

> Life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible? (CR 212)

The novelist's task, according to Woolf, is to describe life as an awareness that extends beyond the subject through the medium of diffuse light (a "halo" or a "semi-transparent" envelope that contains and allows partial access to something "varying," "unknown," and "uncircumscribed"). Because Woolf describes life as a changing, enigmatic spirit that is odd and complicated, the task is clearly an abstract one. Narration is the primary tool at an author's disposal to convey this essence. After all, narrative can be seen as similar to a "semi-transparent envelope surrounding us" in a text because it keeps us within the story and acts as the agent binding all the elements together. Mrs. Dalloway, as we will see, unfolds as one long, continuous flow of narration[2]. In this chapter, I will begin by exploring the implications of Woolf's narrative style: how does it create the sense of "life" Woolf advocates? As we look at the narration, this passage gives us several considerations to keep in mind. Woolf's idea that life envelopes us from "the beginning of consciousness to the end" suggests that consciousness is important and omnipresent. But the word consciousness implies an additional complexity to grasping life: our

[2] Suzanne Raitt brings to our attention the words of Rachel Vinrace, another one of Woolf's characters, in "Virginia Woolf's Early Novels." According to Raitt, Rachel's assertion that "music goes straight to the heart of things" anticipates Woolf's claim that writing should be about "things in themselves" from "A Room of One's Own" (35). I argue that Woolf is attempting to write about "things in themselves" and get "straight to the hearts of things" in her narrative structure of Mrs. Dalloway. By confining herself to only events and experiences that occur within one day, Woolf pushes her writing closer to the tangible as opposed to the abstract. In this novel, Woolf is not attempting to write a philosophical treatise because she wants to show life as it is. By using a long, continuous flow for her narrative structure, Woolf emulates the structure of music in order to attempt to get at "the heart of things" in a similar way.

consciousness, like a "halo," always filters how we see our location as subjects, giving meaning to our placement in the world.

Throughout this project, I use the term subject, as opposed to "self," because as I will show, the subject in Woolf's texts is capable of expanding to include groups of people or pairs and contracting to focus on a single individual. Because of this capacity to change, there are ambiguities in the subject-object relationship, which I will investigate. As human beings, we have the capacity to experience ourselves as singular as well as merged with others. The quest for interpersonal connection through love, friendship, and group belonging features prominently in To the Lighthouse and Mrs. Dalloway. But connection is always experienced as fleeting, incomplete, impermanent. At times, I will use the term "identity" to specify practices whereby the subject contemplates itself. Woolf makes clear that a subject considers life, and can only consider life, from a subjective perspective. Even though this perspective is flexible, we must remember that the subject is always bound up in how it perceives: its perspective will also have other limitations. This is especially important because Woolf's narration draws its energy from the play of multiple perspectives frequently. So too, narrative distance in these two novels allows us to step outside of the subject's mind to consider how it works in relation to other minds.

While our ultimate goal will be to see how aloneness and connection form the basis for Woolf's conception of life as conveyed through these two novels, we must start by attempting to understand what I call the "alone subject." To do so, we can look at how individual subjects grasp their own identity before considering Woolf's treatment of them as part of something larger. Critic James Naremore's 1971 text The World Without a Self: Virginia Woolf and the Novel can help direct us to a range of different interpretations of Woolf's narrative style. Perhaps because Woolf considers life to be

so varying, this style is quite fluid even within a single text. As we look at the ways Woolf's texts engages with consciousness, the subject, and distance, I will draw upon the concepts of stream-of-consciousness narration and indirect interior monologue to illuminate Woolf's treatment of each of these values.

Naremore establishes how stream-of-consciousness technique influenced Woolf's style, as well as how it shaped her approach to the subject in isolation and in relation to others. William James supposedly coined the phrase in Principles of Psychology, Naremore says, to "emphasize the fluid ramblings of the mind's conversations with itself, the jumble of instantaneous thoughts and impressions," suggesting that the style grows out the desire to capture the temporal experience of consciousness (Naremore 64). For James, stream-of-consciousness is a way to get at the hecticness of the conscious mind, a place of internal conversation, spontaneous ideas, and intuitive feelings. Although Virginia Woolf goes in her own direction with the method, we can see points of connection to James' ideas in her writing. As Mrs. Ramsay sits knitting by herself in To the Lighthouse, she reflects: "When things came together in this peace, this rest, this eternity; and pausing there she looked out to meet that stroke of the Lighthouse, the long steady stroke, the last of the three, which was her stroke" (TL 96). These lines contain Mrs. Ramsay's private thoughts as she observes an external stimulus—the rhythmic pulse of the lighthouse beam—as well as her internal feelings of peace. This passage, actually a fragment of an even larger sentence, reflects the ramblings of the mind by stringing one clause to another with commas and semicolons, forming an enormous collection of loosely related ideas in one sentence. Woolf incorporates the fluidity of consciousness not to show pure babble, but to point out how the mind can also attach itself to a particular external object, in this case the lighthouse beams that captivates Mrs. Ramsay's

attention, mediating between an inner world of affect and sentiment and an outer world of phenomena and strict space/time coordination.

Woolf's association of Mrs. Ramsay's abstract conceptions about peace and eternity with the tangible image of the lighthouse beam reflects the scope possible within stream-of-consciousness narration. Lawrence Bowling references the subject's thoughts and sensory impressions in his definition of stream-of-consciousness, claiming that "*all* conscious mental processes' include "such non-language phenomena as images and sensations" (Naremore 67). Bowling's inclusion of sensory information implies how time and space, which ground a sense of reality, affect the subject. Mrs. Ramsay sees the beam of the lighthouse because of details like the time of day, weather, and her location. By having Mrs. Ramsay focus on the lighthouse beam, Woolf points out how seemingly random sensory information can shape one's thinking, reflecting how thoughts are particular to a moment even if their general sentiment repeats. This range inside stream-of-consciousness further allows the subject the potential to create new ideas and images, or react to either old or current ones. Woolf's "alone subject" is never merely "alone in one's thoughts."

As this flexibility of the "stream-of-consciousness" metaphor implies, Woolf's narration reveals the multiple ways a subject can experience time. "Losing personality, one lost the fret, the hurry, the stir" keeps us within the present, pulled along from one idea to the next (TL 96). So too, Clarissa Dalloway's consciousness flows in more than one direction. The mind can move just as easily from abstract conceptions, to memories, and back to the present: "Her only gift was knowing people almost by instinct...dancing all night; and the wagons plodding past to the market; and driving home across the Park. She remembered once throwing a shilling into the Serpentine. But everyone remembered; what she loved was this, here, now, in front of her" (MD 7). Woolf moves through various ideas as they

occur to Clarissa, reflecting how the mind can move out of the present into the past, or into the timeless realm of reflection. This fluidity allows the subject to combine information from the past, various ideas, or potentially even daydreams of an alternate life. This power will be useful for understanding how subjects are able to project in fantastic ways to establish points of connection, for instance to a beam of light, to people with whom one does or does not feel close, and even—as I will explore in my last chapter—to those who are dead and gone.

Parallel to how stream-of-consciousness allows for memories to weave into the subject's present's thoughts, knowledge about other people can influence of the movement of mind as well. Mrs. Ramsay enters a state of meditative philosophizing as she knits, "When life sank down for a moment, the range of experience seemed limitless. And to everybody there was always a sense of unlimited resources, she supposed; one after another, she, Lily, Augustus Carmichael, must feel, our apparitions, the things you know us by, are simply childish" (TL 96). In this passage, Mrs. Ramsay is contemplating her sense of life from within a state of solitude. Her contemplation takes the narrative out of the present moment and into a hypothetical space of her imagination. Looking at these lines, we see a shift in in how she considers life. In the first sentence she thinks abstractly of "limitless" experience. But the next sentences incorporate her speculations about other people into her reflections on her own subject position. On one level, this reflects how even an individual who is alone and undisturbed can have his or her consciousness infiltrated by thoughts about others. The insidious way that knowledge of other people fills the mental space, in some ways, complicates Clarissa's theory of the separation of people into their "own rooms." Yet, Mrs. Ramsay's combination of her reflections and her thoughts of her friends suggest that any and all stimuli can be subsumed and reinterpreted by the subject. In

stream-of-consciousness, then, it is unclear if it is the external world imposing on the subject or the subject reimagining the external world.

As important as capturing the flow of the mind's processes are to Woolf, Naremore reminds us of Woolf's issues with what she considered to be the "egotism" in the stream-of-consciousness writings of contemporaries like James Joyce and Dorothy Richardson (Naremore 63). In an effort to create distance from the ego, Woolf employs what Robert Humphrey calls "indirect interior monologue." An example of indirect interior monologue comes at the beginning of our last passage tracing the thought of Mrs. Ramsay, "Not as oneself did one find rest ever, in her experience (she accomplished here something dexterous with her needles) but as a wedge of darkness (TL 96). The sentence reveals the balancing act Woolf undertakes by providing some grounding as we consider the multiple conceptions of Mrs. Ramsay. The first sentence has two markers: the first to remind us that these thoughts come from Mrs. Ramsay by saying "in her experience." This marker reiterates that these ideas originate from an unknown, but pre-existing history and an opinion. The second indicator, the fact within the parentheses, reminds us again that Mrs. Ramsay is thinking within the context of her knitting. Her knitting is important because it reiterates that these abstract revelations coexist with the relatively mundane domestic tasks that structure Mrs. Ramsay's life. Further, it allows us to call the reality of her ideas into question by reminding us that Mrs. Ramsay may think of herself as a "wedge of darkness," but she continues to exist (at least on one level) as a woman knitting. Because idea is conveyed through the grammatical convention of the parenthesis, we understand that the author is giving us this information. Hearing information from the author reminds us to step outside of the character's point of view in order to imagine the scene for ourselves. Robert Humphrey's definition applies to this section because it "gives the impression of unedited material," within the sentence, but is indirect by having "a

third-person view of the character as well as occasional minor interpolations from the author" (Naremore 69). It is the indirect nature of this style that is key in giving the reader freedom from complete identity with the character's consciousness. The use of the third-person and the past tense assist in establishing this as an indirect reading of these events: we cannot access them directly because they happened to someone else in a time that has already past. Yet, each of Woolf's texts allows us partially to access this fictional story. The very existence of her text points to the possibility of access. Instead of simply seeing life through the character's eyes, we can move between the character's view, our own view of the character, and other elements of the text at large. Woolf guides us through these avenues, teaching us to enter into and out of the consciousness of each character as we read To the Lighthouse or Mrs. Dalloway.

II: The Subject Alone

What is the subject alone then? Woolf presents us often with a character's personal sense – often unedited, abstract thought images – of how he or she experiences himself/herself as a subject. For instance, Mrs. Ramsay considers her identity to be fundamentally singular and stable. We have already read some of the passages in which she thinks about herself as a subject alone when knitting, but we can revisit them here. She compares the benefits of being alone as opposed to being with others: "There was freedom, there was peace, there was, most welcoming of all, a summoning together, on a platform of stability. Not as oneself did one find rest ever, in her experience...but as a wedge of darkness" (TL 96). It is worth considering that Mrs. Ramsay contrasts being this "wedge," the state that lets her rest, with "being herself." Her earlier thoughts about "being herself" suggest that it is when she does need to worry about other people, like her children, or adjust her behavior for their sake (TL 95). We see a tension between the subject and the subject acting in relation to others, even in the isolated subject's mind. Mrs. Ramsay's sense that she is a "wedge of darkness" employs a concrete metaphor for the subject's alone identity. She treats this wedge as a location when she likens it to a "platform of stability." Imagining the wedge as akin to a platform gives it fixedness. Combined with the fact that it is a summoning, a consolidation into shape, Mrs. Ramsay feels stability in her self-conception as a wedge of darkness. Because Mrs. Ramsay references "peace" as part of this summoning together, she implies that becoming a "wedge" is a natural transformation when she is alone.

Clarissa Dalloway considers herself to be a subject in a completely different sense as she privately looks at her face in a glass. In contrast to Mrs. Ramsay, Clarissa emphatically rejects seeing herself as fundamentally singular, but she believes it is possible for her to become that way. She purses her lips as she looks in the glass: "It was to give her face point. That was her self — pointed; dartlike;

definite" (MD 39-40). In isolation, it sounds as if Clarissa and Mrs. Ramsay see themselves in similarly stable, straightforward terms. Both draw on geometric imagery to define themselves. Clarissa's description imagines herself as a point or an atom, meaning that she too is a focused, bounded, and stable structure. But unlike Mrs. Ramsay, Clarissa does not consider this process of becoming a singular point natural whatsoever: "That was her self when some effort, some call on her to be her self, drew the parts together, she alone knew how different, how incompatible and composed so for the world only into one centre, one diamond, one woman who sat in her drawing-room and made a meeting-point" (MD 40). Instead of a solid, cohesive entity, Clarissa believes that she is secretly made up of parts. Her outward appearance of being a singular subject that she observes in the glass is the product of her continuous effort, not some inherent or natural state that she reverts to when the circumstances allow. Even in writing "her self" rather than "herself," Woolf emphasizes that Clarissa sees this as an imposed self, rather than a fundamental one. Since Clarissa composes who she is for the world and performs this action even when she is alone, we are left to wonder how Clarissa thinks of her self when not "drawn" together.

Although Woolf grants to Mrs. Ramsay and Clarissa Dalloway reflections on what it means to be an "alone" subject, we will not be able to come to an ultimate understanding of the subject's singularity by simply comparing these two conceptions. Mrs. Ramsay believes that she becomes stable when she is alone, but each woman describes their power to transform. Mrs. Ramsay begins her reflections by describing how she is so careful about what she does or says around her children because she is convinced they do not forget anything (TL 95). She describes her transformations when with them, in contrast to when she is alone: "All the being and the doing, expansive, glittering, vocal, evaporated; and one shrunk, with a sense of solemnity, to being oneself, a wedge-shaped core of

darkness, something invisible to others" (TL 95). Instead of having Mrs. Ramsay act as a grammatical subject, the noun who performs actions, she becomes indistinguishable from those actions in Woolf's narrative. It is the switch from a "being" to "all the being," which renders her very existence as a verb that she must perform. When we look at the specific actions that Mrs. Ramsay lists as part of "the doing", we see her metamorphose into various physical phenomena. She is no longer a subject. It is only when Mrs. Ramsay is alone that she shrinks to the core of darkness, which has nothing to do with performing for other people because it is invisible to them. While Clarissa Dalloway's sense of how she transforms is very different, with her becoming singular and condensed as a "diamond woman" when she is with others, each character believes that she radically adjusts her core identity in relation to other people. Woolf, it seems, wants to present the subject as responsive to both objects and other subjects surrounding the individual.

These women's thoughts on the contrast between singular identity and social being reflect a unique sort of living in Woolf's texts. For one, social life creates near continuous effort. Although Mrs. Ramsay is able to "rest" when she thinks of herself as a wedge of darkness, all her glittering and vocalizing exhaust her. Her daily responsibilities with her husband, her children, and other social ties consume most if not all of her energies. For our other character, Clarissa Dalloway, "some effort, some call on her to be her self, drew the parts together" (MD 40). Clarissa's two drives suggest different things. An effort drawing the parts together probably comes from within her self. Yet, this is not a feeling she seems to enjoy: It is an effort. While there is such a notion as a group effort that could come from other people, it seems that Woolf would have specified that if she was interested in it. In contrast, "a call on her" does suggest that outside forces (as opposed to an inner urge instigating Clarissa's self-making). Regardless of how you define each force, both compel Clarissa to change for the sake of serving or

appearing well before others. At the same time, we should also realize that both of Woolf's characters comprehend themselves as subjects in abstract, frequently inhuman ways. Certainly, wedges and points are abstract forms, not people. Endowing her characters or "alone subjects" with such abstract self-awareness implies that Woolf's subject is far more complex than the typical sense of a protagonist or narrating "I" allows. As this chapter and this project should reveal, Woolf reimagines the understanding of the subject and subjective experience, to encompass the imagined identity of an individual, but also a group, or the world at large.

Chapter II: Connection

We began to look at Woolf's subject in Mrs. Dalloway and To the Lighthouse by examining it alone. Even in isolation, the characters reflect an internal tension between themselves and other people. To explore this tension further, we must step out of the lonely mind and enter into society. There, we can see how the subject belongs to, and is distinct from, a collective, as well as how the subject feels in connection to other beings.

I: Narration

As the most obvious link uniting the characters, ideas, and events, narration in Woolf's fiction informs our understanding of human connection. The stream-of-consciousness parts of the narration link the subject with external elements. As we have already discussed in the narrative section of Chapter One, characters are capable of experiencing their own subjectivity in connection to external objects. Mrs. Ramsay experiences her own identity in relation to the lighthouse beam as she knits: "If one was alone, one leant to inanimate things; trees, streams, flowers; felt they expressed one, in a sense were one; felt an irrational tenderness thus (she looked at that steady light) as for oneself" (TL 97-98). Mrs. Ramsay, gazing upon the third beam of light from the lighthouse, believes when that alone individuals turn to external, nonhuman things[3] as a way of understanding themselves. Mrs. Ramsay's thoughts move from suggesting that these objects embody the person, to being an extension of the person. The stream-of-consciousness structure of this passage helps ease us into this leap. Because Woolf's

[3] Mrs. Ramsay incorrectly calls these thing inanimate, even though she includes living trees and flowers in her list of examples. It is interesting that Mrs. Ramsay only suggests natural elements. Woolf's love of the natural that we see in her diaries, especially trees and flowers, probably manifests in Mrs. Ramsay.

narration of consciousness is full of little leaps from idea to idea, we no longer expect explanations for them. Such passages come across as the moving of the intuitive mind[4].

Woolf's stream-of-consciousness style enacts movement people in addition individuals and things in Mrs. Dalloway. At the opening of Mrs. Dalloway, as we have seen, Clarissa thinks, "that somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being part, she was positive, of the trees at home; of the house there, ugly, rambling all to bits and pieces as it was; part of people she had never met" (MD 8). Before we encounter the statement, "she was positive," short clauses separated by commas allow for movement between these "the ebb and flow of things." The clauses respond to each other, effectively creating a rhythmic movement. The line teaches us to see relationships between one clause and the one after it. "Here" is a different location than "there," but they are interrelated terms that define each other. Just as we cannot understand where "there" is without first understanding "here," Woolf's syntactical structure has us apply this model to Peter and Clarissa's "survival". The meaning of this interrelated "survival" has to do with what Clarissa calls "living in each other," which allows for some part of her and Peter to exist in external things that will last after their physical bodies decay. Presumably, Clarissa means that something like consciousness persists, but it is unclear if this "survival" would truly allow for the perfect preservation of her and Peter.

While it may seem as though narrative distance would hinder any real sense of connection, Woolf's indirect narration works unexpected effects. At times, Woolf's indirect narration contains sentences that read like an omniscient narrator's traditional, third person address to the reader, but this

[4] This idea is inspired in part by Robert Humphrey's description of how stream-of-consciousness can suggest "the actual texture of consciousness" (Naremore 70).

impersonality also shapes narration to place individuals in new relations to the "real world." In Mrs. Dalloway, the moment when passersby look at an aeroplane writing in the sky reflects the implications for connection: "With his hat held out perfectly still in his hand, Mr. Bowley gazed straight up. All down the Mall people were gazing and looking up into the sky. As they looked the whole world became perfectly silent" (MD 21). The first two sentences sound objective, as if they issue from an omniscient narrator. Woolf's narrative objectivity allows us to zoom out from the individual perspective to that of the group at large: "As they looked the whole world became perfectly silent." The awe we see in Mr. Bowley's manner suggests how the world is silent for these people in the moment of "gazing" and "looking up". Woolf blurs the "objective" narration from the earlier lines with that of the collective perception. We can look at both the subject and the collective as a singular entity here, even though the latter incorporates the former. Because both lines show the individual and the collective acting in the same way, we see the cohesion between the two. The last line operates as indirect discourse, representing the shared awareness of everyone on the Mall. We do not know if this group feeling of awe originates on the level of the individual or on the level of the crowd, but it still forces us to see the world through this perspective. While the past tense should create distance, this distance shrinks dramatically as we are pulled into this local, collective vision of the world. That said, Woolf's narration preserves fixed, clear boundaries between subjects. The fact that we can consider for a moment a movement from the individual to the collective does not destroy the walls or demarcation between people's consciousnesses.

Woolf selectively incorporates certain transitions, however, that obscure boundaries between perceiving individuals by moving from one character's mind to another's seamlessly. After Mrs. Ramsay's dinner party, we witness,

> Mrs. Ramsay going upstairs in the lamplight alone. Where, Lily wondered, was she going so quickly?
>
> Not that she did in fact run or hurry; she went rather slowly. She felt rather inclined just for a moment to stand still after all that chatter, and pick out one particular thing; the thing that mattered… (TL 169)

Although the first statement issues from Lily's perspective, we do not know from whom the second sentence comes because Lily, Mrs. Ramsay, or an unknown narrator could have produced it. Woolf utilizes the ambiguity of pronouns to make it unclear (at least at first) who is speaking. As readers of Woolf's fiction, we learn to assume that the last person speaking (or thinking, in this case) is still speaking unless something indicates otherwise. But here, Woolf makes her first-time readers do a double take: Woolf clearly shows Lily wondering where Mrs. Ramsay is going so quickly in the first paragraph. Even though the start of a new paragraph can represent the start of a new perspective, the next sentence could also represent Lily reevaluating. Yet, the last sentence only makes sense coming from Mrs. Ramsay because only a moving person can note the desire at that moment to stand still. So we return to the second line, but find that it could well be tied to both Lily and Mrs. Ramsay's thoughts. "Not that she did in fact run or hurry" feels like a response to Lily's previous thought, which only Lily should be able to know. Yet, "she went rather slowly" is a perfect setup to Mrs. Ramsay's inclination to stand still. The lines, "She went rather slowly. She felt rather inclined" repeat the pronoun, making the sentences appear to issue from the same speaker, although "she" is an unstable referent. Lily and Mrs. Ramsay's thoughts are held ambiguously in tension with one another. It is not the "truth" about whatever is happening in this section that matters, but the confusion Woolf purposely produces through her wording.

Naremore notes instances of similar narrative confusion in Mrs. Dalloway and suggests that Woolf's transitions can, "help Virginia Woolf to convey the impression that life is what Mrs. Ramsay will later describe as 'all one stream'" (Naremore 87). We are left wondering if Mrs. Ramsay and Lily's

consciousnesses do indeed constitute “one stream.” Even if we conclude that an unknown narrator is the one who describes Mrs. Ramsay’s actions in this moment, it would not erase the question from our minds. Such instances of fluid connection at the level of narration help us gain a better picture of what the texts explore thematically as the elusive promise of singular identity through merging with the consciousnesses of others. In what follows, we will examine some of Virginia Woolf’s most celebrated set pieces, enacting this new fictional practice of narrating the isolated mind in concert with the minds not only of others, but of complete strangers.

II: The Motor Car, The Aeroplane, and The Message

i. The Motor Car

In Mrs. Dalloway, Woolf is particularly interested in exploring the boundaries between distinct, isolated subjects in London's urban setting. At the beginning of the novel, she gives us insight into the how her characters fit within the much larger, anonymous group of Londoners wandering the streets. I will look at how connections form within collectives by focusing on two emblematic instances.

In the first few pages of the novel, we see how a shared situation can temporarily unite a group of strangers when a motor car makes a loud noise. The explosion draws the attention of the unnamed passersby who have "just time to see a face of the very greatest importance against the dove-grey upholstery, before a male hand drew the blind" (MD 13). By not letting us know who among the many viewers we will observe has the best view of the person inside the car, Woolf is not giving us enough information to determine the identity of this unknown passenger. Instead, she directs us to observe the observers. The forces affecting the crowd at this moment help to unite them: "Rumours were at once in circulation from the middle of Bond Street to Oxford Street...passing invisibly, inaudibly, like a cloud, swift, veil-like upon hills" (MD 13). Even in abridged form, the passage describes the impressive spread of the rumours over a large area. Because Woolf uses the passive tense, the origin of the rumors is unclear. Normally, rumors pass through communication by sound or gesture and spread from one person to the next. But the narrator specifically notes that these rumors do not emerge out of visual or oral messages; instead the information is figured as a singular, autonomous cloud. Ultimately, the rumours transform the strangers from separate beings into a group: "Falling indeed with something like a cloud's sudden sobriety and stillness upon faces which a second before had been utterly disorderly" (MD 13). Woolf's prose also circulates from one entity to another. Placing "sudden sobriety and

stillness" between the clouds and the faces tricks us into associating the human beings assembled on Bond Street with these attributes. On the very level of the sentence, Woolf uses the clouds to transfer this seriousness onto the watchers, transforming the faces and their owners. In addition to the spread of "rumours," "mystery" with its "voice of authority" and "spirit of religion" helps unite the crowd in speculation and wonder.

The passage goes on to reveal networks of individuals acting independently, even as these strangers subtly affect one another. There is, "Edgar J. Watkiss, with his roll of lead piping round his arm, said audibly, humorously of course: 'The Promise Minister's kyar'" (MD 14). The misspelling of "kyar" emphasizes his accept, implying that Watkiss is probably of the working class. This line is the only reference to to Watkiss in the text, but he is still the first link in a chain of minds the narration moves through. The fact that there is even a reference to Watkiss suggests that a stranger can indirectly shape someone's life. Woolf signals that she is following in the footsteps of realist texts that explain the title character's life by entitling her novel Mrs. Dalloway. Yet giving minor characters like Watkiss a place alongside the titular protagonist suggests that they too can somehow affect the reader's perception of Woolf's fictional world. Perhaps Clarissa's thought that she will endure as "part" of strangers is correct after all. But before we agree with her, we should see the complexity of Watkiss' indirect effect on Clarissa. To do so, we must also look at Watkiss' effect on Clarissa's double in the text, Septimus Warren Smith.

Septimus is the second link in this narrative chain of relations. After hearing Watkiss speak, Septimus begins to muse as well about the street scene. He looks at the windowshade of the motorcar and sees, "a curious pattern like a tree...and this gradual drawing together of everything to one centre before his eyes, as if some horror had almost come to the surface and was about to burst into flames,

terrified him. The world wavered and quivered and threatened to burst into flames" (MD 14). Septimus, mentally suffering from his time in the Great War, sees reality in a different way than everyone else. Yet, he can perceive ordinary objects and picks up that the car is the focus of everyone's attention, what he calls the "centre". Instead of believing that the coming together of elements is good, Septimus considers the object before him (or rather what lies beneath "some horror...almost come to the surface") to be distressing and dangerous. Harvena Richter, author of Virginia Woolf: The Inward Voyage, points us to one of Woolf's notes to herself as she was writing Mrs Dalloway: "Sanity & insanity. Mrs. D. seeing the truth. S. S. seeing the insane truth" (Richter 120). In the next chapter, we will look at how Septimus' insanity allows him to imagine a world of constant transformation and unfixed boundaries, showing us the stranger side of connection between the self and others. But at this moment in the story, Septimus' horror triggers him to imagine that he is able to see both objective reality AND a horror underneath, freezing him to his place in this moment. As a consequence, his young wife Rezia must tell him to come with her, and Septimus irritably turns on her in response.

The final link in this chain reaction is Rezia. Septimus' anger makes Rezia, already marginal as a foreigner living in her husband's country, feel paranoid and isolated. After her husband yells at her, she is painfully self-conscious: "People must notice; people must see. People, she thought, looking at the crowd looking at the motor car...they were 'people' now, because Septimus had said, 'I will kill myself'" (MD 15). Rezia distinguishes between the "people" in the crowd and herself, looking at outsiders or strangers as potential enemies who could uncover Septimus' secret at any moment. She explicitly states that they are "people" because Septimus has revealed his suicidal intentions to her. Rezia is from Italy, so she is sensitive to her own otherness, but even that would not have stopped her from feeling connections to the strangers around her if she did not know Septimus' secret. Rezia grasps the

knowledge that the fact that someone is suicidal causes "people" to look at that person differently, whisper about them, and talk of sending them to a mental institution. By passing his secret to her, Septimus further isolates Rezia from everyone else who is unaware of his visions of the world. Although people "noticing" or "seeing" Septimus act would not reveal the full extent of his secret, it may be enough for them to realize that Septimus does not belong. Septimus is a "failure" at being normal due to his visions and his outbursts, which is why Rezia takes him "away into some park" to hide him from others. Although Rezia is the final link in this small network of connections from individual to individual, nothing dramatic happens when she feels stressed and takes Septimus away. The narrative simply moves on to follow the circulation of rumours, before turning back to Clarissa. While some texts would reveal how each little action contributes to some large effect, here each little action leads to another little action. These small actions contribute to the lives of the people who perform or experience them. Woolf's focus on the mundane[5] reflects how the "alone subject" experiences the enigmatic sights and sounds of their environment and the effect of this responses on others. We see how ordinary life is part of a huge, extending network of other people. In her essay, "The Tunneling Process: Some Aspects of Virginia Woolf's Use of Memory and the Past", Susan Dick directs us to a section of Woolf's diary about her writing of Mrs. Dalloway: "I dig out beautiful caves behind my characters; I think that gives exactly what I want; humanity, humour, depth. The idea is that the caves shall connect, & each comes to daylight at the present moment" (Dick 176) These lines reflect Woolf's interest in developing the personal "caves" (or, as we see Clarissa call them, "rooms") of her character's inner subjectivity[6]. That said, it is equally important to Woolf that these interior spaces connect through her narration of the

[5] To go deeper into Woolf's interest with the mundane, consider Liesl M. Olson essay, "Cotton Wool of Daily Life."

[6] In another essay, "Literary Realism in Mrs. Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, Orlando, and The Waves," Dick applies Woolf's words specifically to how Woolf's process imitates how the subject interiorly constructs itself, as well as how the subject constructs one another and the world (51). Dick's words emphasize that Woolf is paralleling the process of the subject's internal construction with the process of developing connections to external entities.

moment, revealing how the alone subject is part of a whole series of connections. While Woolf can only represent the expanding awareness of certain people present, doing so helps us conceive of this network encompassing the entire city of London and potentially the entire world. This network of minor cause and effect suggests a different sort of relationship than the typical focus on romantic love[7] in realist novels, but it is arguably far more present in life because it is so pervasive and mundane.

Although I consider Woolf's use of minor characters to honor the value of the stranger in impacting the individual's self-awareness and growth, Naremore sees their usage slightly differently. With reference to a different scene in Mrs. Dalloway, Naremore claims of another extremely minor figure, "Little Elsie Mitchell serves no other purpose than to form a bridge between Septimus and Rezia…the transition makes us feel as though Mrs. Woolf's world were made of a single thread" (Naremore 86-87). Naremore considers such characters as conventional, included only to bridge the gaps between the major players. He argues that Woolf works to create a world of connection, but he finds this strategy a little "forced." Although Naremore is looking at a slightly different situation, we can consider if his criticism applies to the chain of momentary contact between Watkiss, Septimus, and Rezia. In our example, it is true that Watkiss' actual effect on Septimus is not personal or lasting. Septimus hears him, but the thoughts he produces have nothing to do with Watkiss himself. Certainly, Septimus does not know or consciously "connect" with the other man. But before dismissing Woolf's less than minor characters, we should turn to her essay "A Mark on the Wall." Narrated by a nameless fictional speaker in an imagined room, this speaker describes how the subject cares deeply for its own image and understanding of itself. Woolf writes, "Suppose the looking glass smashes, the image disappears, and the romantic figure...is no longer, but only that shell of a person which is seen by other

[7] Naremore directs us to the differences between romantic connections in traditional realist novels and Woolf's connections in The World Without a Self: Virginia Woolf and the Novel (103-104).

people--what an airless, shallow, bald, prominent world it becomes!" (bartleby.com). A world without the ability to know oneself is an empty and superficial one. Yet Woolf also wants to engage seriously with the project of shattering "the romantic figure" through her own work. This may seem totally unrelated to Woolf's treatment of minor character, but the passage goes on to say, "As we face each other in omnibuses and underground railways we are looking into the mirror that accounts for the vagueness, the gleam of glassiness, in our eyes" (bartleby.com). This passage operates on two levels. It reiterates the earlier point that people look at each other without paying much attention because they are interested only in looking at themselves. But, it also suggests how other people can actually serve as a mirror for looking at oneself because all people act in similar ways. That, I argue, is why Woolf's speaker says future novelists will pay attention to these reflections, which exist in infinite number, rather than writing about reality or only about the image the self constructs and treasures of itself (bartleby.com). Although Watkiss' words do not impact Septimus directly in our passage, Septimus observes the other man commenting on the scene around both of them. This triggers Septimus' painful vision of life as consisting of surface and something unknown underneath. Serving as a mirror for Septimus to turn to look at the scene, the slight point of contact or connection with Watkiss is stronger than it would first appear.

Looking at particular individuals in the car scene does reveal something that divides them: how personal bias affects their speculation about who is in the car. Because the watchers have almost no information to go on, and even the information they have "is now in dispute," Woolf's minor characters base their guesses on things from their own lives. Once the narrative does return to Clarissa's perspective, her speculation that it is the Queen who sits in the car reveals more about her vanity than about the car itself. Although Clarisa initially thinks it is "probably" the Queen, the narrative goes on to

trace her thought process: “Clarissa guessed; Clarissa knew of course; she had seen something white, magical, circular, in the foot-man’s hand...which, by the force of its own lustre, burnt its way through (Clarissa saw the car diminishing, disappearing), to blaze among candelabras, glittering stars...that night in Buckingham Palace” (MD 17). The stream-of-consciousness flow of this passage takes Clarissa from thinking about the disc in the footman’s hand to daydreaming about her own memory of visiting Buckingham Palace. This move reveals her admiration for British royalty and her vanity. She would like, “of course,” to be privy to whomever is in the car, but her guess is no better than anyone else’s in actuality even though she has a husband in government and respected friends like Hugh Whitbread.

Michael Tratner writes in Modernism and Mass Politics : Joyce, Woolf, Eliot, Yeats that individual speculation about an entity can serve to create group identity. In his analysis of The Waves, Tratner talks of Percival’s influence on the six protagonists:

> Leaders allow those who are in a group to think of the group as embodied by a single individual. The six lobes can feel united, not by group consciousness, but by the fact that each of them separately identifies with this single, individual leader. The fact that Percival never speaks suggests further that he does not in fact exist: he is a projection of the six, an image created by social order... (Tratner 219)

Tratner describes how a collective sense of unity can form from having its members feel a tie to the same, fixed entity. Such an entity, rather than being something real, attracts the projections of the individuals in order to fulfill a sense of admiration and connection with this leader. We can apply Tratner’s analysis of Percival to the unnamed person within the motor car in Mrs. Dalloway. We do not need to believe there is someone specific in the car (the narrative’s lack of objectivity certainly creates enough doubt). But the anonymity of the person inside allows each viewer to project his or her relationship to authority onto the inhabitant of the car. Clarissa has a particularly strong reaction to feeling near the Queen expressed in the “look of extreme dignity” she herself wears as the car passes her (MD 16). That said, all in the street-goers hear “the voice of authority” that encourages these

projections (MD 13). Like Clarissa's daydream, this sense of connection is the concoction of each watcher's mind, which assembles them briefly into a group, at least at the level of narration.

ii. The Aeroplane

This initial act of speculating on the mysterious identity of the passenger primes the crowd to act and share the same emotional responses. This car's aura of mystery leaves a "slight ripple" in the street after it passes, causing "all heads [to be] inclined the same way" (MD 17). With reference to a "ripple," Woolf implicitly characterizes the watchers as situated in a fluid substance that can be moved or reconfigured. The next passage sets up a new shared situation that further solidifies the collective:

> Suddenly Mrs. Coates looked up into the sky. The sound of an aeroplane bored ominously into the ears of the crowd. There it was coming over the trees, letting out white smoke from behind, which curled and twisted, actually writing something! making letters in the sky! Every one looked up. (MD 20)

Woolf establishes the sentiment as collective by treating Mrs. Coates as a stand-in for "every one." "Every one" is an all-encompassing phrase that conveys the sentiment that all people in this particular world are doing something, even though it is only the people on the street who observe the aeroplane. Summoning "every one" makes this group appear stronger and more unified than it actually is because their excitement (marked by the exclamation marks) is general. Yet, the division of the word "everyone" to "every one" reiterates that this collective is made up of singular individuals: "ones." Woolf shifts the subject in each sentence to include more people as the mood grows more intimate. The first line starts with just Mrs. Coates, while the next talks about "the ears of the crowd." This movement treats the crowd as a singular thing with shared ears. Again we begin with the third-person omniscient narration in these two sentences, but the third line changes gears to become more psychological. "There it was" gestures to us, unlike the earlier sentences that relay primarily objective information. The double exclamations at the end of this sentence reflect the notion that discoveries are occurring in real time

within the awareness of whoever is narrating. Since it is the group making these discoveries and the last sentence refers to them, it seems as though these sentiments come from the "verbalized being" of the crowd[8]. Like the use of "every one," Woolf's passage conveys the illusion that people make these discoveries at the exact same time. This illusion strengthens the collective's unity, as the unidentified person in the motor car initially did.

Woolf demonstrates how the collective works in tension and in feedback with that of the individual subject: "Suddenly Mrs. Coates looked up into the sky...Every one looked up" (MD 20). Although Mrs. Coates is already looking up, the last sentence abandons her in favor of describing the rest of the crowd. Or perhaps everyone else (by coincidence or not) effectively follows her example. Proceeding lines read: "'Glaxo,' said Mrs. Coates in a strained, awe-stricken voice, gazing straight up, and her baby, lying stiff and white in her arms, gazed straight up" (MD 20-21). We read that the baby looks up only after hearing that Mrs. Coates does it. Mrs. Coates distinctly looks "straight up" and reveals the awe she feels. Other characters continue the pattern of looking straight up with awe. Mrs. Bletchley "murmurs" her own reading of the message "like a sleepwalker," her trance state analogous to Mrs. Coates' awe (MD 21). So too, Mr. Bowley "gazed straight up" (MD 21).

Finally, the entire crowd follows suit: "As they looked the whole world became perfectly silent, and a flight of gulls crossed the sky, first one gull leading, then another, and in this extraordinary silence and peace, in this pallor, in this purity, bells struck eleven times, the sound fading up there among the

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[8] In Virginia Woolf: The Inward Voyage, Harvena Richter describes Woolf's narration: "It is not the spoken voice of the character or the conventional narrator; it is the inner voice whose exact nature resists definition yet attempts, through language and rhythm, to articulate feeling...It is verbalized *being*; giving voice to the total moment, transcending self and time" (129). I find Richter's characterization compelling, although I am still unsure if I completely agree with it. If we take Richter's words as true, however, than the sections of Woolf's text that sound like the words of a unknown, omniscient narrator take on a new light. Richter tells that this narrator does not exist and that this is rather the voice of the "total moment," implying that in order to have knowledge of multiple individual subjects, it must be the vocalized being of all of them. Richter's proposition about Woolf's "voice of subjectivity" strongly suggests that the voices of Woolf's novel are actually one voice of a collective that "transcends the self." If you agree, than Woolf's narration is always presenting a world of interconnection that rings out in the voice we read.

gulls" (MD 21). This beautiful passage manifests a general feeling of "silence and peace" that moves from Mrs. Coates onward. It is the sense that "the whole world became perfectly silent" and full of both "pallor" and "purity" that endows the ordinary events of the passage with reverence. Woolf's selection of events, the gulls' flight and the bell chimes, subtly integrate instances of individuality within the collective. At first, we see the gulls' flight as a whole, then we realize there is "one gull leading, then another." The changing of leadership here reflects how someone like Mrs. Coates may guide the group for a time, but another like Mr. Bowley will then step into this role. In this way, specific people contribute even though they also exist as part of a flock. With the gulls, the fact that more than one being can step into the same role does not diminish the direction brought about by the last leader. The bells tolling exist also as individual sounds perceived within the larger context of the collective ringing. The experience of hearing the bells and seeing the birds together grants the crowd one more shared experience. The reader too shares in this moment of unified perception. Besides managing to balance the tension between the subject and the collective, we are drawn into the crowd. We have no space to interpret on our own. Although Mrs. Coates in not exactly a leader, Woolf uses her as a "leading" point of reference. She and the other individuals help us to move in and out of proximity to events and objects as well as emotional distance: the act of looking up initiates the feeling of awe that exist on all levels of the group.

iii. The Message

In the motor car and sky-writing scenes, Woolf has these subjects maintain their independence alongside the ability to form connections within the larger context of the collective. Even though Mrs. Bletchley follows Mrs. Coates' lead in feeling awe, she comes up with her own reading of the sky writing. The possibility to deciphering the letters being made from smoke entices people to articulate

their guesses. Such discourse encourages individuals to consider the guesses of the people around them. As the aeroplane swooped like a skater:

> That's an E," said Mrs. Bletchley — or a dancer —
> It's toffee," murmured Mr. Bowley —(and the car went in at the gates and nobody looked at it)... (MD 21)

The structure here creates a sense of dialogue, as if Mr. Bowley can hear Mrs. Bletchley (although we do not know their proximity to each other). Regardless of what reality is, Woolf's narration forces us to see these two comments in relation to each other. It seems as though Mr. Bowley hears Mrs. Bletchley say that she sees an "E" and it causes him to conclude that it is a message for toffee. Mr. Bowley is on the Mall, but his guess spreads all the way down to the nursemaid in the park. Rumours carry Mr. Bowley's guess as if there is a psychic connection between crowd members. It is not a coincidence that Woolf includes the detail that the car enters Buckingham Palace at this point without anyone noticing. It is now out of the characters' range of perception: we hear about it only within the bounds of parenthesis. The ignored status of the car reflects how it was only the temporary source of intrigue and how it loses all its power when the attention shifts.

The exchange between Rezia and the nursemaid tells a contrasting story about the individual and connection. One subject stands out, while the other gets lost. Rezia, who had felt so alone and divided from the "people" around her in the motor car scene, manages to connect with the nursemaid next to her as they look up to the sky together: "It was toffee; they were advertising toffee, a nursemaid told Rezia. Together they began to spell t . . . o . . . f . . ." (MD 22). The two appear to represent a fleeting fusion of their separate voices into one. We do not hear Rezia's voice alone, however, and the rest of the passage makes her absence even more poignant: "'K. . . R . . .' said the nursemaid" (MD 22). Two people speak, but the narration dismisses Rezia's individual voice by making it invisible. In this way, one woman's presence overpowers or subsumes that of another. We do not see the group on the street

dissipate because the narration turns to Septimus' insane thoughts. But the double ending of the breaking up of Rezia's coalition with the nursemaid and Septimus' ideas taking over the narration reflect how one point of view can have more force than others. Even though people choose to follow the hypotheses of someone like Mr. Bowley for no clear reason, they still have their individual perspective which will eventually break away from and dissolve that of the group.

III: Looking and Making a Party Together

The act of looking has obvious power both to create and break apart the connections within a group. Thus far we have only considered the engagement of strangers on the street in an impersonal public setting. But what happens when perception is shared in a less public setting between intimate acquaintances? Here, we will look at Mrs. Ramsay's party from To the Lighthouse to consider the bonds that can form between friends and family who willingly join their attention to each other. Each person implicitly recognizes the role and expectations set upon them by attending the event, making the matter of cohesion a source of anxiety. Mrs. Ramsay occupies the primary role as the orchestrating hostess who wants to create a fusion between the others. Although the party goes on for much longer and takes up to four times the amount of space of both street scenes in Mrs. Dalloway, we will focus on the end of the party when the group finally comes together in awareness of communion.

While the party had languished when people like Lily Briscoe struggled under social expectations, lighting the candles causes the guests see the dinner party in a whole new light. This starts with Mrs. Ramsay and Augustus Carmichael independently appreciate anew the beauty of the fruit dish at the center of the dining table. Mrs Ramsay thinks, "Thus brought suddenly into the light it seemed possessed of great size and depth, was like a world in which one could take one's staff and climb hills,

she thought, and go down valleys" (TL 146). As we saw with the motor car for the street-goers, Mrs. Ramsay can project her desires upon the object of the bowl. It becomes a landscape she can use to indulge her fantasy of traveling, a place of untapped discoveries. The candlelight has the power to alter people's perceptions of space, which will come into play later on as well, and to focus attention on a single object. Mrs. Ramsay notes: "to her pleasure (for it brought them into sympathy momentarily) she saw that Augustus too feasted his eyes on the same plate of fruit, plunged in, broke off a bloom there, a tassel here, and returned, after feasting, to his hive (TL 146). Unlike the strangers looking at the car, Mrs. Ramsay notices and recognizes the fellowship that looking has created between her and Mr. Carmichael. She claims that shared vision brings them into "sympathy" for the moment. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, "sympathy" is: "A (real or supposed) affinity between certain things, by virtue of which they are similarly or correspondingly affected by the same influence" (OED). This definition is revealing is several ways. Sympathy can a perceived affinity rather than an actual correspondence. We hear that Mrs. Ramsay sees Mr. Carmichael observing, but her interpretation of the moment could be entirely inaccurate. Her belief is enough to give her a sense of connection. Secondly, the definition specifies that sympathy can come from undergoing a shared experience in a similar way.

If we compare the way Mrs. Ramsay looks at the bowl with the way Mr. Carmichael supposedly does, we see that the images are not terribly alike. Mrs. Ramsay imagines a "world" she can move through and explore. Mr. Carmichael looks for with the purpose of taking the most interesting bits with his eyes. His way of "plunging in" and "feasting" on pieces here and there are like a bee moving from flower to flower in the pursuit of nectar. Like a bee, Carmichael returns to his "hive" after he finds what he was looking for and does not use his spoils solely for personal pleasure. Because he is a poet,

Carmichael is constantly looking for inspiration for his next work of art and the fruit dish offers material for him to store and use in future compositions. In a way, both of their looks serves a selfish purpose: one to live out her dreams, the other to produce art. But Mrs. Ramsay sums up their sympathetic connection as fundamental: "That was his way of looking, different from hers. But looking together united them" (TL 146). For Mrs. Ramsay, the act of looking is enough to unite them.

The light of the candles shining against the darkness of the ending day has all the guests reevaluate what is at stake in Mrs. Ramsay's gathering. Leaning closer together in an attempt to see, they become a party round a table that represents "order and dry land," unlike the watery world that has wavered and vanished beyond the window panes (TL 146-147). The mood of the group changes dramatically: "Some change at once went through them all, as if this had really happened, and they were all conscious of making a party together in a hollow, on an island; had their common cause against that fluidity out there" (TL 147). Because the group shifts to imagining the party as their only refuge against the outside, they have a common enemy. This enemy is the constant change that time creates in the world. Fluidity is the enemy of stability and a potential destroyer. Change could (and will) break up the harmonious composition of the fruit dish, but the changes possible in the outside world are much more dangerous. Although the party does not offer a practical defence against the uncertainty of life, it is a it creates a sense of fellowship amongst people who want to stop this sense of flux, drawing themselves together over a domestic dinner party. The practice of dining or having a party together is a tradition, conferring an illusion of constancy. With this common feeling, this enemy, and this goal, the group comes "together." Mrs. Ramsay, the creator of this event who seeks to "merge" its separate parts together, intuitively feels the success of her efforts: "Nothing need be said; nothing could be said. There it was, all round them. It partook she felt, carefully helping Mr. Bankes to a specially tender piece [of meat], of

eternity...there is a coherence in things, a stability; something, she meant, is immune to change" (TL 158). Mrs. Ramsay believes that this moment contains a piece of eternity. Even though it will pass and she will be the one to end it, somehow the party itself (as event or memory) will remain coherent, stable, and immune to change. For the moment, she imagines that something is "holding them safe together," protecting them all temporarily from whatever future changes are coming.

Mrs. Ramsay attempts to describe how this moment will last. Something, she thinks, "shines out (she glanced at the window with its ripple of reflected lights) in the face of the flowing, the fleeting, the spectral, like a ruby; so again she had the feeling she had had once today, already, of peace, of rest. Of such moments, she thought, the thing is made that endures" (TL 158). Mrs. Ramsay claims that there is a special thing within this moment. At the start of the passage, she compares this thing to a ruby that shines all the brighter because of the changing lights around it, even as the ruby remains fixed and stable[9] . In the second part of the passage, Mrs. Ramsay compares the present moment to how she felt earlier when she was alone. Both moments rest on her internal sense of identity as a singular subject and of her sense of self in relation to external forces or stimuli. She notes how each experience gives her the feeling of being at peace and at rest. Her comparison throws into question the profound difference between being alone and being with other people that she had observed earlier in the novel while gazing upon the lighthouse beam. Mrs. Ramsay's sense of her own subjectivity differs in the two scenes, but she also claims that such moments produce: "the thing that endures." This sentiment supports what Mrs. Ramsay thinks to herself when she observes that the party is stable and immune to change. It is noteworthy that Mrs. Ramsay does not specify anything other than "the thing...that endures": she could have easily said the party or the moment is "the thing." Her obscurity implies that she is getting at something fundamental

[9] Woolf apparently likes the image of reflective rocks as stable beings, as Clarissa calls herself a "diamond" woman when she is being singular and reliable for others.

that not only exists within the time and the context of the event, but also that exists outside. She cannot know what this thing is, but its presence causes this party to survive "the fluidity out there." Although it is not the deciding factor in her mind, the connection and unity that the party create seem related to producing the thing that endures.

This gathering is Mrs. Ramsay's "last supper" before her passing into death. In a final act of bringing people together, they break bread in a space of formal comfort that reflects all of the domesticity that Mrs. Ramsay loves. People sucumb to her will for them to enter into domestic communion: Mr. Bankes by attending the party instead of doing his work, Lily Briscoe by being nice to Mr. Tansley, and Mrs. Ramsay learns that she has successfully convinced Paul Rayley to propose to Minta Doyle. Their marriage, in her eyes, promises to continue the domestic traditions that Mrs. Ramsay has fought so hard to perpetuate. This gathering together is Mrs. Ramsay's triumph: this is how she gives a sense of stability and safety to her guests. Yet, Mrs. Ramsay's life is about to come to a close. She will no longer be around to protect others from the storm of war and death that is coming.

In this chapter I have explored the question of what connection between isolated selves means in Woolf's texts and if such moments of connection have the potential to bring lasting unions. While our discussion reflects the fact that the subject fluctuates between independence and group dependence, the few moments of strong connection are meaningful. At her party, Mrs. Ramsay feels that her efforts to bring people together create a stability within that moment, creating a thing that endures. This "thing" will return in Woolf's works again as characters continue to think about how connection and moments of stability improve their lives. In the next chapter, as we observe how loss can overcome the boundaries of the subject to create fusion, we will ask how long that sense of stability is supposed to be able to last. Is connection between the subject alone and other beings possible only in ephemeral experiences such

as I have explored here? Or is there any more lasting sense of connection represented in Woolf's fiction?

Chapter III: Destruction, Fusion, and Reaching Out

After her dinner party is over, Mrs. Ramsay enjoys "that community of feeling with other people which emotion gives as if the walls of partition had become so thin that practically (the feeling was one of relief and happiness) it was all one stream" (TL 170). In this moment, Mrs. Ramsay sees the boundaries separating people to be almost nonexistent. She happily imagines everything belonging to "one stream" instead of being constantly separated, the form of merging she wanted most from her party. In To the Lighthouse and Mrs. Dalloway, Woolf shows us what happens when the walls of partition between people "become so thin," to allow for significant contact or moment of mutual recognition. But Woolf's vision (at least part of it) is a perversion of Mrs. Ramsay's dream. We will explore cases in which the boundaries between subjects seemingly disappear and there is complete merging. Each instance of fusion between one subject and another comes at a price.

To begin, we will look at "Time Passes," the section of To the Lighthouse that follows Mrs. Ramsay's words about her arduously achieved "community of feeling." "Time Passes" is the connecting section between "The Window" and "The Lighthouse." As its name suggests, the section recounts events occurring over a large span of time, encompassing the start of the world's entrance into the Great War all the way through to peace. The section is experimental in several respects. Its begins by describing life during the war, for instance, without featuring a single human subject from the other two parts of the novel. Instead, Woolf's prose deals with the universal effects of the war on all. The darkness that afflicts the house serves as a metaphor for the death and violence spreading all over the world. While the inhabitants of the house exist in the margins of the narrative are are even alluded to parenthetically, the house itself registers the brunt of loss and suffering and need. Our focus here will be

on Woolf's representation of darkness itself as a form of life without identity, suggesting a radical form of unindividuated collective being.

Daytime ends. One by one, the lights from the house go out. And darkness takes over everything, starting with objects. We read: "Nothing, it seemed, could survive the flood. The profusion of darkness which, creeping in at keyholes and crevices, stole round window blinds, came into bedrooms, swallowed up here a jug and basin, there a bowl of red and yellow dahlias, there the sharp edges and firm bulk of a chest of drawers" (TL 189-190). It penetrates every corner of the house completely from the keyholes to the drawers. Although darkness naturally obscures the contours of visible objects, Woolf personifies it here by claiming that the darkness "creeps" and "steals," giving it agency. Not only does the darkness enter the house, but it also consumes things, "swallowing up" items of all shapes and sizes. All things are subsumed in this "flood" which nothing can survive. By destroying these things, the darkness leaves the remains of these items as part of the same body in a sense, like the wreckage that flood water carries with it as it spreads. However, this is hardly a collective body that anything, or anyone, would want to be a part of. Details like the colors of the dahlias and the sharp edges of the drawers do not matter because they are indiscriminately lost within the dark.

Since this darkness could be said to represent the war, naturally people also face it. We see a similar destruction of the human subject in the darkness, as we did with the objects:

> Not only was the furniture confounded; there was scarcely anything left of body or mind by which one could say, "This is he" or "This is she." Sometimes a hand was raised as if to clutch something or ward off something, or somebody groaned, or somebody laughed aloud as if sharing a joke with nothingness. (TL 189-190)

The darkness strips everyone of identity. People lose parts of their body and mind, causing the removal of identifying boundaries of "he" and "she". We see the representation of the body itself becoming dissociative in the next sentence. The phrase "sometimes a hand was raised" grammatically reflects the

loss of a singular subject to complete the action. Instead, a disembodied hand of no one becomes the agent. The loss of the mind's control over the body comes through in the image of the raised hand. We only know that it is raised "as if to clutch something or ward off something," either to hold onto connection or to repel it, which confounds our understanding of agency. The action occurs, but it is done for unknown reasons by a being who no longer has an identity, or ownership over its own hand. We see the lack of possessive identities everywhere. Someone groans, but no one knows who. The lack of a distinct subject at the start of "Time Passes" makes such actions belong to everyone and no one at the same time[10]: everyone because they all share this bizarre space of non-light as time passes, and no one because the singular entity here is nothingness, the only thing left to joke with. In both "The Window," which we have explored, and the third section of the text, "The Lighthouse," Woolf's characters function as individuated subjects. In "The Window," the ambiguous sections of narration offer the potential for mental connection between individuals. But here in "Time Passes" the text denies the capacity for connection by decimating the mind. All beings (subject and object alike) coexists together in this state, but actions lose their meaning and certainty with the loss of the singular subject.

Exactly how this space works is ambiguous, but time functions in it very differently. Staying with the last passage, we can return to, "Sometimes a hand was raised as if to clutch something or ward off something, or somebody groaned, or somebody laughed aloud as if sharing a joke with nothingness" (TL190). Since we learn that all these events happen "sometimes," we are looking at a hypothetical

[10] In The Phantom Table: Woolf, Fry, Russell and Epistemology of Modernism, Ann Banfield writes of the space of "Time Passes:" "This omnipresent, eternal element surrounding all things is at once destructive and constructive...Yet dividing on perspective from another and linking each to each, it invisibly imparts form, constructing the "scaffolding" to give rigidity and permanence to the fleeting event" (128). Banfield's words reflect how Woolf constructs the space of "Time Passes" by at once destroying and combining objects and subjects of the house. Although the narrative gains a sense of form from this "linking," we see the individual subject suffer under the oppressive regime of darkness. I would also argue that the hypothetical nature of all actions in this world also undercuts the "rigidity and permanence" of the fleeting event.

realm with no way to orient ourselves in terms of when events happen. There is no sense of past, present, or future. The third part of "Time Passes" does recognize that night is a "short space" in relation to day. "Night, however, succeeds to night" (TL 192). While peace will eventually bring light back into the house and subjectivity back to the individuals characters by now familiar to us, the storm of darkness feels neverending as it occurs.

Now would be the time when someone like the comforting Mrs. Ramsay would be most wanted. In fact, we see Mr. Ramsay fumbling through this darkness, reaching out for his wife. The dark parts of "Time Passes" dominate Woolf's prose however, so such details about individuals are confined to brackets: "[Mr. Ramsay, stumbling along a passage one dark morning, stretched his arms out, but Mrs. Ramsay having died rather suddenly the night before, his arms, though stretched out, remained empty]" (TL 194). It is a tragic image of someone reaching out, but having no one to connect with. This image of looking for resolution in another is important to the "main stream" narrative To the Lighthouse. But the prose of "Time Passes" avoids dealing with death directly: "Should any sleeper fancying that he might find on the beach some answer to his doubts, a sharer of his solitude..." (TL 193). By including the desire to reach out in times of hardship in the novel proper, Woolf implies that this is a general desire of mankind, rather than just of Mr. Ramsay. This passage also suggests that an answer to one's troubles does not need to come through reason. Instead, a companion's presence is enough to comfort. Even though the person would share, ironically, in the state of aloneness, somehow doing this together could be enough to provide comfort. Mrs. Ramsay's obsession with marriage makes more sense in this context. But, as in the case of Mr. Ramsay, what happens when the person you rely on dies? Although the darkness and the war eventually end, the question of how to exist in the face of absence will continue to haunt living characters and is the focus of my next chapter.

In Mrs. Dalloway, Septimus Warren Smith lives in a world not unlike the reign of darkness in "Time Passes," where transformation and merging are always possible because he is insane. The threat that everything could become grotesque at any moment is a part of his insanity. Still, Septimus' vision allows him intermittently to fight his loneliness by reaching out and connecting with the world around him. Septimus' manner of looking for connection is different than that of a sane person. After Septimus hears the nursemaid's voice reciting the letters in the sky, he feels enticed to look at some elm trees, even though he is trying not give way to his visions (MD 23). "But they beckoned; leaves were alive; trees were alive" (MD 23). Because of Septimus' shell shock and inability to feel, his mind exports his emotions to the external things around him. Instead of recognizing that he is drawn to or projecting his needs onto the trees, Septimus imagines that the trees are reaching out to him. His comments that leaves and trees are alive, however, are not simply the ravings of a madman. The life in leaves and trees implies that these are things that he can connect with. Septimus gains a "sharer in solitude" with the leaves and the trees, but his madness takes this union to an extreme level.

Because Septimus is unhinged from reality, he has a very different approach to connection with the world. He imagines: "The leaves being connected by millions of fibres with his own body, there on the seat, fanned it up and down; when the branch stretched he, too, made that statement" (MD 23). In his mind, Septimus achieves the ultimate fusion of himself with other beings not human but alive as he is. But instead of experiencing destruction of his identity as do the people in the darkness of "Time Passes," Septimus retains ownership of his body while linking his sense of being as a subject alone "connected by millions of fibres" to the branches. He even gains the movement and power of the leaves, which fan "up and down." Septimus does lose some of his agency because he is one with "the statement" of the

branches and the leaves, but he appears to experience such extension of his own being in a state of rapture.

Rather than wanting to escape from this fusion, Septimus wants to incorporate more of the external elements of the world around him into it. He begins to see other connections suggested by the visual and auditory cues within the park. He believes that, "the sparrows fluttering, rising, and falling in jagged fountains were part of the pattern; the white and blue, barred with black branches " (MD 23). Septimus considers the movements of the sparrows to be part of a pattern. The information after the semicolon describes this pattern: "the white and blue, barred with black branches." With this in mind, it becomes clear that Septimus is looking at the scene in the sky from a unique perspective. The branches cover up the blue sky filled with clouds behind it, so blue and white segments fill the frame of the branches. With eyes like an artist, Septimus collapses and combines perspective of the sparrows, the branches, and the sky into one image. We also can take Septimus' reference to the pattern as a signal of a larger plan at play. Earlier in the passage, Septimus notes how the elm trees are "rising and falling, rising and falling" and these are the same words he uses to describe the birds' flights. Thus, the sparrows are part of the pattern of the trees on the level of the image as well as on the level of timing. Septimus is using reasonable logic, yet he endows these relationships with far greater meaning than a sane person would. For instance, we next read that, "Sounds made harmonies with premeditation; the spaces between them were as significant as the sounds" (MD 23). Just as he sees the visual landscape before him as one image, Septimus does the same thing here by perceiving the auditory landscape, or soundscape, as forming a singular composition. This composition has harmonies and meaningful moments of silence or no sound. But Septimus crosses the line of observation into projection and interpretation by calling the sounds premeditated. Although he does not say who "premeditates" such

"harmonies," he is claiming that there is a plan behind the larger pattern occurring before him that "all taken together meant the birth of a new religion" (MD 23).

Although Septimus envisions himself as a prophet bringing his (as Woolf called it) "insane truth" to the masses, his desire to reach out and connect also torments him. Septimus struggles to accept the loss of his officer Evans from the war and the insanity of his mind causes him to strive to bridge the gap between the living and the dead: "There was his hand; there the dead...Evans was behind the railings!" (MD 25). But while it is one thing to summon the dead, it is quite another metaphorically to take the hand offered and embrace Evans. In the final chapter, we will look at how Septimus and other characters struggle with their desire to bring back the dead to alleviate their sense of unbearable loneliness. So too, we will explore the possibility of accepting and even incorporating the dead into the subject's identity, a very different form of connection from anything we have discussed thus far, without sacrificing the integrity of the original subject.

Part II: In Absence

Chapter IV: The Living and the Dead

> "It is time," said Rezia.
>
> The word "time" split its husk; poured its riches over him...He sang. Evans answered from behind the tree. The dead were in Thessaly, Evans sang, among the orchids. There they waited till the War was over, and now the dead, now Evans himself—
>
> "For God's sake don't come!" Septimus cried out. For he could not look upon the dead.
>
> But the branches parted. A man in grey was actually walking towards them. It was Evans! But no mud was on him; no wounds; he was not changed. I must tell the whole world, Septimus cried… (MD 77)

In this vision, Septimus' reimagines the world to avoid facing a problem: the most important person in his life is dead. For Woolf, connections can exist between people who are not simply family or friends and these connections go beyond the bounds of life. Time continues after Evans' death, but Septimus remains locked in relationship with the man he once knew. In this chapter, Septimus and other characters face the loss of someone who cannot be relinquished and attempt to handle their grief without losing their beloved other. We will explore each of their respective strategies for finding meaning in death.

I: Narration

Although Woolf narratively structures Mrs. Dalloway and To the Lighthouse with different approaches, both texts look at the same larger question: How can we live in the face of the coexistence of aloneness and connection, absence and life? In To the Lighthouse, Woolf deals with this question through a symmetrical structure that parallels life in the same place before and after war, while acknowledging how death transforms it. In her notes, Woolf sees the novel structure as an "H" shape:

"Two blocks joined by a corridor" (Briggs 72). Each "block" looks at a short span of time, less than a whole day, for multiple characters who cohabitate on an island during the summer season. I have already discussed the peace and unity that springs up temporarily under the guidance of Mrs. Ramsay in "The Window." In my previous chapter, I looked at the chaos that war brings to the house on the island, as well as its inhabitants. We hear of Mrs. Ramsay's death, but only within brackets. We are not allowed to properly grieve for Mrs. Ramsay. Mrs. Ramsay not only brings the people around her together with her dinner party, she is the leading presence that introduces us to and guides us through the first section of the novel. After all the changes that occur in "Time Passes," we face the last section, "The Lighthouse," without knowing what to expect of this new world without Mrs. Ramsay. With parallel structure, Woolf emphasizes how life reverts to being very much the same after Mrs. Ramsay's death. People return to the island house and we see life continue as before. But this life operates in tension with the memory of Mrs. Ramsay and the dead children of the Ramsay family. Lily Briscoe's painting and Mr. Ramsay's journey to the lighthouse are homages to the past and Mrs. Ramsay, who supported the journey and posed for the picture when alive, could be said to haunt the last third of To the Lighthouse. As Lily completes her picture, she feels the pull of the dead Mrs. Ramsay reminding her of the past even as she bears witness to the promise of Mr. Ramsay sailing into the future.

Woolf approaches time differently in her earlier novel, Mrs. Dalloway. The text comes to us, as Naremore says, in "one stream." It is a book of little rest and constant movement, weaving one character's thoughts with another's as it passes through the hours of a single day. Mrs. Dalloway engages with time with more precision, as the chimes of London's bell towers signal the passing of each hour[11]. In Woolf's retrospective writing, "A Sketch of the Past," she describes the problem of

[11] For the way that Woolf appears to give clarity of the time through the bell chimes and other methods, see Susan Dick's essay "The Tunneling Process: Some Aspects of Virginia Woolf's Use of Memory and the Past."

biography and suggests that being able to show someone's daily experiences during a single day would be, superficially but effectively, a way of getting at all the little eccentricities of life (MD 69). Mrs. Dalloway is about Clarissa Dalloway, the title character, yet Woolf approaches telling her story through her perspective and her experiences as interwoven with the people around her. Septimus Warren Smith, a complete stranger to Clarissa, acts as her double.We see Septimus experience insanity, imagine his dead officer Evans, and commit suicide while Clarissa remains sane, and ultimately hears about his death at her crowded party through the offhand remarks of one of her guests.

In both novels, life and death coexist, interact, and inform each other using triangular relations. Lily Briscoe can only "see" Mrs. Ramsay as a triangular shape and the novel frequently triangulates perception of the mother in such moments as the Oedipal scenarios between James and his father at the start of the novel. When alive, Septimus exists in a triangle of relations between the dead Evans and his living wife Rezia. When Clarissa hears of Septimus' death, she defines her life using her conception of him to reimagine her love of her husband and friends. Thus, both texts engage relationships that triangulate connections among the living and the dead. The texts approach time differently, with Mrs. Dalloway closely following the intricacies of a single day, while To the Lighthouse zooms in to the particular, out to the global, metaphoric scale, and back in again. Yet, these differing processes emphasize the existence of death and the fact that life goes on before and after it. In this chapter, we will observe how Woolf's characters face the loss of people with whom they connect and how death becomes an integral part of their lives in the process.

II: Septimus, Evans, and Rezia

In the last chapter, I spoke a little about Septimus' inability to feel, his use of projection to cope with his illness, and his grief over Evans' passing. To appreciate why Septimus has visions of Evans returning from the dead, we must better understand the various parts of Septimus' character. We can start with the relationship between Evans and Septimus told to us by Woolf's narrator. Because we never hear of Evans outside of this narrator's and Rezia's description, Evans' existence functions to reveal certain parts of Septimus to us. The narrator recounts how Septimus, "drew attention, indeed the affection of his officer, Evans by name. It was a case of two dogs playing on a hearth-rug...They had to be together, share with each other, fight with each other, quarrel with each other" (MD 96). Although the narrator specifies that Evans noticed and essentially "chose" Septimus, the two quickly began to act in a partnership rather than as an officer with an enlisted man. Evans rank places him higher than Septimus in the military, which probably stems from Evans' higher social class. But temporarily, the two men became not like humans defined by societal rules, but dogs on equal footing. Already, this story suggests the impossibility of the two maintaining the scope of their relationship by always being together outside of a military context. The implications of a homoerotic component to this relationship (found in Woolf's choices to claim that Septimus needs to develop "manliness" before the war, Evans' lack of bravado around women, and Septimus' later refusal to procreate), strengthens the impossibility of their future together (MD 95, 96, 99). Yet, Septimus shows total denial that he will no longer be with Evans even after Evans enters the most unreachable state of existence: death. Septimus, "far from showing any emotion or recognizing that here was the end of a friendship, [he] congratulated himself upon feeling very little and very reasonably. The War had taught him. It was sublime" (MD 96). The first clause points to Septimus' refusal to accept the loss of Evans from his life, probably preventing him from

indulging in strong feelings. The rest of the passage, however, suggests another aspect of Septimus' character: the desire to be manly. For the War, an event which Septimus here imagines as an actual thing, to teach Septimus anything, it must be something that he wants to learn. By disavowing feeling, codified as a feminine emotion, in favor of the supposedly more masculine sense of reason, Septimus is attempting to transform himself into a proper man. It is also possible that Septimus simply does not want to feel his grief. It is too overwhelming. This desire, in addition to the "shell shock" resulting from war trauma, leads Septimus into a spiral of madness.

While Septimus leaves the war physically unscathed, mentally he experiences panic at times over not being able to feel. Marrying Rezia, a woman who temporarily distracts him from his lack of feeling, is an attempt to circumvent his new emotional crisis (and gives him a more socially appropriate, female object of interest) (MD 96). As Septimus senses that something is terribly wrong, he begins to project his troubles onto the external world: "He could add up his bill; his brain was perfect; it must be the fault of the world then — that he could not feel" (MD 98). Next, Septimus projects his own sense of meaninglessness without Evans, and the meaninglessness of Evans death, onto the landscape: "It might be possible, Septimus thought, looking at England from the train window, as they left Newhaven; it might be possible that the world itself is without meaning" (MD 98). Although Septimus does consent to see doctors eventually, his grief manifests itself in a new relationship with death. Septimus evaluates his own insanity, using Dr. Holmes' assertion that he is simply, "in a funk:" "Nothing whatever the matter, except the sin for which human nature had condemned him to death; that he did not feel" (MD 101). Just as Septimus projects his judgement that his life has no meaning onto the world, he similarly claims that it is "human nature" that sentences him to death for not feeling, rather than himself. Septimus repeatedly associates Dr. Holmes with an imperative to conform to "human nature." Holmes represents

an idea of human nature that British society promotes, which proposes that every Englishman is normal and incapable of going insane. For this reason, Holmes claims that there is nothing wrong with Septimus. Septimus intuitively grasps that there is no place for him within his own society anymore, but in his madness he concludes that it is human nature itself that condemns him.

Septimus believes he has deep links to death. He imagines the "whole world" telling him to kill himself "for our sakes," but claims: "Now that he was quite alone, condemned, deserted, as those who are about to die are alone, there was a luxury in it, an isolation full of sublimity; a freedom which the attached can never know" (MD 103). Like in a previous passage, Septimus again associates his new situation with the "sublime." The Romantic notion of the sublime is that of the solitary figure emotionally reaching towards an grand realization, one that is so powerful and vast that "reaching" or "achieving" it annihilates the subject. Just as the War "taught" Septimus, this isolation impresses him, but destroys his ability to feel or connect with others. Yet, Septimus does not want to die and even enjoys his aloneness in this passage. It is noteworthy that his diction of freedom, being free from attachments and finding luxury, parallels Mrs. Ramsay's words about being alone. Yet, Septimus correlates the aloneness with death. Here, Septimus considers himself like one about to die. Earlier in the text, Septimus had imagined himself the one "taken from life to death" but who has come back: "I have been dead, and yet am now alive, but let me rest still" (MD 26, 76). Again, we see a link between Mrs. Ramsay's desire for "rest" and Septimus' association of rest with death (or at least anti-life). But fundamentally, Septimus sees himself as someone utterly unlike all others, the living and dead, because he believes he has undergone both states. His sense of his separation at once reflect his isolation from society and creates meaning for his loss of feeling. Seeing himself as dead combines with Septimus' ability to project his guilt into other beings. He thinks, "All the other crimes raised their heads and shook their fingers and jeered and

sneered over the rail of the bed in the early hours of the morning at the prostrate body which lay realizing its degradation" (MD 101). Instead of feeling it, Septimus' guilt spills over into his visions of the personified creatures of his crimes. Since his crimes are not real entities, their judgement and contempt can only come from himself. His crimes gain hideous life; Septimus becomes like a corpse — "the prostrate body" — in the scene. His "degradation" calls forth the idea of a corpse rotting in the bed. The narration reflects Septimus' distance from his own body, "which lay realizing its degradation." Septimus regards this body as an "it" rather than his own. Even in his visions, he cannot imagine himself experiencing his emotions like a living, ordinary person. Ultimately, Septimus attempts to reconcile his grief, sense of his own lifelessness, and degradation by imagining that Evans has come back from the dead.

Although it is Septimus' mind that channels Evans, Septimus is still afraid to face the emotions of his loss and to see Evans before him. This is true whenever Septimus senses his dead friend's presence. When Septimus senses Evans behind a tree, we hear Septimus' reasons: "For God's sake don't come!" Septimus cried out. For he could not look upon the dead" (MD 77). Septimus may not be able to feel his grief in a traditional way, but he certainly feels distressed by the prospect of seeing Evans. The refusal to look suggests two possible fears. The first is that Septimus does not want to face his friend's death. If Evans returns mutilated and ghostly, then Septimus would have to acknowledge that he cannot connect with Evans in the same way that he used to. The second is that Septimus does not want to recognize the inappropriate relationship he shares with Evans. We have already heard how Septimus believes that he has died and returned to life; now he is envisioning Evans experiencing the same fate. In doing so, Septimus acts as if he and Evans can defy the laws of not only nature but also of society. His dream that they can breaks rules of life and death parallels the way that their love breaks the rules of

that society. If Septimus did these two things, he would ultimately have to come to grips with the grief he is avoiding and his guilt over not properly mourning for Evans. To Septimus, this is his "worst" sin and he would have to acknowledge his failure to his friend upon their encounter.

Septimus does encounter Evans, but with unexpected results. After crying out to tell Evans not to come, Septimus sees his friend walking toward him and Rezia through the trees: "It was Evans! But no mud was on him; no wounds; he was not changed. I must tell the whole world, Septimus cried, raising his hand" (MD 77). Rather than seeing a rotting corpse coming towards him, Septimus thankfully finds that Evans is just as he remembers him. It is interesting that we never hear Evans speak. The two sing to each other before Septimus envisions Evans in the figure of Peter Walsh walking through the park, but they do not discuss their separation. Instead, Evans sings that he and the other dead are getting ready to return to life (MD 77). In this fantasy, Septimus gets to see Evans without going through the pain of recognizing loss. The fantasy only serves to perpetuate Septimus' hope that he and Evans will be permanently united sometime soon and they can then exist somewhere happily together.

In this dream, Septimus not only finds a way to be with Evans, but he also sees a new path for "the fate of man:" "raising his hand like some colossal figure who has lamented the fate of man for ages in the desert alone with his hands pressed to his forehead, furrows of despair on his cheeks, and now sees the light on the desert's edge" (MD 77). As Septimus raises his hand, he imagines himself as a "colossal figure," like someone from one of the monuments erected in the name of the dead soldiers in the Great War. He and his insanity are, in a sense, a legacy of that war, but in his vision the narrative changes to one of triumph. Although he used to be alone in his despair over humanity, like one lost in the desert, now he has seen the light. With "legions of men prostrate behind him," Septimus, "the great mourner, receives for one moment on his face the whole —" (MD 77). Woolf interrupts this moment

with Rezia's speech. Septimus marries Rezia to distract himself from his loss of feelings and ironically she does so by interrupting this vision of his reunion with Evans. Septimus' vision continues, but it is now beyond our view. He says that he can tell Rezia the time (in answer to her earlier question that he misheard) as he continues to stare at Walsh. Woolf does not show us Septimus' moment of euphoria, but his words suggest that he is imagining the dawn of a new age for society that brings together the living and the dead. I speculate that Woolf refrains from keeping us within Septimus' mind during these last moments to help with her transition into Peter's thoughts, but more fundamentally because this vision only gives Septimus temporary relief. "Evans" leaves him as Walsh walks away and he continues to feel very much alone and oppressed.

In the moment of lucidity that precedes Septimus' suicide, Rezia entertains him as they sit together. But when Rezia leaves temporarily, we see Septimus quickly turn back to seek visions of connection with the dead to escape his loneliness. We hear: "He was alone with the sideboard and the bananas. He was alone, exposed on this bleak eminence, stretched out - but not on a hill-top; not on a crag; on Mrs. Filmer's sitting-room sofa. As for the vision, the faces, the voices of the dead, where were they?" (MD 163). Septimus' tone in this passage reflects disappointment over his current sanity. He seems to prefer imagining that he is on some great precipice about to fall over the edge. The drama of his visions is one strategy Septimus' mind employs to avoid or at least exalt his isolation. But now that he is thinking sanely, it is surprising that Septimus implies that he will take any substitute for his aloneness: his visions, Evans, or Rezia, as we have seen. Septimus is aware of the indiscriminate nature of his strategies. Still, he sincerely appears to mourn the loss of his visions: "Where he had once seen mountains, where he had once seen faces, where he had once seen beauty, there was a screen" (MD 163). These lines again suggest that Septimus prefers his insane vision of the world to the ordinary one

of his lucidity. As we observed in the last chapter, Septimus' visions can give him a sublime experience of connection. Perhaps it is not surprising that Septimus would rather be in a state of bliss as a madman than sane and alone.

In this state of fear, we see Septimus' relationship with Evans in a different light. Septimus reaches out towards the departed:

> "Evans!" he cried. There was no answer. A mouse had squeaked, or a curtain rustled. Those were the voices of the dead. The screen, the coalscuttle, the sideboard remained to him. Let him then face the screen, the coal-scuttle and the sideboard . . . but Rezia burst into the room chattering. (MD 163)

In this case, Septimus calls out for Evans and tries to bring on his insane visions. When he realizes that the world is remaining as it is in his mind, he purposely faces the screen with the intention of imagining something else. The screen provides him with a blank surface or "film" upon which he projects his desires. Rezia interrupts his thoughts, however, removing his need for Evans. Septimus had deep feelings for his officer, but now Evans' role in Septimus' life is simply acting as a buffer against aloneness. Septimus can attempt to summon him at any time precisely because Evans is dead. Still, Evans does not always answer the call and he can only appear as a vision, so their partnership is uncertain. His young wife Rezia is Septimus' socially appropriate substitute but she replaces Septimus' partnership with Evans with a new and different form of union.

Although Rezia and Septimus are not like "two dogs playing on a hearth-rug," we do see their bond grow as Septimus faces his battle against Holmes and his other doctor, Sir William Bradshaw. "She held her hands to her head, waiting for him to say did he like the hat or not, and as she sat there, waiting, looking down, he could feel her mind, like a bird, falling from branch to branch, and always alighting, quite rightly; he could follow her mind" (MD 165). Woolf's narrative gracefully moves from

one person's perspective into the others. Simply in her manner of waiting with her head in her hands, Septimus taps into her thoughts. Here, he feels himself to be in sympathy because he could "follow her mind."

Rezia gains importance in Septimus' life (to the extent that he thinks of her and not Evans right before his death) when she steps outside of her role as his wife and reveals her shared sensibility with him. He tells her to burn all of his writings about his mad visions:

> Burn them! he cried.
>
> But Rezia laid her hands on them. Some were very beautiful, she thought. She would tie them up (for she had no envelope) with a piece of silk (MD 166).

In accordance with the heightened understanding between Septimus and Rezia we saw in the last passage, Woolf omits traditional dialogue conventions. Because of this, we do not know how many of these ideas are said out loud and how much Woolf summarizes. But this obscurity points to the intense communication between Reiza and Septimus, which allows Rezia to state her appreciation of the beauty Septimus sees simply with the movement of her hands. Communication on such an intimate level reflects how the two finally gain a real connection after five years of marriage. Rezia may not completely grasp what Septimus' writings mean, but she independently values them for their own merit. She shows Septimus that she appreciates the beauty of his visions by honoring his records.

Additionally, she too refuses to accept the diagnosis and prescriptions of the doctors. In the name of protecting England, the doctors want to fix Septimus because he is no longer fit for society: Sir William Bradshaw's instructions epitomizes the view that Septimus is now a dangerous outcast. He is to be sent into solitary exile at a country treatment centers until he learns a sense of "proportion" and is safe to return. Rezia refuses to accept the conditions of Bradshaw and his "proportion," preserving and

honoring the legacy of Septimus' insanity by tying it up in silk. In this moment of calm before the storm, she believes: "Even if they took him, she said, she would go with him. They could not separate them against their wills, she said" (MD 166). Once again, the indirect telling of this dialogue suggests the newfound closeness between Septimus and Rezia. It supports Rezia's touching statement that she will stay by his side, fighting the doctors if necessary. Woolf's wording emphasizes their strengthened partnership by treating "their wills" as sympathetic. In this new light, Rezia loses the birdlike quality associated with her during the rest of the novel for something greater: "She was a flowering tree; and through her branches looked out the face of a lawgiver, who had reached a sanctuary where she feared no one; not Holmes; not Bradshaw; a miracle, a triumph, the last and greatest...Over them she triumphed" (MD 166). On the verge of a sense of salvation when he looked at Evans, Septimus achieves it fully, at least in this moment, with Rezia. In this moment, she rules over a safe space where he can finally live under the gaze of "a lawgiver." Her bold stance saves Septimus from feeling alone. Rezia gives him a glimpse of salvation, even as his sense that she is the "last and the greatest" miracle anticipates his approaching end.

Although Woolf presents Rezia as an impenetrable protector in this passage, Rezia reverts to bird form. Because Rezia cannot hold Holmes back when he returns to their home, Septimus flings himself out the window in a final act of freedom. Septimus is indeed free, being about to die, from his ties to society. But he does not consider himself alone as he contemplates throwing himself out: "It was their idea of tragedy, not his or Rezia's (for she was with him)" (MD 168). Although Rezia is not by his side physically, Septimus trusts that she shares his sentiments about his death. It is tempting to claim that Septimus' connection to Rezia is an illusion of his volatile mind believing what it wants to believe. But Woolf does not allow such an interpretation. Rezia experiences Septimus' death as intensely vivid and

shared. Drinking a medicated vial from Holmes in the immediate aftermath of Septimus' suicide, she imagines, "she was opening long windows, stepping out into some garden" (MD 168). In her dream, Rezia mimics Septimus' action of freedom and enters into the sanctuary he imagines within her. In this space, she validates her trying marriage to Septimus by thinking how most of her memories are happy (MD 169). By stepping through the window as well, Rezia shows her devotion and connection to Septimus. In honor of their connection, Woolf has Rezia pronounce Septimus' passing: "'He is dead,' she said, smiling" (MD 169). Her smile reflects the truth that Rezia supports Septimus in his choice. We should recall that Septimus used to think that someone about to die is unattached and alone. Rezia breaks through the isolating barrier of death to create connection. Her sympathy and understanding demonstrate how connection beyond the grave need not inherently destroy the person who remains behind.

III: Lily, Mrs. Ramsay, Mr. Ramsay, and a Picture

As her dinner dinner party disperses, Mrs. Ramsay thinks to herself: "They would, she thought, going on again, however long they lived, come back to this night; this moon; this wind; this house: and to her too...wound about in their hearts, however long they lived she would be woven; and this, and this, and this…" (TL 170). Because it contains the "thing that endures and matters," memory, Mrs. Ramsay believes that she and her party, will become "wound about in the hearts" of the people present. While she admits that this notion of her legacy flatters her, Mrs. Ramsay believes that her friends will keep her, through acts of memory, alive. This thought comforts Mrs. Ramsay as she contemplates her death, which is unknowingly just around the corner. If Septimus is the sole keeper of Evans' spirit as a visitant from the realm of dead, many people cherish Mrs. Ramsay's memory in the third section of To the Lighthouse. Yet, arguably one alone, Lily Briscoe, wishes to summon her from the beyond to partake in her form of "mad" vision: a painting she struggles to complete.

When Lily Briscoe faces the death of her friend, Mrs. Ramsay, she takes it particularly hard. Her grief transforms her as she looks at the empty step of the house where Mrs. Ramsay once posed for her: "To want and not to have, sent all up her body a hardness, a hollowness, a strain. And then to want and not to have—to want and want—how that wrung the heart, and wrung it again and again! Oh, Mrs. Ramsay! she cried out silently" (TL 266). Although Lily already had a deep emotional response immediately after Mrs. Ramsay's death, she still has this intense wanting rise up within her upon returning to the house where they spent time together. Thinking that "Mrs. Ramsay has faded and gone," Lily is at first confident that she no longer has any more painful, desires to raise the dead, giving Lily the security to think back to her memories of the deceased woman. Yet, Lily still experiences her old feeling of wanting Mrs. Ramsay to return. As we look at the relationship between Lily and Mrs. Ramsay, we

will see how it is tied up in the quest for intimacy and connection. Lily learns to use her imaginative communion with the dead to help her connect to world around her.

We should note that Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe, although friends, are two very different people and their differing hopes for Lily create a tension between them. Mrs. Ramsay wants to act as Lily's mother in some ways, or at least feels entitled to meddle, and the older woman is an overbearing representation of domesticity for Lily. As a mother of eight, a wife, and homemaker, Mrs. Ramsay's social life takes up most of her time as she serves others. Mrs. Ramsay emphatically tells Lily, "an unmarried woman has missed the best of life" (TL 77). In contrast, Lily is an independent, single woman who paints to express her unique view of the world. Getting to "spinsterly" age, Lily still rejects Mrs. Ramsay's faith in marriage, feeling: "she would urge for her exemption from the universal law; plead for it; she liked to be alone; she liked to be herself; she was not made of that" (TL 77). It is clear how much sway Mrs. Ramsay has over Lily in the way Lily refers to Mrs. Ramsay's opinion as "universal law" that she needs to "plead" against. Indeed, we see Lily want to run to Mrs. Ramsay when she "often felt herself — struggling against terrific odds to maintain her courage; to say: 'But this is what I see; this is what I see,' and so to clasp some miserable remnant of her vision to her breast, which a thousand forces did their best to pluck from her" (TL 32). In these times of despair, Lily imagines flinging herself at Mrs. Ramsay's knee. Lily's powerful, if stressful bond with Mrs. Ramsay does help to guide and comfort her, even though she rejects Mrs. Ramsay's domestic way of life.

As with Septimus and Evans, Lily's relationship to Mrs. Ramsay is ambiguous. For instead of looking to Mrs. Ramsay as simply an advisor, or a mentor in directing her life, Lily wants to break down the barriers between herself and Mrs. Ramsay. As they sit together, Lily wonders: "What device for becoming, like waters poured into one jar, inextricably the same, one with the object one

adored?...Could loving, as people called it, make her and Mrs. Ramsay one? for it was not knowledge but unity she desired...intimacy itself, which is knowledge" (TL 79). The analogy of becoming "like waters poured into one jar" is provoking. It treats people as basically the same and suggests that connection could be as simple as finding a jar that each can pour themselves into. We saw a variation of this during the dinner party when Mrs. Ramsay and Mr. Carmichael both looked at the fruit dish together. But Lily does not have a shared object like a fruit dish or a jar: she does not know how to go about creating connection and intimacy. In an attempt to gain this connection, Lily touches Mrs. Ramsay's knee, but feels nothing (TL 79). When Mrs. Ramsay was alive, Lily desired but failed to develop intimacy with her. Now that Mrs. Ramsay is gone, Lily does not even have her friendship to guide her. Yet, we will see how it is in this state that she finally finds a way to connect with Mrs. Ramsay.

Although Lily does not achieve in life the intimacy she seeks with Mrs. Ramsay, Lily recognizes how Mrs. Ramsay sought to help Lily connect to others when she was alive, in part through her parties and gatherings. Mrs. Ramsay thinks her guests will remember her for her last dinner party, but we see Lily's mind turn back to another occasion when she, Mrs. Ramsay, and Mr. Tansley sat on the beach together. Although Lily and Tansley generally detest each other, Mrs. Ramsay's presence manages to bring them to a temporary comradery. Mrs. Ramsay, Lily realizes, "brought together this and that and then this, and so made out of that miserable silliness and spite…something—this scene on the beach for example, this moment of friendship and liking—which survived, after all these years complete" (TL 239-240). Lily recognizes that Mrs. Ramsay has a gift for purposefully and expertly combining elements to give events extra meaning. This extra "something" exists outside of time so that it can survive in memory. Even though they did not talk about it, Lily picks up on what Mrs. Ramsay called the "thing

that endures" at the conclusion of her own dinner party. With this hint from Woolf, we already see how Lily's consciousness has some intuitive links to Mrs. Ramsay's.

As Lily thinks about Mrs. Ramsay, she has a "revelation" about Mrs. Ramsay's powers: "Mrs. Ramsay making of the moment something permanent...In the midst of chaos there was shape; this eternal passing and flowing (she looked at the clouds going and the leaves shaking) was struck into stability. Life stand still here, Mrs. Ramsay said" (TL 241). By reinvoking Mrs. Ramsay's past words in this new context, Lily is both learning to understand Mrs. Ramsay and letting Mrs. Ramsay's memory guide her to see the world in a new way. This new vision has the power to conjure up the constant flux of the world, like the movement of the clouds and leaves, and then "strike it into stability." The passage continues with Lily calling out for Mrs. Ramsay because she was her teacher: "She owed it all to her" (TL 241). Although Mrs. Ramsay is not physically there, Lily can still learn from her imperfect conception of the woman. Lily's revelation is inherently valuable to her, even if we imagine her misunderstanding Mrs. Ramsay. Yet, the fact that Woolf does show us Mrs. Ramsay feeling the same sentiments, and even using the phrase "struck everything into stability" to talk about the enigmatic thing that gives her dinner party lasting value, suggests that there is a deep engagement occurring between Lily and Mrs. Ramsay in this moment (TL 170). Their thoughts echo one another. It does not seem to matter that Mrs. Ramsay is dead; she continues to speak to Lily through the words and scenes of memories.

Continuing to think about Mrs. Ramsay so deeply and in this setting brings back Lily's intense grief over her death. This pain is personal for Lily, but also reflects a crisis in her dependence of Mrs. Ramsay in the face of her absence. She feels a physical "hardness, a hollowness, a strain" in her body as she wants her mentor back (TL 266). Lily's physical responses reflect that her wanting, in part, has to do with losing Mrs. Ramsay's hand for creating connections that bring these special, lasting moments.

The challenge is particularly difficult because of Lily's "hardness." This hardness reflects a masculine sort of wanting that contrasts with Mrs. Ramsay's feminine fertility and creative energy to bring elements together. As a chosen spinster who rejects marriage even to the admirable Mr. Bankes, Lily's barren lifestyle and "hollow" womb differ radically from that of the mother of eight that she emulates. Lily is caught between admiring and rejecting Mrs. Ramsay's power of fusion. She cannot use Mrs. Ramsay's domestic means of achieving unity or communion without compromising the parts about herself that Lily values the most.

Rather than attempt to create connection and stability on her own, Lily instead "strains" to bring Mrs. Ramsay back from the dead. We see her, like Septimus, actually call out Mrs. Ramsay's name in order to summon her: "Mrs. Ramsay!" she said aloud, "Mrs. Ramsay!" The tears streaming down her face" (TL 268). Lily's grief is palpable through the page. Lily may not be think of her grief as a crisis to find connection, but we hear how the ghost of Mrs. Ramsay already influenced Lily's gaze after she first died. Lily remembers that for days after she heard of Mrs. Ramsay's death: "It was strange how clearly she saw her, stepping with her usual quickness across fields among whose folds, purplish and soft, among whose flowers, hyacinths or lilies, she vanished. It was some trick of the painter's eye" (TL 270). Mrs. Ramsay's spirit appears and disappears without any prompts from Lily's consciousness in this description. The way that Mrs. Ramsay moves in and out between the flowers is beautiful, perhaps encouraging Lily to call it a product of her "painter's eye." However, the mere presence of her spirit again suggests that Mrs. Ramsay's passing changes Lily's vision of the world. Now, she sees the dead among living flowers. Mrs. Ramsay's death is not the only act of destruction that affected Lily, as "Time Passes" suggests how the war transforms life for everyone. Lily imagines Mrs. Ramsay all over in her travels of England, which too had recently been turned it into "fields of dead" (TL 270). Seeing Mrs.

Ramsay around the world that, by appearances, looks unchanged by war, reminds Lily how life and death go hand in hand.

While Lily desires to follow in the footsteps of Mrs. Ramsay she is not and cannot be completely like the elder woman. Lily's ambition is not only to create a fleeting gesture, like Septimus, but to make something permanent of her visions. Lily too imagines the ghost of her friend, but she strives to go a step past Septimus to make life "stand still here" through her own means. As Lily reflects on a a preserved moment on the beach, she thinks how "it stayed in the mind affecting one like a work of art" (TL 240). With this thought, Lily realizes that she can recreate the effect of such moments "in another sphere:" the sphere of art (TL 241). By finishing her painting, Lily can create permanence and connection within the composition while maintaining her independence as a single woman. Still, Lily recognizes that the strategy of using art to form stability comes with its own set of problems. Lily considers if paintings last forever; she also questions the value of her picture since few will probably see it (TL 267). Furthermore, painting may form connections on the canvas, but it is not a typical tool for connecting the living with the dead[12]. We will see Mrs. Ramsay's ghost guide Lily to finding a vision as a way to complete her picture, allowing Lily to accept Mrs. Ramsay's death, and connect to the living people around her.

It is not only Mrs. Ramsay that helps Lily in her artistic and personal struggle for connection. Mr. Ramsay acts as Lily's living inspiration, reminding her of the present and the future as she slips into

[12] In her transcription of her interview with Virginia Woolf, Ruth Gruber tells Woolf that her texts seem to suggest "the hope that women will help end the horror and create peace. Men make wars, not women" (5). I wonder if Gruber was partially thinking of Lily's desire to create connection in the composition of her painting. Lily's picture becomes a positive force, in some ways attempting to counteract the negative destruction and separation that war, and death in general, create. And yet, Virgina Woolf responded, "Once, we had such hope for the world" (5). Woolf was battling the depression that dominated the end of her life at the time of this interview, yet her words ring out as a somber note not just about the power of women, but for the pursuit of connection. To read more of Ruth Gruber's fascinating tale of her correspondences and interview with Woolf, turn to the introduction of her book, Virginia Woolf: The Will to Create as Woman.

thinking of Mrs. Ramsay and the past. Although to a much lesser extent than Rezia ultimately achieves with Septimus, Mr. Ramsay becomes an unlikely (and unaware) source of comfort for Lily. Both Lily and Septimus make a male-female pairing to substitute for the one they lost. Since Lily's quest to finish her picture coincides with Mr. Ramsay's final journey to the lighthouse, Lily can rest from the difficult task by observing the progress of Mr. Ramsay's boat. From where she stands on the lawn, Lily can both focus on her composition and see far out to sea. Additionally, each are attempting to finish a task that Mrs. Ramsay was somehow affiliated with, but was never completed. For this reason, Lily imagines Mrs. Ramsay's spirit with Mr. Ramsay on the boat (TL 266). Additionally, Lily feels as though she owes Mr. Ramsay sympathy because she only partially comforted him before his departure. Assuring Mr. Ramsay of his greatness, an act that Mrs. Ramsay performed constantly when alive, would have required a complete sublimation of Lily's personal desires. By partially giving in, she stands on the crossroads with him. She connects to him, although he is completely unaware of her after his moment of need, because he too is trying to find a way to move on without Mrs. Ramsay to support him. As Lily goes forward in her journey to accept the loss of her teacher and finding her own way to create moments of connection, she uses the progress of Mr. Ramsay in the boat to inspire her.

Lily begins to connect with Mrs. Ramsay when she returns to painting her old picture, the one she left unfinished from the time of her last visit. This time, Mrs. Ramsay's memory transforms her composition of the scene into a vision of death and absence: "The empty drawing-room steps, the frill of the chair inside...became like curves and arabesques flourishing round a centre of complete emptiness" (TL 266). Instead of representing a house with a hedge and a tree, Lily can only focus on how the steps upon which Mrs. Ramsay once sat quietly are now empty. Like Septimus, Lily is projecting her feelings into the external world, but she also feels them inside of her. Her grief becomes so strong that Lily

initially loses her ability to paint. Even if she had managed to convey this sense of emptiness, it is not the feeling of connection that she wants to immortalize in her picture. Lily initially told Mr. Bankes that the difficulty in finishing is with uniting the left and right sides of her painting (TL 82-83). Even at this early juncture, her painting dealt with the idea of connection from a compositional standpoint. But now, ten years after her first attempt, compositional difficulties compound: she literally cannot see her painting through her tears (TL 267). The grief that she feels emotionally and physically prevents her from moving forward with her painting or accepting Mrs. Ramsay's passing. Rather, Lily wants to convert "those empty flourishes" into their original form by bringing Mrs. Ramsay back from the dead. Like Septimus when he realizes he is alone with only the sideboard and bananas for company, Lily calls out for Mrs. Ramsay.

Surprisingly, Lily does summon her ghost just as Septimus does in this moment, although to different effect. Lily feels, "a relief that was balm in itself, and also, more mysteriously, a sense of some one there, of Mrs. Ramsay, relieved for a moment of the weight that the world put on her, staying lightly by her side" (TL 269). Lily senses Mrs. Ramsay's presence, but it is not the same Mrs. Ramsay Lily knew in life. Instead, this is a free Mrs. Ramsay "in all her beauty." Lily imagines death liberating her mentor. Mrs. Ramsay here is better than the haggard, tired woman constantly worrying about everyone else we saw in "The Window," giving this new version of Mrs. Ramsay the "power to console." It is interesting that Lily thinks that Mrs. Ramsay will only be this free "for a moment," as if even in the afterlife Mrs. Ramsay will be busy with new domestic duties. With Mrs. Ramsay by her side, Lily begins to paint again (TL 270). Although Mrs. Ramsay is a vision of the past, this apparition suggests that the future holds new possibilities. Mrs. Ramsay's presence helps Lily return to her present, as do her musings about Mr. Ramsay's journey on the boat.

Unlike Septimus, Lily goes beyond images of Mrs. Ramsay, somehow entering the elder woman's consciousness. We already touched upon this earlier, but Lily begins to draw on Mrs. Ramsay's characteristic language of subjectivity to an intense degree. An important case of Lily's acquisition is the metaphor of the water as "unfathomably deep." Recall how when Mrs. Ramsay was alone and knitting, she used similar words to invoke her own interior nature, what she dubs her "wedge of darkness." Her "wedge" is akin to water below the surface in that it is "all dark, it is all spreading, it is unfathomably deep" (TL 96). Here, Lily references something related but different: "these waters were unfathomably deep. Into them had spilled so many lives. The Ramsay'; the children's; and all sorts of waifs and things besides. A washerwoman with her basket; a rook, a red-hot poker; the purples and grey-greens of flowers: some common feeling held the whole" (TL 286). Lily's adoption of Mrs. Ramsay's metaphor makes clear that these waters are constant, including separate components that can change. These components, be it members of a family or a flower, are nonetheless connected not only by the waters, but also by a shared feeling. Woolf employs both senses of the "deeps" to tell of different types of subjectivity. Mrs. Ramsay focuses on her unique identity as an individual subject, while striving to foster a common feeling that connects people. It is amusing that the constant-hostess is attracted to this metaphor to think of the individual subject, while the independent woman, Lily Briscoe, thinks of the collective. In both cases, however, the subject is cohesive. Mrs. Ramsay's wedge of darkness has depth and Lily's waters are inclusive of seemingly unrelated elements, but they both function to constitute a singular whole. Woolf emphasizes the similarities in structure between the isolated identity and the collective body by pointing through metaphor to the capacity of the "subject" to contract as well as expand.

The notion of the "common feeling" that Lily evokes should remind us of Mrs. Ramsay's

"community of feeling with other people" that she experiences after her dinner party. For Mrs. Ramsay, this community makes all the components around her appear to flow into "one stream" (TL 170). Without realizing it, Lily is embracing Mrs. Ramsay's logic about how feeling, rather than understanding, is a means of uniting a group. Somehow the whole (be it the stream or the ocean) will carry on even if certain individuals or things fade away. With this, Lily feels "a sense of completeness" that is very much akin to the peace and stability Mrs. Ramsay felt when she found the "thing that mattered."

In fact, we see Lily continue to pursue what sounds very much like this "thing that matters and endures" as she paints. Like Mrs. Ramsay, Lily imagines this thing as being outside a particular moment or event: "It evaded her when she thought of Mrs. Ramsay; it evaded her now when she thought of her picture. Phrases came. Visions came. Beautiful pictures. Beautiful phrases. But what she wished to get hold of was that very jar on the nerves, the thing itself before it has been made anything" (TL 287). The "thing that mattered" is, for Lily, "that very jar of nerves," has the power to move her emotionally. Yet, she is no closer to directly grasping this thing than Mrs. Ramsay was. It is noteworthy that we see this thing underneath many of the moments of connection and beauty in both texts: Mrs. Ramsay feels it when she is content in her current state of being (whether alone or connected to her friends) and Septimus feels it it in the glory of his his visions. As he looks at the beauty of the world around him, he believes that there is a pattern behind the surface of things which reveals the connections between different elements. He believes this awareness or revelation is worthy of a new religion. In all these cases, it is not the surface reality of a party or picture or vision that matters; it is the emotional connection underneath. Lily wants to uncover the center and the fundamental quality of Mrs. Ramsay's power through a painting that will represent a lasting memorial.

Although Lily has stopped imagining Mrs. Ramsay by her side, her final act of completing her

picture unites Mrs. Ramsay, Mr. Ramsay's journey, and the sides of Lily's picture (both left and right) through Lily's new vision. First, Lily learns to accept Mrs. Ramsay's passing through her picture. Woolf makes Mrs. Ramsay's presence manifest: "By some stroke of luck so as to throw an odd-shaped triangular shadow over the step. It altered her composition a little. It was interesting" (TL 299). Although Lily does not recognize the correlation, this shadow looks like the representation of Mrs. Ramsay that she initially painted on her canvas. Lily's interpretation of Mrs. Ramsay replaces the empty spot left by Mrs. Ramsay's absence. In this way, Mrs. Ramsay's absent presence becomes a part of the scene that Lily is painting. The shift serves as a metaphor for letting go of the real past for what Lily wants to take from it. We see this change when again Lily longs for Mrs. Ramsay's return. Instead of simply feeling her old grief, Lily situates her need for Mrs. Ramsay in the context of a new vision: "Mrs. Ramsay — it was part of her perfect goodness — sat there quite simply, in the chair, flicked her needles to and from knitted her reddish-brown stocking, cast her shadow on the step. There she sat" (TL 300). The last sentence embodies how "ordinary" it seems for Mrs. Ramsay to be sitting and posing for her once again. It is a bizarre situation, even more bizarre than when Lily imagines Mrs. Ramsay by her side because now Mrs. Ramsay is simply being. Mrs. Ramsay exists once more as an alone subject, "quite simply," there. In one sense, Mrs. Ramsay's spectral presence fulfills Lily's desire for her to come back in the same way that Evans' ghost does for Septimus. But Lily adds another level of complexity to her vision. Before seeing her, Lily wonders if Mrs. Ramsay is still able to inflict pain upon her. Instead of losing this pain, however, "that too became part of ordinary experience, was on a level with the char, with the table" (TL 300). Effectively, Lily accepts that she will continue to want Mrs. Ramsay, but this knowledge allows her to imagine the woman by her side at peace. Instead of hovering on the verge of returning to life, the way that Septimus imagines Evans, Mrs. Ramsay sits quietly as a contented ghost.

By removing the extraordinary aspect of Mrs. Ramsay's presence, the vision loses its power to hurt Lily. Lily no longer needs to cling to the hope of Mrs. Ramsay's return because she is always already there, as commonplace as a chair or table. Lily faces the permanence of both the loss of Mrs. Ramsay and the value of her memory. Mrs. Ramsay can be with her quietly, without imposing, so that Lily need not forget her to live unimpeded by her influence.

Lily's journey to completing her picture corresponds in time with Mr. Ramsay's trip to the lighthouse. At the start of the novel, he declared categorically that such a journey could not take place. Now her ferries his children James and Cam to the destination, long after James' original impulse has been neglected. Lily feels a strange affinity with Mr. Ramsay as he travels. Lily imagines his voyage as she struggles to push through to the completion of her own work: "'He must have reached it,'... feeling suddenly completely tired out. For the Lighthouse was almost invisible...and the effort of looking at it and the effort of thinking of him landing there, which both seemed to be one and the same effort, had stretched her body and her mind to the utmost" (TL 308). Lily establishes an imaginary connection to Mr. Ramsay and instinctively knows when he arrives at the lighthouse. Woolf's structure supports the connection between the two events by having us see Mr. Ramsay reach the lighthouse and then having Lily guess he arrives immediately afterward in the text. Because the boat is out of sight, Lily's projection has a mystical quality. Looking at the lighthouse and imagining Mr. Ramsay are linked in Lily's mind. In the larger picture of Woolf's treatment of connection, the two ideas do go together. Looking is so often an attempt to understand the subject and one that inspires projection, as we saw with the the crowd and the motor car in Mrs. Dalloway. Since Lily cannot actually view the lighthouse itself, her struggle to perceive the unseeable is like her struggle to imagine the unknowable, Mr. Ramsay's arrival. She feels the fatigue of imagining but also the triumph of connecting: "Whatever she had wanted to give him, when

he left her that morning, she had given him at last" (TL 308-309). Mr. Ramsay has no idea Lily feels this fatigue as she imagines him reaching his destination, but Lily's perception nonetheless is accorded significance in the novel. She also gains an understanding of her painting from this connection to Mr. Ramsay. Her assertion that "It is finished" applies to Mr. Ramsay's journey on the boat, but also anticipates the completion of her picture (and the text as a whole, for that matter). By thinking of Mrs. Ramsay and Mr. Ramsay as she paints, Lily endows her composition with a logic of connection to others.

Lily has only to complete her picture to bring all the pieces of these new connections together. Feeling these links gives her a new way of seeing, literally and metaphorically. Instead of worrying that her picture will not last forever and will only ever be hung in attics, she asks, "But what did it matter?" (TL 310). The implication here is that viewing the picture in the future, or having other people see it, is not what gives Lily pleasure or value in painting. Rather, she looks at the blur of her canvas and "with a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision" (TL 310). Lily's personal growth is at stake in completing the picture and she draws strength from imagined connection in these final moments. When Lily says she has her "vision," we can interpret her statement on multiple levels. Lily's painting operates as a means of accessing a vision of harmony. This vision allows her to connect the sides of her picture[13], but also carries the weight of suggesting how Mr. Ramsay's quest to the lighthouse, and the memory of Mrs. Ramsay, culminate in this moment. Instead of

[13] In her essay, "Painting and Writing: A Symbolic Relation in Virginia Woolf's Works", Chantal Lacourarie describes how Lily's final mark is "visual closure which fuses strewn threads" (79). Lacourarie claims Woolf's other novels also either converge to, or extend out from, a center. For her, Mrs. Dalloway's center is Septimus and Clarissa, while Jacob's lack of definitive presence haunts Jacob's Room from the emptiness within his vacant room (where, in Clarissa's metaphor, his subject should reside). Lily's line at the center of her painting is a way of filling the central absence she initially felt after losing Mrs. Ramsay, one of the central figures in her life. In Lacourarie's analysis, the obsession to retrieve the form within the center is inherent in Post-Impressionist painting.

attempting to understand Mrs. Ramsay, Lily can instead simply enjoy her presence and see her as inherently a part of things. Once she lets go of trying to comprehend the thing that matters, Lily can achieve the balance of connecting all these elements together and simply feel it come together in her vision. Lily initially would turn to Mrs. Ramsay when she wanted someone to justify her way of seeing the world. Here, we see Lily coming into her own and having the confidence to stand behind her own perspective as an artist and as a person. Lily too wanted to gain intimacy with Mrs. Ramsay. Often she felt frustrated in her lack of access to the older woman. Now, although dead, Mrs. Ramsay is with Lily like never before.

Lily believes that her way of seeing the dead at one with the living is a painterly quality, yet we see this type of looking in some of Woolf's conventionally unartistic characters. All of them see in "visions," if you will. Lily, as she says, "has her vision" as she looks at her picture. Septimus' insane visions cause him to see the beauty of life and to summon the dead. Mrs. Ramsay even has her sense of stability as she imagines her life extending onwards after her party. We have already examined Clarissa Dalloway's theory of her multiplicity, suggesting that she too sees connections between herself and others entities as she looks at the world. In fact, Clarissa's sense that she is "part" of the things from her past and present, as well as people she both knows and has not met, is similar to Lily's sense of the subject as immersed in waters that are "unfathomably deep." "Into them had spilled so many lives. The Ramsay'; the children's; and all sorts of waifs and things besides… some common feeling held the whole" (TL 286). Lily imagines a singular entity, the waters, to be holding all the lives of the people she knows, while Clarissa imagines her self as persisting beyond her lifespan within all these different things. They may have differing senses of the subject as part of a singular or multifaceted structure, yet all suggest that there is some watery substance holding all the elements together. For Lily, it is the water

and “common feeling.” For Clarissa it is, “like a mist between the people she knew” (MD 8). Lily and Mrs. Ramsay’s use of “unfathomably deep” water metaphors suggests a wholeness, even as Lily’s painting has many sections but forms a singular composition. In contrast, Clarissa’s philosophy on her multiplicity rejects a sense of singularity, yet her words synthesize the two approaches of Lily and Mrs. Ramsay’s reflections about the water. As we have stated, Lily’s interpretation brings seemingly unlinked elements together, while Mrs. Ramsay deals with the depth of the subject. Clarissa considers the belief that she would survive in all the things and people she has known is her means of finding preservation and permanence for her subject. Life is still at the center of constant change, so Clarissa asks, “did it not become consoling to believe that death ended absolutely?” (MD 8). We can ask: how does this paradox of the problem of death for the human subject shape Mrs. Dalloway’s resolution?

IV: Clarissa, Septimus, an Old Lady, and Those She Loves

We should recognize the dissimilarities in how Septimus and Lily face death compared to Clarissa's experience. In each of the previous cases, the person was facing the loss of someone close to them. For Septimus, it was a beloved companion and for Lily it was a motherly guide. Lily and Septimus summon their visions of these dead figures because they cannot imagine life without them. But Septimus is a stranger to Clarissa and the only things that she knows about him is that he was in the war and he commits suicide on the day of her party. They never interact directly with each other or hear of each other before Septimus' demise. Clarissa does not lose Septimus, but she experiences the loss of other people closer to her. Clarissa lets go of her two lovers, Sally Seton and Peter Walsh, in order to marry the respectable and reliable Richard Dalloway. As a mother, Clarissa feels her daughter growing distant as she becomes her own person in adulthood. Perhaps most importantly to Clarissa, she has lost the life she cherished in her youth when her loves were still fresh. Although Clarissa does not attempt to summon Peter or Sally back, we see Clarissa returning to her memories of them from the first page of the novel to the last. The death of Septimus represents for Clarissa not personal loss, but of the death that faces herself and everyone she has loved. It also reminds her of the way her life could have been.

Woolf constructs paralleled journeys for Lily Briscoe and Mr. Ramsay in the final section of To the Lighthouse, so too she constructs dialectical tension between the lives of Clarissa and Septimus. After Septimus leaps to his death and Rezia is sedated and begins to lose consciousness:

> She saw the large outline of his body dark against the window. So that was Dr. Holmes.
>
> One of the triumphs of civilization, Peter Walsh thought...as the light bell of the ambulance sounded (MD 169).

Rezia sees Holmes and the "treatment" that he represents as a form of darkness, as he stands before the

the window that grants Septimus his freedom. Peter Walsh, a member of Clarissa's social order, at the same moment listens with satisfaction to the ambulance siren thinking of the "triumph of civilization." By placing these words in juxtaposition to Rezia's vision, Woolf twists them to become bitterly ironic. Yes, the ambulance is an harbinger of the modern just as Holmes is, but both attempt to hide away and handle the invisible problems of society, at least in cases like Septimus' suicide. By showing the same space of London through the eyes of the sane and the insane, Woolf causes us to examine the uncomfortable closeness between them. As we will see in Clarissa's reflections over Septimus' death, she is not so different from the insane, dead man she imagines with wonder, sympathy, and even satisfaction.

In the previous two scenarios we have looked at, Septimus' loss and Lily's mourning, both characters attempt to stave off the passing of one person by replacing him or her with a living secondary substitute. When Clarissa hears of Septimus' untimely death, she withdraws from the party to a small room to be alone with her thoughts. Her observations of an old woman in a building across the way act as a counterweight to thinking about Septimus, enhancing her understanding of the interconnectedness of the world. She looks through the curtains of her own room and thinks, "Oh, but how surprising! – in the room opposite the old lady stared straight at her!" (MD 209). Clarissa feels a jolting reminder of other people's existence. Just as Clarissa did earlier in the text, she imagines selfhood in relation to "a room of one's own." This old woman has the capacity to turn the power of the gaze back on Clarissa. This moment reminds us that Clarissa shares the world of space and time with other people, but that people, like rooms, are inherently separate. Clarissa hears the noises of her party still going on, yet she lingers apart watching this old woman alone in her room, about to go to bed. By simply looking, Clarissa can see through this (literal and metaphorical) window into another person's life.

The simple act of looking has the power emotionally to satisfy Clarissa's desire to bypass the gap between people. As Clarissa's double, Septimus has a parallel opportunity to connect with an unknown observer before his death, but he ignores it. Just before Septimus jumps he sees, "coming down the staircase opposite and old man stopped and stared at him" (MD 168). In both cases, the starring elder may represent a version of their future selves, but Clarissa meets the stare of the other, while Septimus turns away. In addition to contemplating the life of someone else, Clarissa compares the contrasting versions of life she sees: "It was fascinating, with people still laughing and shouting in the drawing-room, to watch that old woman, quite quietly, going to bed alone" (MD 210). These lines have several implications in terms of Woolf's ideas about connection. Clarissa is able to contemplate the two aspects of experience we have been looking at: being alone with the silence and being with others and communicating. One is vibrant, but raucous; the other quiet, but isolated. Clarissa does not reject either, but finds it strange that both can occur at the same time, so close to each other. Woolf emphasizes the connectedness of these experiences by summoning the sound of Big Ben chiming at the hour as Clarissa thinks, emphasizing how all of these events share the same time and even the same sounds for a moment. Her "fascination" with seeing another woman prepare for sleep while at she herself conducts a party should remind us of Woolf's sentiment in "A Mark on the Wall:" people (including novelists) use other people as mirrors to reflect back images of themselves. Instead of simply seeing a reflection of herself, however, Clarissa also uses this woman as a window into which she gazes upon a parallel way of life, just as we will see her with thoughts of Septimus.

Like the other characters we have seen, Clarissa is fundamentally curious about how life and death coincide. Her immediate response to hearing about the suicide of Septimus Warren Smith is: "Oh!...in the middle of my party, here's death" (MD 207). The context in which Clarissa faces death, a

social event, differs from Septimus' and Lily's moments of vision. Because this recognition takes place in the context of her party, she can think about how death fits into the multiplicity of states that are around her: that of the energetic interactions of party-goers, that of the alone woman, and that of the deceased. Clarissa, like Mrs. Ramsay, creates her party with the intention of bringing people together, but death seems to stand in opposition of her efforts. When Clarissa does think about Septimus' death, she assumes oddly a sense of responsibility: "Somehow it was her disaster – her disgrace. It was her punishment to see sink and disappear here a man, there a woman, in this profound darkness, and she forced to stand here in her evening dress" (MD 209). Clarissa feels guilt over the deaths of people she imagines: Why? Clarissa describes herself as a passive agent "forced to stand here", and a helpless observer to Septimus' death. Notably, Clarissa's reference to her dress is a subtle jab at the superficiality of high-class society. Clarissa has a role to play, looking beautiful and exchanging pleasantries in an effort to create connection, but human beings "sink and disappear" around her. The passage continues with Clarissa admitting how she cares about the petty vanities of her comfortable life, like wanting to go to Lady Bexborough's lunch (MD 209). Clarissa enjoys the splendor of her parties, but suggests her discomfort at the knowledge that outcasts of society suffer. Their suffering does not have a place in her world of surfaces. By calling it her punishment to live while others die, Clarissa's suggests a kinship, and perhaps even vicarious identification with the people like Septimus who fall into the darkness.

But how can Clarissa possibly have any connection to Septimus? Even though they are strangers to one another, Clarissa has a vision of Septimus' suicide: "Her dress flamed, her body burnt. He had thrown himself from a window. Up had flashed the ground; through him, blundering, bruising, went rusty spikes. There he lay with a thud, thud, thud in his brain, and then a suffocation of blackness.

So she saw it" (MD 207-208). Her vision of the scene is visceral. Clarissa physically responds to imagining Septimus' death, although she does note that this "always" happens to her when she hears of an "accident." We do not have details of what happens to Septimus' body after his fall to compare to Clarissa's version, but it is uncanny that Clarissa correctly assumes that Septimus jumped through a window. Because Woolf does not give us easy proof that Septimus' death is indeed identical to Clarissa's vision, it is up to us as readers to decide how connected Clarissa is to Septimus and how much she simply invents.

Clarissa's own fears over life give her reason to feel connected to someone who jumps out a window: "there was the terror; the overwhelming incapacity, one's parents giving it into one's hands, this life, to be lived to the end, to be walked with serenely; there was in the depths of her heart an awful fear. Even now, quite often if Richard had not been there reading the *Times*…she must have perished" (MD 208-209). We should remember that unlike Mrs. Ramsay and Septimus, Clarissa feels social pressure even when she is alone. Perhaps it is not surprising then that she views life as one big expectation: an obligation entrusted to one by their parents at birth, a performance one must enact to the end with grace. In the face of this pressure, Clarissa feels an "overwhelming incapacity" in herself to be "serene" all the time. Clarissa is not insane, but this pressure from society to act a certain way afflicts her just as it afflicts Septimus. Clarissa's spouse, Richard, manages to ground her in the comforts of mundane life. Septimus has Rezia, but he still cannot stand up against the pressure of the doctors who try to control him in their attempts to "protect" society. Clarissa and Septimus are strangers, but they suffer under the same societal forces, albeit from different positions. As an upper-class woman, Clarissa is expected to conform to the "party dress" culture, while Septimus is from a lower class and experiences himself to be a failure as a man because of his insanity.

Clarissa continues eerily to relate to Septimus' problems with society by also rejecting one of his doctors, Sir William Bradshaw. Clarissa accurately imagines that Septimus met with Bradshaw whom she too finds to be abhorrent: "a great doctor, yet to her obscurely evil...forcing your soul...might he [Septimus] not have said (indeed she felt it now), Life is made intolerable; they make life intolerable, men like that?" (MD 208). Clarissa finds Bradshaw's domination over other people's "souls" to be repulsive and vile. Septimus, she thinks, perhaps refused to live under such a man's terms and instead took the only way out he could see. Once again, Clarissa hits upon Septimus' logic, although he also regrets letting go of the other aspects of life he has enjoyed. Yet Clarissa is still alive; indeed, she "has never been so happy" as she is during this moment (MD 209). Although she rejects the way that the repressive regimes of culture manifested in Bradshaw and Holmes distort or crush the "alone subject" in its unique particularity, Clarissa is glad that she has managed to "escape' through holding onto Richard.

Clarissa finds meaning in Septimus' death and comes to a radical conclusion: she feels "glad he had done it" (MD 210). Clarissa claims that in life, "a thing was there that mattered; a thing, wreathed about with chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, let drop every day in corruption, lies, chatter. This he had preserved" (MD 208). We have already encountered the phrase "the thing that mattered" from Mrs. Ramsay, along with Lily's variation of the term. Mrs. Ramsay senses how chatter obscures "the thing that mattered" and considers it a part of her dinner party (TL 169). Lily expands the definition of this thing as something akin to emotional energy before it is "made into something" like an image (TL 287). But for Clarissa, "the thing that mattered" exists in people, not images or events. For her, it is a thing that her life already contains, but is "let drop" as she engages superficial behaviors like gossip and entertaining. The more one lives, the more one taints this fundamental thing with superficialities of society. Clarissa interprets Septimus' suicide as a refusal to allow further distortion of this thing: his

death preserves this inherent component of the subject. Bradshaw orders a sense of "proportion," in opposition "death was defiance" (MD 208). That is why poets and thinkers, even insane ones like Septimus, are so threatening to the Bradshaws of the world. Clarissa sees Septimus not as a victim who deserves pity, but as a preserver of this important truth of life. Woolf draws parallels between Clarissa's conception of Septimus' death and his last actual thoughts. Just before Septimus jumps out the window, he refuses to consider his life as a tragedy (the way that Bradshaw and Holmes will interpret it) (MD 168). He sees himself not as a lost soul who could not be saved. Clarissa's interpretation expands his sentiments, claiming that the suicide is not an empty loss, but a meaningful gesture striking back against unfair social laws.

Septimus' gesture bridges the gap between aloneness and connection, the main focus of our inquiry. Clarissa describes this reconciliation: "Death was an attempt to communicate, people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded; one was alone. There was an embrace in death" (MD 208). Clarissa's words operate on two levels: they apply to being alone and to being connected. Like Lily attempting to understand Mrs. Ramsay when she touches her knee, one can attempt to understand the center, or subjective consciousness, of someone else, but fail. The inability to gain the connection one seeks can be devastating and the walls of isolation between the subject and others can become a prison. Clarissa's words suggest such people see death as a reconciliation between their own aloneness and the "thing that mattered," one's "treasure." Septimus claims that those near death are alone. Dying is then simply a means of making this isolation absolute. Yet, we also saw Septimus die and remain connected to Rezia, just as other characters continue to cherish relationships with the dead. Looking at Clarissa's words again, we can read them actually to suggest the possibility of connection through the communication represented by

death. The people who remember the dead can see life more clearly because of communications from the grave. As we have seen, death also allows these people to imagine reunions with the ones they love. Although these visions emanate from their own minds, making an imperfect ghost of the lost person, it is through reinterpreting the dead that that the living can embrace the people they have lost. Lily and Clarissa can imagine the dead spirits not as enemies, but as friends. Death is a permanent state of being, but it can create connection between subjects and even gives meaning to the lives of those who remain behind in this world.

The ways the subject deals with aloneness and connection in the face of life and death point to fundamental issues of how attachments bring both meaning and restriction into one's life. When Septimus jumps to his death, he is taking back agency to defend his way of being and seeing, even though the only way to do so is to take his life before someone else can force him to change. The fact that Rezia supports him does not negate the fact that his jump is fundamentally an independent, solitary act, but it does reveal how bonds coexists with the state of being alone. The way that Clarissa interprets Septimus' death gives it additional meaning, and resolves the final element of what his death may be attempting to communicate. His strange partnership with Clarissa reveals how death gives value to life, just as the collective emphasizes the value of the singular subject. Septimus' suicide would be meaningless if he already lived in total isolation, but his relation to society turns his death into a rebellious gesture against the frivolous society that Clarissa criticizes, but loves to be a part of. She proposes that his life has meaning by comparing their fates. Yet, with his completed the gesture of defiance, Clarissa feels an answering sense of "disgrace." Clarissa "felt somehow very much like him – the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away while they went on living" (MD 210). Because Clarissa claims that she too has barely escaped drowning under the expectations of life if not

for Richard, we can wonder if Clarissa may have contemplated this act for herself if not for Septimus. She is happy to live, but she is also glad that he sent a message with his death in defiance of social rules. It is worth noting that Clarissa still notes the distance between herself, who can "feel like" Septimus, but is still very much alive and enjoying her life[14]. Believing that Septimus' death was an act of defiance, Clarissa can enjoy the culture she criticizes: "She had never been so happy" (MD 209). The text's title, Mrs. Dalloway, reflects that the book is primarily about Clarissa. Although Septimus is in some sense Clarissa's double, his function in the text allows her to embrace life within society, to pull her multifaceted self together into a singular point, step out, and bring together people like Peter and Sally, Richard and Elizabeth. Death and its aloneness, paradoxically, support life and connection. Ironically, each feed the systems that negate one another: death oppressing life, society oppressing the individual.

[14] Karen Smyth looks at the role of distance in what she deems Woolf's "fiction-elegy" in "Virginia Woolf's Elegiac Enterprise." Although earlier parts of Mrs. Dalloway let us see into Septimus' life, we too have distance from Septimus' death as readers. When talking about Jacob's Room, Smythe claims that distance from Jacob allows readers to "transfer meaning from the text to his/her own realm of experience" (66). Now Jacob, like Percival from The Waves, is an unseen character, so it is much easier for readers to "transfer meaning" onto them. Yet, we see Clarissa undergo this process of transferring meaning with her interpretation of Septimus' death at the end of the novel. Reading Clarissa's response provides us with both an interpretation and an additional layer of separation to Septimus' suicide. Should we want to, this additional layer of separation is helpful for developing our own interpretation.

Conclusion

In this project, I have studied Virginia Woolf's exploration of connection and relationships in Mrs. Dalloway and To the Lighthouse. Both texts describe the world as a series of interrelations. Although we can believe that these connections are solely the creation of the subject's perspective, the way that Woolf interweaves the lives and thoughts of different characters suggests that the "alone subject" is far more than an isolated entity in a room. Woolf writes candidly on the matter of connection in her retrospective text "A Sketch of the Past": "I reach what I might call a philosophy; at any rate it is a constant idea of mine; that behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern; that we—I mean all human beings—are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of this work of art" (MB 72). The notion of the "cotton wool" relates to moments of "non-being" that Woolf speaks of earlier, which are times when she is not paying much attention to the mundane activities of daily life (MB 70). In other words, Virginia Woolf claims that she has a philosophy of sorts that states that human beings are all connected and part of a hidden pattern that makes the entire world into a singular work of art. In this way, the collective parallels the everyday, commonplace experiences of the subject, which all help to constitute this larger work of art. Woolf writes additionally about a central idea of connection that influences her: "There is a pattern hid behind the cotton wool. And this conception affects me every day...I feel that by writing I am doing what is far more necessary than anything else" (MB 73). Here, Woolf strongly implies that her conception of the hidden pattern is entrenched in her perspective and is a part of her writing. It is this belief in connection that gives Woolf faith that her writing is important because in it she is able to explore the intricacies of these connection within and beyond the subject.

In writing of Clarissa's theory of connection, which overlaps with her own, Woolf employs a telling metaphor. Clarissa's friends are people "who lifted her on their branches as she had seen the

trees lift the mist" (MD 8). Woolf's evocation of trees in this passage reflects a sense of interconnectivity: all the branches spread out in different directions, each with leaves that flutter in the wind. Yet, these leaves and branches all stem back to the same, singular trunk. It is fitting that Clarissa often imagines herself as part of the "trees at home." In one of his visions, Septimus too imagines himself as connected to the leaves and branches of an elm tree, as if he too lives by responding to all the nuances of these invisible connections. When Rezia feels her power she is likened to a flowering tree of beauty and love that can break through her husband's isolation of insanity by supporting him. After her party, Mrs. Ramsay uses an elm tree to stabilize her sense of identity, noting that her world is about to change but the tree is still. This sense of connection, transformed but maintained in the symbol of trees, represents how the network between people is both ephemeral and lasting, part of a singular work of art. The fusion of trees with Woolf's conception of connection manifest is made in Lily's final brush stroke on her picture: It brings her ties to the dead Mrs. Ramsay, the living Mr. Ramsay, and her vision together in one action as she paints a line down the center of her canvas. This line, as Lily anticipates at the dinner party, represents the tree she sees before her.[15] In creating actual works of art, Woolf can emulate the pattern she sees in the world and use writing as a form of imagining the connections that hold it all together.

[15] I did not come up with this idea myself. Jane Goldman presents, and actually counteracts this conception of the line as tree in her book The Feminist Aesthetics of Virginia Woolf. There, Goldman writes that "the tree has vanished" (171). However, I argue that even though Lily does not describe her final line as the tree, she fulfills the ultimate promise of her idea. We heard Lily thoughts to solve her compositional problems by putting the tree in the center at Mrs. Ramsay's dinner party. Lily's final brushstroke contains the unifying spirit that Lily associates with the tree at the party, regardless of how the the mark looks on the canvas.

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