THE FACT AND THE VISION: VIRGINIA WOOLF AND ROGER FRY'S POST-IMPRESSIONIST AESTHETIC

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Virginia Woolf considered Tolstoy the perfect novelist, for he had the ability, she believed, to combine the facts of surface reality with his vision of an inner reality in such a way that the reader shares his spiritual experience. This critical judgment is in accord with the aesthetic philosophy which emerges from the critical essays and reviews written by Virginia Woolf between 1905 and 1941. That philosophy assumes the existence of two realities, an inner and an outer; in order to conform to that philosophy in his writing, the novelist, Mrs. Woolf contends, must attempt to convey through the form of his novel the vision of the inner reality which he has experienced in moments of spiritual apprehension.

In 1910 Roger Fry brought an exhibition of Post-Impressionist painting to London. In that painting he believed he had found a return to formal design which he considered lacking in the work of the Impressionists; he believed that in the Post-Impressionists' works the reality beneath appearance was conveyed through the design. Fry formulated an aesthetic which is based upon the works of the Post-Impressionists and which functions most satisfactorily in art criticism as an explanation of their work. The similarity between Fry's

Post-Impressionist aesthetic and Mrs. Woolf's aesthetic philosophy is striking, and even more notable is a similarity in formulation and articulation of their critical ideas. Roger Fry and Virginia Woolf were close friends, and in close personal and intellectual contact during their years of friendship between 1909 and Fry's death in 1934. Since Fry was the elder of the two and since his basic aesthetic was formulated before Mrs. Woolf published her first novel in 1915, the assertion has often been made that Roger Fry influenced Virginia Woolf; yet no extensive investigation of the subject has been undertaken.

This dissertation attempts to explore the nature and significance of the intellectual relationship between Roger Fry and Virginia Woolf in order to determine what impact that relationship had upon the formulation of Mrs. Woolf's theory of fiction and her practice as a writer. It is divided into three parts. Part I presents a statement of the background in literary history for a comparison between the works and ideas of Roger Fry and Virginia Woolf; a brief biography of Fry with emphasis upon his place historically in art criticism, particularly with respect to his commitment to the Post-Impressionists; and an attempt to offer a systematic statement of Fry's aesthetic theories. Part II deals with Mrs. Woolf's theory of fiction generally and with her application of that theory both in her criticism of her fellow novelists and in the writing of her own works. Part III explores the impact which methods of the Post-Impressionists, as expounded by Fry,

and Fry's aesthetic theory had upon Mrs. Woolf's fictional works. In this part detailed studies are made of "The Sun and the Fish," "The Lady in the Looking-Glass," and portions of Jacob's Room, Mrs. Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The Waves, and The Years.

Although no one has doubted Virginia Woolf's dedication to the perfection of her art and her willingness to experiment to find the best method of expression, it becomes evident as this study progresses that it is Mrs. Woolf's aesthetic philosophy which directs her experimentation, her development, and ultimately her achievement as a novelist. To the extent that Roger Fry helped to shape that aesthetic philosophy, he affected her work as a practicing writer of fiction, and in the light of her aesthetic philosophy, many of her works of fiction are illuminated.

To

C. L. P.

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INTRODUCTION

The significance of the intellectual relationship between Virginia Woolf and Roger Fry first interested me when I was struck, in reading the essays and diary of Mrs. Woolf, by a similarity between her critical vocabulary and that of Roger Fry, particularly with regard to the words "vision" and "design." Fry's use of these words was not an innovation in the history of art criticism, nor was it surprising that Mrs. Woolf should find them helpful in articulating her theory of fiction, for critics have frequently called upon "vision" and "design" in attempts to describe certain aspects of the process of artistic creation. Roger Fry, however, gave to those two words, which form the title of a collection of his essays published in 1920, a meaning, although neither new nor unique, which is integral to the expression of his aesthetic theories. Both Virginia Woolf's use of these words and her close friendship with Roger Fry suggested the possibility of common acceptance of certain aesthetic principles. I soon discovered that other students and admirers of Virginia Woolf's works had also noticed a similarity in thought and articulation between Mrs. Woolf and Roger Fry, but that although several critics had even asserted a belief that Roger Fry influenced Mrs. Woolf, none had brought together sufficient evidence to support his

assertion. I also discovered that the detailed and systematic studies of the aesthetic theories of both Roger Fry and Virginia Woolf which would have to be compared in order to draw any valid conclusions about either 1. the extent to which Roger Fry and Virginia Woolf shared common aesthetic philosophies, or 2. the extent to which Mrs. Woolf's work as a writer of fiction was affected by her friendship with Fry, had not been made. I thus undertook the writing of this dissertation which has as its purpose to explore the nature of the intellectual relationship between Roger Fry and Virginia Woolf and the significance of that relationship for our understanding of Virginia Woolf's practice as a writer of fiction.

This study consists of three parts. Part I deals essentially with Roger Fry and is divided into three chapters which present 1. the background in literary history for a comparison between the works of Roger Fry and Virginia Woolf; 2. a brief biography of Roger Fry and a discussion of his place historically in art criticism, particularly with respect to his commitment to the Post-Impressionist painters; and 3. an attempt to offer a systematic statement of his aesthetic theories. Part II is concerned with Virginia Woolf's theory of fiction and is composed of four chapters which consider 1. the general theoretical attitudes expressed in her essays; 2. her critical attitudes as they are revealed in her criticism of fellow writers; 3. her critical responses to her own work as they are revealed in her diary; and 4. a comparison of the theories of Roger Fry and Virginia Woolf as

they are summarized in Parts I and II. My purpose in these first two parts has been to determine exactly what the theories of Roger Fry and Virginia Woolf are and to order those theories into whatever systems have emerged naturally from them. I have considered it my task not to pass judgment upon the ideas of Fry and Mrs. Woolf, but to present those ideas in such a way that some conclusions about the relations between them can be drawn. My accounts are thus detailed, descriptive summaries which I consider capable of valid comparison. In my work with the criticism I have attempted to be objective, approaching Roger Fry's and Virginia Woolf's statements of theory as much as possible without preconception and criticizing their ideas only when I have felt it necessary for the purpose of clarification. In Part III I use the results from the comparison to determine the impact of Mrs. Woolf's intellectual relationship with Fry upon her practice as a writer by analyzing a selection of her fiction. This part consists of a brief chapter dealing with transferences from the visual arts to literary art made by Mrs. Woolf and detailed analyses of the two short works "The Sun and the Fish" and "The Lady in the Looking-Glass," and portions of the novels Jacob's Room, Mrs. Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The Waves, and The Years.

This dissertation has naturally been beset by the problems which develop whenever one attempts to isolate historically important figures from their intellectual milieu. Underlying the works and ideas of both Roger Fry and Virginia Woolf are the assumptions that art is of great importance in

determining the quality of life one leads and that the practicing artist ought to devote himself relentlessly to the perfection of his skill. Both assumptions, which were given impetus by the aesthetic movement, have their foundation in the Romantic period,[1] particularly in the Romantic emphasis upon the importance of the poetic imagination and the poet's sensibility. Both assumptions were accepted by most serious artists at the turn of the century, especially those for whom the efforts of Flaubert and of the Symbolist poets in France provided examples of what could be achieved by the conscious artist who was willing to devote his life to his art. Roger Fry and Virginia Woolf emphasize above all else the artist's personal response to objective reality and his search for the proper means of conveying an inner reality which he perceives intuitively and feels compelled to express. This common preoccupation with subjective and objective reality and the nature of the artist's relationship with reality is not an unique phenomenon, nor is their preoccupation with the particular moment of spiritual apprehension which the artist attempts to convey through his work. Similar ideas and concerns occur in the critical statements and works of Joyce, Eliot, Yeats, Lawrence, the Imagists, indeed in all of those writers whom we

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[1]Frank Kermode's The Romantic Image (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1957), in tracing the influence upon literature of the concepts of the isolated artist and the supernatural Image from the Romantic period to Modern Literature, presents one of the most lucid discussions to date of the developments and forces which shaped the intellectual milieu of the early twentieth century.

would label "spiritualist" as opposed to "materialist," availing ourselves of the distinction provided by Mrs. Woolf in her essay "Modern Fiction." Indeed, the ideas which Mrs. Woolf and Roger Fry share in common with their contemporaries could constitute a complete study by itself.

This present study is concerned essentially not with what is original with Roger Fry and Virginia Woolf, but with what they share in common intellectually. What is finally most important is what it can tell us about Virginia Woolf and her work. Although no one has doubted Mrs. Woolf's dedication to the perfection of her art and her willingness to experiment to find the best method of expression, it becomes evident as the present study progresses that it is Mrs. Woolf's aesthetic philosophy which directs her experimentation, her development, and ultimately her achievement as a novelist. To the extent that Roger Fry helped to shape that aesthetic philosophy, he affected her work as a practicing writer of fiction, and in the light of her aesthetic philosophy, her purposes in many of her works of fiction are illuminated.

PART I

ROGER FRY AND HIS AESTHETIC THEORY

CHAPTER I

ROGER FRY AND VIRGINIA WOOLF: THE RELATIONSHIP

A small group of friends who shared a Cambridge intellectual background began to form in 1904, gathering during the evening at the Bloomsbury home of the children of Leslie Stephen--Virginia, Vanessa, Thoby, and Adrian. This circle of friends eventually came to be called "the Bloomsbury Group," a label bestowed after its members began to be famous.[1] In 1909-10 Roger Fry, an art critic who had studied at Cambridge in the 1880's, made acquaintances within the group. It was then that the friendship between Roger Fry and the most distinguished female member of the Bloomsbury Group, Virginia Stephen Woolf, began to develop.

At that time Virginia Woolf had begun writing her first novel, The Voyage Out, which she did not complete for publication until 1915.[2] Roger Fry was an acknowledged art critic with an international reputation, and he was engaged

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[1]For accounts of the Bloomsbury Group, its formation and membership, see Leonard Woolf, Beginning Again: An Autobiography of the Years 1911-1918 (London: The Hogarth Press, 1965), pp. 21-26 and Desmond MacCarthy, Memories (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1953), pp. 172-73.

[2]See Aileen Pippett, The Moth and the Star: A Biography of Virginia Woolf (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1953), p. 65.

in bringing the first Post-Impressionist exhibition to London. Although the personal relationships within the Bloomsbury Group, which has frequently been attacked for the intimacy shared by its members, were very important for both Roger Fry and Virginia Woolf, when one reviews the intellectual scene in London around 1910 and that of the decade which followed, it is impossible to consider either as isolated from the currents of the day. Roger Fry's falling-out with Wyndham Lewis at the Omega Workshops was too widely publicized by Lewis[3] for us to doubt that both Fry and Mrs. Woolf were aware of Lewis, his followers, and their activities. Ezra Pound had arrived in London in 1908, and he "quickly made contact with the few figures in contemporary art and letters whom he could respect--W. B. Yeats, Wyndham Lewis, then just emerging as a self-styled Vorticist, and the belligerent philosopher T. E. Hulme."[4] From Pound's friendship with Hulme and his close work with Richard Aldington, H. D. (Hilda Doolittle), and F. S. Flint, in particular, emerged the Imagist movement in poetry. Pound and the Imagists certainly influenced the young T. S. Eliot, and it was the Hogarth Press of Leonard and Virginia Woolf that published the first edition of Eliot's The Waste Land.[5] Also, the interests of the Imagist poets in the verbal

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[3]The "Round-Robin" letter circulated by Lewis in which he states his accusations against Fry is published in W. K. Rose (ed.), The Letters of Wyndham Lewis (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1963), pp. 49-50.

[4]Herbert Read, The Tenth Muse (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957), p. 261.

[5]See L. Woolf, Beginning Again, p. 245.

expression of the visual and in the image as a moment of revealed truth are not at all incompatible with the interests of both Fry and Mrs. Woolf. Roger Fry sent Harriet Shaw Weaver to the Woolfs with the manuscript of Joyce's Ulysses.[6] Although the Hogarth Press declined to publish the novel, the Woolfs had an opportunity to become acquainted with Joyce's experiments in fiction much earlier than the general public. Further, T. S. Eliot, who was exceedingly enthusiastic about Joyce's accomplishments, shared that enthusiasm with Mrs. Woolf on his visits to the Woolf home.[7] Virginia Woolf's interests and associations were not only literary and social. She wrote articles and gave speeches in support of the movement for women's rights, and Leonard Woolf was an active member of the Fabian Society. Roger Fry, in addition to arranging the two Post-Impressionist exhibitions in London and starting the Omega Workshops, was working with young painters, helping them to exhibit their works, and was also giving lectures all over England. Both he and Mrs. Woolf were frequent contributers to the periodicals of the day, writing reviews and critical articles. Thus, when one elects to study the relationship between just these two people, Roger Fry and Virginia Woolf, one is isolating them from a large realm of relationships and activities and focusing on a very minute aspect of their experience.

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[6]See Virginia Woolf, A Writer's Diary (London: The Hogarth Press, 1959), p. 363.

[7]See V. Woolf, A Writer's Diary, pp. 28, 47, 50-51.

Yet to do this is not at all unreasonable. In her "Preface" to Orlando, Virginia Woolf acknowledges that "to the unrivalled sympathy and imagination of Mr. Roger Fry I owe whatever understanding of the art of painting I may possess."[8] After Fry's death, in 1935, Mrs. Woolf was called upon to give the opening address for the Roger Fry Memorial Exhibition of the Bristol Museum and Art Gallery. In that address she states her conviction that many shared with her the discovery Fry brought to her life, the enjoyment of looking at pictures:

> Pictures were to many of us--if I may generalise--things that hung upon walls; silent inscrutable patterns; treasure houses with locked doors in front of which learned people would stop, and about which they would lecture. . . . And we would trail behind them, silent, servile, and bored. Then all of a sudden those dim pictures began to flash with light and colour; and our guides, those respectable professors, began to argue and to quarrel, . . . and altogether began to behave like living people arguing about something of vital importance. What had happened? . . . It was that Roger Fry had gathered together the Post-Impressionist Exhibition in Dover Street.[9]

Fry also, Mrs. Woolf maintains, helped his audience to see and to enjoy those pictures he placed before them by bringing "to the surface in new and startling revelation those qualities that lie deep sunk in pictures so that . . . [they] saw them afresh."[10] The impact of this new awakening in the visual arts

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[8]Virginia Woolf, Orlando: A Biography (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1928), p. vii.

[9]Virginia Woolf, "Roger Fry," The Moment and Other Essays (London: The Hogarth Press, 1964), p. 83. This essay, like many written by Virginia Woolf, was first published in a periodical. See the "Appendix" for information regarding the publication history of Mrs. Woolf's essays and books mentioned in the text.

[10]Ibid., p. 84.

was felt everywhere, Mrs. Woolf believes, even by writers; and in an essay, "Pictures," written in 1925, she states her conviction that "were all modern paintings to be destroyed, a critic of the twenty-fifth century would be able to deduce from the works of Proust alone the existence of Matisse, Cézanne, Derain and Picasso."[11] That critic would know "with those books before him that painters of the highest originality and power must be covering canvas after canvas, squeezing tube after tube, in the room next door."[12]

Mrs. Woolf's stated indebtedness to Fry for her understanding and appreciation of painting, her acceptance of a relationship between the visual and the literary arts, her role as Fry's biographer,[13] and their common membership in the small, insulated group of Bloomsbury intellectuals has led to a linking of their names by numerous critics. As early as 1942, David Daiches, in his study Virginia Woolf, observes that Mrs. Woolf "was very much in sympathy with Roger Fry's views on art, and keenly appreciative of his personality and character."[14] In 1946, John Hawley Roberts published a short essay in PMLA entitled "'Vision and Design' in Virginia Woolf."[15]

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[11]V. Woolf, "Pictures," The Moment, p. 140.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Virginia Woolf, Roger Fry: A Biography (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., 1940).

[14]David Daiches, Virginia Woolf (Norfolk: New Directions, 1942), pp. 51-52.

[15]John Hawley Roberts, "'Vision and Design' in Virginia Woolf," PMLA, LXI (September, 1946), 835-47.

Hawley's thesis is that Fry's critical ideas were incorporated in Mrs. Woolf's work, and he undertakes the demonstration of that thesis with a study of Mrs. Dalloway and To the Lighthouse. Although Hawley's work is too brief to do more than make an acceptable beginning in the exploration of the relationship between Roger Fry and Virginia Woolf, his essay is the first study to offer convincing proof of Fry's influence upon Mrs. Woolf. Three years later Bernard Blackstone, in Virginia Woolf: A Commentary, asserts that there exists a strong practical relationship between the ideas and works of the two Bloomsbury friends. Not only does Blackstone feel that there are definite similarities between the career of Jacob in Jacob's Room and that of Roger Fry,[16] but also that in "Kew Gardens," Mrs. Woolf is trying to carry out Fry's elaboration of the Post-Impressionists' aims, "'to find an equivalent for life' . . . to express reality rather than appearance."[17]

Even as Blackstone laments the lack of fire and imagination in Mrs. Woolf's biography of Fry, he states his belief both that Fry's friendship "meant a great deal to her as a writer"[18] and that the "interest in painting and its technique, and above all in Post-Impressionism, has made its mark on the writing of the novels."[19] Blackstone does not

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[16]Bernard Blackstone, Virginia Woolf: A Commentary (London: The Hogarth Press, 1949), p. 65. This identification is unusual, for Jacob is compared by most critics with Mrs. Woolf's brother, Thoby, who died in Greece in 1906.

[17]Blackstone, Virginia Woolf, p. 156.

[18]Ibid., p. 193.

[19]Ibid.

explore the implications of his assertions; and Irma Rantavaara, in her monograph Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury, limits herself to noting that "critics have been fond of likening her [Virginia Woolf's] work to pictorial art."[20] J. K. Johnstone, in his book The Bloomsbury Group, attempts the first extensive study of the relationship between "Bloomsbury Aesthetics," as derived from Roger Fry, and the works of Virginia Woolf. Johnstone emphasizes both Fry's interest in literary theory and his subscription to the theories of Charles Mauron, and he relates both to the art of Virginia Woolf.[21] Johnstone's treatment of Roger Fry's ideas and Mrs. Woolf's work is general, and in his anxiety to discover evidence of Fry's influence upon Mrs. Woolf, he selects to discuss, in particular, whatever supports his argument. Further, Johnstone's failure to document his text limits its usefulness for scholars. A more recent study, Serena Sue Hilsinger's unpublished doctoral dissertation, "Insubstantial Pageant: A Reading of Virginia Woolf's Novels,"[22] also explores the influence of Roger Fry upon Mrs. Woolf's work, but Mrs. Hilsinger confines her interest in Fry's ideas to those on civilization which he shared with Clive Bell, and to his theory of "significant form."

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[20]Irma Rantavaara, Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Tiedeakatemian Toimituksia, Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae, 1953), p. 123.

[21]See J. K. Johnstone, The Bloomsbury Group (London: Secker & Warburg, 1954), pp. 58-59.

[22]Serena Sue Hilsinger, "Insubstantial Pageant: A Reading of Virginia Woolf's Novels" (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of English, University of Connecticut, 1964). See particularly pp. 7-8.

Mrs. Hilsinger is aware more specifically than previous critics of elements of Post-Impressionism in Mrs. Woolf's novels, particularly in To the Lighthouse, and brings these to the reader's attention. In 1965 Mark Goldman, in his essay "Virginia Woolf and the Critic as Reader," asserts that Fry's and Bell's concept of "significant form" also underlies Mrs. Woolf's insistence in her critical essays "on the emotional significance of form."[23]

The most forthright assertion of the influence of Roger Fry upon Viriginia Woolf in recent years occurs in Jean Guiguet's excellent comprehensive study Virginia Woolf and Her Works:

> We can see from Virginia Woolf's Roger Fry to what extent the author of The Waves and To the Lighthouse was able to assimilate her friend's aesthetic views; and indeed it must be admitted that she succeeded in transposing into the field of literature the theories of Transformations and Vision and Design.[24]

Guiguet follows this acknowledgment, however, with the following admonition:

> But it would be wrong, in my opinion, to let oneself be impressed by similarities of vocabulary which are, after all, a social phenomenon of a superficial character. It is surely legitimate to assert Virginia Woolf's originality, as well as that of Roger Fry. A similarity of nature and temperament, a similarity of aesthetic and intellectual experience, made even more striking by the fact that they frequently, no doubt, reached their respective positions through the common

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[23]Mark Goldman, "Virginia Woolf and the Critic as Reader," PMLA, LXXX (June, 1965), p. 52.

[24]Jean Guiguet, Virginia Woolf and Her Works, trans. Jean Stewart (London: The Hogarth Press, 1965), p. 52.

> ground of their conversations together, these are phenomena real enough to render pointless any search for 'influences' or for a 'Bloomsbury doctrine.'[25]

Guiguet's warning is made in retrospect with the work of Johnstone particularly in mind; but Johnstone has not been alone in his search for "influence." The obvious similarities between statements made by Roger Fry and Virginia Woolf have led inevitably to assertions of influence. Yet nowhere has a thorough study of the ideas and works of these two Bloomsbury friends been carried out; nowhere have the two been compared with each other except superficially.

The main problem with many studies of "influence" is that the critic begins with an assertion that the influence exists and then proceeds to find evidence to support his assertion, often consciously or unconsciously overlooking evidence which would render his findings dubious. With Roger Fry and Virginia Woolf this is exceedingly easy to do. Their friendship began in 1909,[26] the year before the first Post-Impressionist exhibition. The surge of interest in the visual arts which that exhibition awakened was felt in English intellectual circles, and Mrs. Woolf's intimate acquaintance with Fry increases the probability that she was susceptible to his influence. Mrs. Woolf was, though, a woman of genius with a vigorous intellect, critical acumen, and independent judgment. She began writing reviews for the Times Literary Supplement

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[25] Ibid.

[26] See V. Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 199.

before she met Roger Fry, and she continued to write reviews, essays, and lectures throughout the years of her friendship with him. Although she wrote a few light essays on pictures and exhibitions, the lecture preceding the opening of the memorial exhibition of Fry's works, and Fry's biography, most of her writings deal with literary subjects. Fry's activities were almost entirely devoted to the visual arts, either as analyses of pictures, critical commentaries on exhibitions, or essays in aesthetic philosophy. He touches on literature and literary theory only in Transformations, The Artist and Psychoanalysis, and in his subscription to Charles Mauron's ideas in The Nature of Beauty in Art and Literature which he translated from French into English. The two friends actually ventured seldom into each other's fields formally in print. There is little doubt that, as Guiguet believes, they arrived at many of their ideas through conversation together, but evidence for this is scant. A reading of Mrs. Woolf's published diary reveals how seriously she regarded Fry's criticism and how deeply devoted to him she was;[27] but since none of Fry's letters or personal notes are available in published form, similar evidence is not available for him. But the works of both Roger Fry and Virginia Woolf are available. If there is, indeed, a similarity between the thought of the two, between the theoretical assumptions which each accepts and the practical application of those assumptions by Mrs. Woolf, then surely this will be revealed through a study of their works.

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[27]See A Writer's Diary, pp. 27, 32, 33, 104, 148, 176-77, 223-25, 233, 235, 262, 303, 311, 325-26, 339.

CHAPTER II

ROGER FRY'S LIFE AND INVOLVEMENT WITH THE POST-IMPRESSIONIST PAINTERS

1. Roger Fry

Sir Kenneth Clark states that "so far as taste can be changed by one man, it was changed by Roger Fry."[1] Howard Hannay claims that in 1934, the year of Fry's death, "Roger Fry's position in the English art world was unique, and the only parallel to it is that of Ruskin at the height of his reputation."[2] Yet Fry has not enjoyed the fame which usually accompanies such high praise. Even though his contribution to the cultural life of a nation has had lasting significance, particularly his introduction of the Post-Impressionist painters to England, his work, especially in recent years, is known more by specialists than by the general public. Even less is known about Roger Fry's personal life. It therefore does not seem out of place to begin this study of Fry with a brief biography.

Roger Fry was born December 14, 1866, at Highgate to Quaker parents. His father, Sir Edward Fry, was a lawyer and

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[1]Kenneth Clark, "Introduction" to Roger Fry, Last Lectures (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), p. ix.

[2]Howard Hannay, Roger Fry and Other Essays (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1937), p. 15.

a judge, and the life of the Fry family was conducted with austerity and severity. Although Fry feared his parents and lamented the "lack of simple humanity" in his upbringing, he revered both his father and mother. Sir Edward's interests as a youth were in science; and even though he had abandoned them for the profession of law, it would appear that when he noted an early interest in scientific experimentation in his son, Roger, Sir Edward was pleased and willing to nurture its development. In 1877 Fry was sent off to a new school, Sunninghill House at Ascot. He was miserable there, and his most vivid memories of Sunninghill were of the floggings which he, as head of the school, was required to assist in executing. In 1881 Fry entered Clifton, a school more congenial to him, where he met John Ellis McTaggert. Although Fry then held his Quaker convictions steadfastly, almost prudishly, he welcomed the spiritual and philosophical questioning of McTaggert.[3] When in 1884 Fry received a scholarship for science at King's College Cambridge, the only one given for science that year, he began "years that were to be so important to him that in after-life, he said, he dated everything from them."[4]

Fry pursued a scientific course of study at Cambridge, but the greatest impact and importance of his college years rested in his friendships and the exchange of ideas he encountered there. His greatest friends were Nathaniel Wedd, Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, and John McTaggert. In 1887 he

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[3] V. Woolf, Roger Fry, p. 39.

[4] Ibid., p. 44.

was invited to join the Apostles, one of those specifically Cambridge societies which Forster describes in his biography of Dickinson:

> Certainly these societies represent the very antithesis of the rotarian spirit. No one who has once felt their power will ever become a good mixer or a yes-man. Their influence, when it goes wrong, leads to self-consciousness and superciliousness; when it goes right, the mind is sharpened, the judgment is strengthened, and the heart becomes less selfish. There is nothing specially academic about them, they exist in other places where intelligent youths are allowed to gather unregimented, but in Cambridge they seem to generate a peculiar clean white light of their own which can remain serviceable right on into middle age.[5]

With the exception of Dickinson, to whom Fry continually attempted to convey his chaotic and changing enthusiasms, Fry's discussions with the Apostles were usually concerned with religion or philosophy. He sought friends outside the Society for discussions of aesthetics and attempts to articulate ideas and opinions about art works. John Henry Middleton was appointed Slade Professor of Art at Cambridge in 1886, and Fry became one of the circle of young men who met in Middleton's rooms for discussions of painting and aesthetics.

In 1888 Fry asked his father's permission to study painting as a profession. Sir Edward was unprepared to yield completely to this desire, but he allowed Fry to remain at Cambridge, combining painting and science, for a few terms. Twice Fry sat for a fellowship, and twice he failed. When Sir Edward finally did submit to his son's wishes, he endeavored

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[5]E. M. Forster, Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1934), p. 66.

to keep Fry under supervision by permitting him to study under Francis Bate while living at home. It was 1891 before Fry took his first trip to Italy. There he met Arthur Symons and Horatio Brown, with whom he carried on long discussions of aesthetics. The next year, 1892, he went to the Académie Julian in Paris. William Rothenstein, who was there at the time, notes the impression Fry made upon his fellow students:

> He had done very little drawing; I gathered that he had moved chiefly in scientific and philosophical circles; but he had a quiet attractiveness, and he was clearly very intelligent. He did not stay long in Paris; he was not much of a figure draughtsman and he was somewhat shy and uneasy at first in the free atmosphere of Julian's. He had rather the habits and reserve of the student and was more at home in the quieter atmosphere of Cambridge and London.[6]

Fry, living with Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson in Paris, seems to have remained aloof from the wild excitement of Julian's; and although he spent much of his time looking at paintings, he saw none of Cézanne's work during this first trip. He was little impressed by either Parisian life or the symboliste poets who to him seemed to be "a set of egregious asses in some ways and only to keep alive through vast orgies of mutual admiration and reciprocal incense-swinging."[7] Fry's later enthusiasm for both Cézanne and Mallarmé suggests openness to new experiences and willingness to alter opinions.

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[6]William Rothenstein, Men and Memories: Recollections of William Rothenstein, 1872-1900 (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1931), I, 76.

[7]As quoted by Virginia Woolf in Roger Fry, p. 79.

When Fry returned to London, he sent pictures to the New English Art Club. They were rejected. In 1893 he began writing short articles in periodicals for necessary income. This was not his first acquaintance with journalism, for he had been editor of the Cambridge Fortnightly.[8] When in 1894 he accepted a position as an extension lecturer on art, he probably made one of the most important decisions of his life. The lectures were a success, and he much preferred doing them to writing. Also, Virginia Woolf observes, he had "natural gifts--a beautiful speaking voice, and the power, whatever its origin, to transmit emotion while transmitting facts."[9] Clive Bell considers him the "perfect lecturer almost. . . . He stuck loosely to his text, allowing himself to be inspired by whatever was on the screen. It was from a sensation to a word. Almost one could watch him thinking and feeling."[10] Moreover, he could make others feel with him. Howard Hannay attempts to explain Fry's magic as a lecturer:

> His sincerity, his fluency in expounding his views, and his wide historical knowledge were tremendously impressive. In spite of complete absence of purple passage or playing to the gallery he was able to keep his audience at a high pitch of interest and curiosity. It was not the attraction of literature--there is no particular literary distinction about his writing--but of the whole man. He had only to point to a passage in a picture and murmur the word 'plasticity' and a magical atmosphere was created. It was the personal power of a great actor.[11]

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[8]Forster, Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, p. 65.

[9]V. Woolf, Roger Fry, p. 89.

[10]Clive Bell, Old Friends (London: Chatto and Windus, 1956), p. 84.

[11]Hannay, Roger Fry and Other Essays, p. 16.

Fry married Helen Coombe, an artist, in 1896. They were happy together, but her health began to fail, she suffered from delusions, and in 1898 was committed to an asylum. Helen was well enough to return home in 1899 and bore Roger a son, Julian, in 1901 and a daughter, Pamela, in 1902. In 1910 Helen was again committed to the asylum and never released although she lived until 1937. During those years when his wife was periodically ill and when his young family had begun to grow, Fry turned his efforts more and more toward criticism. In 1899 his first book, Bellini, was published; and in 1905 his edition of The Discourses of Reynolds appeared. He had become chief art critic for the Athenaeum in 1898, and in that capacity he launched attacks upon the Royal Academy and its members, asserting that the "Academy becomes every year a more and more colossal joke played with inimitable gravity on a public which is too much the creature of habit to show that it is no longer taken in."[12] It is scarcely surprising that following this attack, Fry's bid for the Slade Professorship of Art at Oxford in 1904 was refused.[13]

Although Fry, in 1904, was unacceptable to Oxford, his reputation as a critic and connoisseur had grown. He had contrived in 1903 to revive the Burlington Magazine, establishing Charles Holmes and Robert Dell as co-editors. The

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[12]V. Woolf, Roger Fry, p. 108.

[13]Virginia Woolf states that the vacancy for Slade Professor of Art was at Cambridge (Roger Fry, p. 128). Sir Charles Holmes, who was appointed to fill the vacant Slade Chair in 1904, defeating Fry, states that it was at Oxford. See Charles J. Holmes, Self and Partners (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1936), p. 235.

Berensons were active in this project, and a Bernard Berenson essay on Sassetta was published in the first issue of the revived Burlington.[14] Fry was appointed Director of the National Gallery in 1905, but the appointment had been delayed so long that by the time it was made, he had already accepted a position from Pierpont Morgan as a buyer for the Metropolitan Museum in New York. Fry stayed with Morgan for five years, an amazingly long time for one who found Morgan overbearing and who also found it difficult to be tactful. Relations between the two men finally ended completely when Fry contrived to obtain a painting from Morgan's private collection for the museum. When Fry returned to England in February, 1910, he was jobless.

1910 was probably the most important year in Fry's life and career. In that year, for one thing, he became accepted into the Bloomsbury Group. Desmond MacCarthy, in completing a list of Bloomsbury members, includes Lytton Strachey, Virginia and Leonard Woolf, Clive and Vanessa Bell, David Garnett, Maynard Keynes, Duncan Grant, E. M. Forster, and Roger Fry.[15] MacCarthy denies that Bloomsbury was either a "movement" or a "push":

> In fact, 'Bloomsbury' is . . . only a group of old friends; whose affection and respect for each other has stood the test of nearly thirty years and whose intellectual candour makes their company agreeable to each other. It never was a movement. In taste

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[14]Hanna Kiel, (ed.), The Bernard Berenson Treasury (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962), p. 177.

[15]MacCarthy, Memories, p. 172. Leonard Woolf adds the name of Saxon Sidney Turner in Beginning Again, p. 22.

> and judgment 'Bloomsbury' from the start has been at variance with itself. Indeed, here lay its charm as a social circle. There was enough mutual respect and affection, well tested by time, to supply cement; enough difference of temperament and opinion to stimulate talk; enough intellectual honesty to enable them to learn from each other. Their association began when they were far too young (with the exception of Roger Fry) to have achieved anything; and by the time the world heard of 'Bloomsbury', 'Bloomsbury' as a group had ceased to exist. Though old ties remained, friends were scattered; and most of them were seeing much more of new friends than of each other.[16]

Fry had probably had acquaintances among the Bloomsbury people before 1910, but he was older than they and had been away much of the time between 1905 and 1910. His first meeting with Clive Bell was on a train early in 1910, and he immediately enlisted Bell's aid with the Post-Impressionist exhibition:

> . . . when Roger Fry told me that morning in the train that he proposed to show the British public the work of the newest French painters, I told him that I would be proud to help in any way I could but that his scheme was fantastic. Not that there was any question of my being of serious use--Roger never needed an <u>État-Major</u>; but as I had written in praise of Cézanne and Gauguin and other 'revolutionaires' he thought I might as well give a hand.[17]

Perhaps it was through this meeting with Bell that Fry entered the inner Bloomsbury circle. Certainly, Bloomsbury provided an atmosphere congenial to him. According to Leonard Woolf, the male members of the group, with the exception of Clive Bell, Adrian Stephen, and Duncan Grant, had all been Apostles at Cambridge.[18] Although the younger men who had been together

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[16]MacCarthy, <u>Memories</u>, p. 173.

[17]Bell, <u>Old Friends</u>, p. 80.

[18]L. Woolf, <u>Beginning Again</u>, pp. 23-24.

at Cambridge around the turn of the century, especially Strachey, Keynes, and Bell, were all adherents of the philosophy of G. E. Moore, and Fry, according to Clive Bell, was "definitely anti-Moorist,"[19] the "clean white light" of Cambridge thought, as well as common interests, must have attracted Fry to these young people; especially since Fry maintained, Desmond MacCarthy tells us, his youthful vigor throughout his life: "If to remain 'young' is to keep a vivid curiosity, the power of enjoying the present, and a faith in pleasure . . . then it must be also said of him [Fry], to use an obituary cliché, that he remained 'young to the last'."[20]

The man accepted into the Bloomsbury Group was a person of perplexing dichotomies. Although this is noted by most of his friends, Leonard Woolf was particularly aware of it:

> His character was more full of contradictions than most human beings. He was one of the most charming and gentle of men; born a double-dyed Quaker, he had in many respects revolted against the beliefs and morals of The Friends, and yet deep down in his mind and character he remained profoundly, and I think unconsciously, influenced by them. . . . He had a Quaker's uncompromising sense of public duty and responsibility and, though he would have repudiated this, ultimately the Quaker's ethical austerity. And yet there were elements in his psychology which contradicted all these characteristics.[21]

Fry acknowledged the influence of his Quaker, puritanical upbringing upon his behavior,[22] an influence which frequently led

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[19]Bell, Old Friends, p. 133.

[20]MacCarthy, Memories, pp. 176-77.

[21]L. Woolf, Beginning Again, p. 95.

[22]See V. Woolf, Roger Fry, p. 289.

him to act with righteous indignation and suspicion.[23] In Roger Fry a cold, calculating intellect was also coupled with an enthusiasm for new ideas. Leonard Woolf states that Fry was "really capable of believing anything, particularly the most extravagant assertions of the great quacks."[24] Desmond MacCarthy also noted this trait so "amusingly at variance with his strong intellect": "He was a credulous man. There were moments when I used to exclaim, 'You would be the greatest of critics if you only sometimes listened to the small still voice which whispers "Fiddlesticks!"'"[25] Fry was able, though, to weigh his enthusiasms, to become a disciple for a short while and then to accept or reject the ideas of his master on intellectual grounds:

> Roger Fry had a great capacity all his life for laying himself open, trustfully, optimistically, completely to any new idea, new person, or new experience that came his way. But with it was combined another characteristic--when he had sat long enough at those feet to see where they led, he would get up and go off, sometimes in the opposite direction. This rare combination--the capacity to accept impressions implicitly and then submit them to the test of reason--made him the most stimulating of critics.[26]

His youthful enthusiasm made him attractive to young people, and his commitment to the works of the Post-Impressionist painters exhibited in the 1910 exhibition brought Roger

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[23]See Bell, Old Friends, p. 84, and Ottoline Morrell, Ottoline: The Early Memoirs of Lady Ottoline Morrell, ed. Robert Gathorne-Hardy (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), p. 213.

[24]L. Woolf, Beginning Again, p. 96.

[25]MacCarthy, Memories, p. 184.

[26]V. Woolf, Roger Fry, p. 86.

Fry many followers among the younger British painters who were exhilarated by the exhibition and began to look to Fry for leadership and encouragement, not as their master but as their advocate. As Clive Bell explains, "With his fine intellect, culture and persuasive ways he became spokesman for modern art--our representative in the councils of the great; for he could place his word where he would."[27] When Grafton Galleries, following the Post-Impressionist exhibition, offered Fry the control of the galleries for the autumn months, he planned an exhibition of the young artists. Many of the older artists, in particular Steer, Tonks, and Rothenstein, were unwilling to be shown with the younger artists.[28] In 1912 Fry brought a second Post-Impressionist exhibition to England, and in 1913 he began the Omega Workshops. His purpose in the Workshops was to employ the young artists who had difficulty supporting themselves and, through this endeavor, to bring more beauty into everyday life by placing useful but aesthetically pleasing objects in the homes of the general

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[27]Bell, Old Friends, p. 83. Fry's status with the younger artists and as spokesman for modern art did not increase his popularity with the older artists. He severed relations finally with William Rothenstein for many reasons, but one of the major was certainly Fry's lack of enthusiasm for Rothenstein's later work. (See Robert Speaight, William Rothenstein: The Portrait of an Artist in His Time (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1962, p. 380.) Fry obviously also quarreled with Berenson, although we are dependent upon Berenson's published diaries for knowledge of this. (See Bernard Berenson, Sunset and Twilight: From the Diaries of 1947-1958, ed. Nicky Mariano (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1963), pp. 208, 233, 269, 282, 489, 490, 455.) Neither Mrs. Woolf nor Berenson's biographer, Sylvia Sprigge, mentions the quarrel.

[28]See V. Woolf, Roger Fry, pp. 166-68.

public. Even Wyndham Lewis, who later quarreled with Fry and left the Workshops, taking with him his group of followers, recognized the value of what Fry was trying to do:

> Mr. Roger Fry's solution for the desperate situation of the artist was, I will say that for it, free of uplift. As the world at large, in his estimate, had become impossible for the artist to survive in, without destructive compromises, it was necessary to create, at least for those he favoured, an artificial atmosphere (in the case of the Omega to re-create the workshop of the past, to compete, in a small way, with the factory). By confining themselves to the special economic atmosphere in this way created, a favoured few could survive.[29]

Fry continued the Workshops, attempting to keep them going during the war years, and only finally abandoned them when it was obvious that they could never recover from bankruptcy. They lasted from 1913 to 1919, mostly through Fry's efforts.

The two Post-Impressionist exhibitions raised problems of aesthetics,[30] and Roger Fry wrote numerous articles and gave many lectures between 1910 and 1934, frequently dealing with those problems. Most important among his works published during those years are Vision and Design (1920), A Sampler of Castile (1923), The Artist and Psychoanalysis (1924), Art and Commerce (1926), Transformations (1926), the translation into

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[29]Wyndham Lewis, Rude Assignment: A Narrative of My Career Up-to-Date (London: Hutchinson and Co., Ltd., 1950), p. 131.

[30]In "Retrospect," written in 1920, Fry recalls, "In contrast to its effect on the cultured public the Post-Impressionist exhibition aroused a keen interest among a few of the younger English artists and their friends. With them I began to discuss the problems of aesthetic that the contemplation of these works forced upon us." Vision and Design (London: Chatto and Windus, 1923), p. 292.

English of Charles Mauron's The Nature of Beauty in Art and Literature (1927), Flemish Art (1927), Cézanne, A Study of His Development (1927), Georgian Art (1927), Characteristics of French Art (1933), Art History as an Academic Study (1933), and Reflections on British Painting (1934). Fry's Henri Matisse (1935), Last Lectures (1939), and his translations of Mallarmé, Poems of Stephen Mallarmé (1936) were all published posthumously. During these years Fry also edited several books, wrote articles and reviews, and prefaced catalogues for exhibitions. He was never idle. Fry accepted the Slade Professorship of Art at Cambridge in 1933. The next year, in September, 1934, he fell and broke his thigh, and never recovering from this injury, died on September 9, 1934.

2. Post-Impressionism and Fry's Aesthetic

Roger Fry's fame as an art critic and the significance of his contribution to aesthetic theory cannot be separated from the Post-Impressionist painters whom he brought to London in November, 1910, after convincing the Grafton Galleries that bringing in modern foreign artists would provide a good "stop-gap" between their regular big exhibitions.[31] Fry coined the name "Post-Impressionist" at the request of a journalist who wanted a "convenient label"[32] for the artists included in the exhibition: Manet, Cézanne, Gauguin, Picasso, Van Gogh, Seurat, Matisse, Derain, and Rouault, among others. Desmond MacCarthy,

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[31]MacCarthy, Memories, p. 179.

[32]See V. Woolf, Roger Fry, p. 153.

who had accompanied Fry to Paris to get pictures for the exhibition, reports his feelings of nervousness on opening day, a nervousness warranted by the public response to the exhibition:

> Soon after ten, the Press began to arrive. Now anything new in art is apt to provoke the same kind of indignation as immoral conduct, and vice is detected in perfectly innocent pictures. Perhaps any mental shock is apt to remind people of moral shocks they have received, and the sensations being similar, they attribute this to the same cause. Anyhow, as I walked among the tittering newspaper critics busily taking notes . . . I kept overhearing such remarks as 'Pure pornography', 'Admirably indecent'. . . .
>
> The Press notices were certainly calculated to rouse curiosity. And from the opening day the public flocked, and the big rooms echoed with explosions of laughter and indignation. . . .
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> The people who annoyed me most were, I think, cultivated women who went deliberately into trills of silvery laughter in front of pictures. . . . I remember . . . a stout, elderly man of a good appearance, led in by a young woman, who went into such convulsions of laughter on catching sight of Cézanne's portrait of his wife . . . that his companion had to take him out and walk him up and down in the fresh air.[33]

Intolerance and ridicule were not the reactions of the general public alone. Wilfrid Blunt rejected the exhibition as either "an extremely bad joke or a swindle" and stated he was inclined to think the latter since he could find no humor in it.[34] The newspapers and public amused themselves at Fry's expense over this exhibition, Virginia Woolf recalls, and "caricatures of a gentleman whose mouth was very wide open and whose hair was very untidy appeared in the papers. Parents sent him

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[33]MacCarthy, Memories, pp. 182-83.

[34]Edith Finch, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt: 1840-1922 (London: Jonathan Cape, 1938), p. 322.

childish scribbles which they asserted were far superior to the works of Cézanne."[35] Alfred Werner describes another caricature in which "Fry was portrayed as a ranting maniac, wild-eyed, with wildly flying hair, on a platform, attended by Clive Bell, who is ringing a hand-bell and intoning 'Cézannah! Cézannah!"[36]

Sir Charles Holmes claims that he tried to give the exhibition a fair appraisal:

> 'Notes on the Post-Impressionist Painters,' an attempt, in my usual rather cautious way, to survey the exhibition without bias, seemed to please nobody. Opinions at the time were too sharply divided for reconciliation. Ricketts was stirred by my liking for Van Gogh, and wrote at length, and trenchantly: 'This twisted touch is a common fact in the drawing of lunatics, a doctor will tell you so!'[37]

Many people, Holmes recalls, considered the Post-Impressionists insane:

> Dr. Hyslop, a prominent alienist of the moment, delivered an illustrated lecture on the subject before the Art Workers' Guild. His arguments and evidence, however, were based upon such a complete misapprehension of the aims of painting, in all its most commonplace and trivial aspects, that I was wholly unconvinced, and indignant that this elementary, catch-penny stuff should be put forward as the verdict of Science. Yet his conclusions were accepted with such respect, and such

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[35]Virginia Woolf, Roger Fry, p. 154.

[36]Alfred Werner, "Roger Fry's Discovery of Cézanne," the introduction to Roger Fry, Cézanne: A Study of His Development (New York: The Noonday Press, 1958), p. xii. Werner here probably refers to Henry Tonks's "The Unknown God: Roger Fry preaching the New Faith, Clive Bell ringing the Bell." This picture is reproduced in "Editorial: A Shock for the Troops," Apollo Magazine, LXXX (October, 1964), 262.

[37]Holmes, Self and Partners, p. 280.

> enthusiastic applause, as left no doubt as to the sympathies of the artists and craftsmen there present.[38]

Although Holmes tried to take the middle ground, most English artists and art critics had definite opinions about the exhibition. Eric Gill related some of the varying responses to William Rothenstein who was in India at the time and had missed the exhibition:

> All the critics are tearing one another's eyes out over it and the sheep and the goats are inextricably mixed up. John says 'it's a bloody show' & Lady Ottoline says 'oh charming!' As a matter of fact, those who like it show their pluck, and those who don't, show either great intelligence or else great stupidity. The show quite obviously represents a reaction and transition and so if, like Fry, you are a factor in that reaction and transition then you like the show. If, like MacColl & Robert Ross, you are too inseparably connected with the things reacted against and the generation from which it is a transition, then you don't like it.[39]

The Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition of 1912 received a similar response to the first from the public, with the spectators either laughing or feeling enraged. Leonard Woolf attributes this to the philistinism of the British public which he believes will lead them to condemn anything new.[40] What made Leonard most angry was that "hardly any of them made the slightest attempt to look at, let alone understand, the pictures and the same inane questions or remarks were repeated. . . all day long."[41] Some of the visitors were more

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[38] Ibid., pp. 280-81.

[39] Rothenstein, Men and Memories, II, 213-14.

[40] L. Woolf, Beginning Again, p. 95.

[41] Ibid.

interested. Both Henry James and Arnold Bennett visited the exhibition:

> Them he [Fry] would take down to the basement where, among the packing cases and the brown paper, tea would be provided. Seated on a little hard chair, Henry James would express 'in convoluted sentences the disturbed hesitations which Matisse and Picasso aroused in him, and Roger Fry, exquisitely, with something of the old-world courtesy which James carried about with him', would do his best to convey to the great novelist what he meant by saying that Cézanne and Flaubert were, in a manner of speaking, after the same thing.[42]

In "Retrospect" Fry recalls the failure of the public who had listened attentively to his lectures on Italian painting "to see that my position with regard to this movement was capable of a logical explanation, as the result of a consistent sensibility."[43] Convincing the public that the "modern movement was essentially a return to the ideas of formal design which had been almost lost sight of in the fervid pursuit of naturalistic representation"[44] was not an easy task. In the catalogue he prepared for the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition, Fry tried to emphasize his position:

> Now, these artists do not seek to give what can, after all, be but a pale reflex of actual appearance, but to arouse the conviction of a new and definite reality. They do not seek to imitate form, but to create form; not to imitate life, but to find an equivalent for life. By that I mean that they wish to make images which by the clearness of their logical structure, and

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[42] V. Woolf, Roger Fry, p. 180. Leonard Woolf also gives an account of this episode in Sowing: An Autobiography of the Years 1880-1904 (London: The Hogarth Press, 1960), pp. 108-09.

[43] Roger Fry, Vision and Design, p. 290.

[44] Ibid.

> by their closely-knit unity of texture, shall appeal to our disinterested and contemplative imagination with something of the same vividness as the things of actual life appeal to our practical activities. In fact, they aim not at illusion but at reality.[45]

To convince the public of the truth of this was more difficult. Although Desmond MacCarthy, who was business manager of the first Post-Impressionist Exhibition, made four-hundred-sixty pounds, "Fry himself did not make one penny out of the exhibition, nor did he out of the Omega workshops, which he started seven years later."[46] The greatest personal result of the first Post-Impressionist exhibition for Fry was, MacCarthy believes, that he "smashed for a long time his reputation as an art critic. Kind people called him mad, and reminded others that his wife was in an asylum. The majority declared him to be a subverter of morals and art, and a blatant self-advertiser."[47]

Douglas Cooper, writing about the first Post-Impressionist exhibition in 1954, states his opinion that the exhibition of 1910 was unfortunate because "it presented a distorted view of post-Impressionist developments and, by virtue of its own inconsistencies, had the effect of frightening the English public away from rather than of encouraging it to take an active interest in modern French art."[48] The

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[45]Fry, "The French Post-Impressionists," Vision and Design, p. 157.

[46]MacCarthy, Memories, p. 183.

[47]Ibid.

[48]Douglas Cooper, The Courtauld Collection, A Catalogue and Introduction (London: The Athlone Press, 1954), pp. 52-53.

exhibition included no Impressionist painters, and Cooper affirms its shocking affect on the public. The second Post-Impressionist exhibition, Cooper believes, was more narrowly planned and built around the idea that "the expressive means of modern art were not 'rhythm' and 'an abstract harmony of line' but the significance of 'pure form.'"[49] In 1912, Cooper asserts, "a census of intelligent opinion--even among the younger artists--would have shown negatively that 'of all the painters represented Gauguin seems to be the least disliked,' to quote the expression of Spencer Gore. Van Gogh appealed to an enlighted few, Matisse to fewer still, though his pictures certainly aroused more interest and admiration than those of Picasso."[50] Cézanne, considered by Fry and his friends as "a great and inspiring genius," emerged "as the most perplexing and most publicized figure."[51]

These artists, selected by Fry for recognition in 1912, received the greatest attention during the next twenty years, for Fry's personal taste, Cooper asserts, "set the standard for public opinion and after 1912 his view of modern French art did not greatly change, except in so far as it became narrower."[52] It is on this basis that Cooper observes that "between 1910 and 1930 Fry's interpretation of 'modern art' was the only one to gain currency: during those years, alas, no other writer on the subject was of any account."[53]

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[49] Ibid., p. 57. [50] Ibid., pp. 57-58.
[51] Ibid., p. 58. [52] Ibid. [53] Ibid., p. 52.

Fry's personal taste, which dictated that of the British public for twenty years, favored the work of the Post-Impressionists. His dissatisfaction with Impressionism had begun as early as 1902,[54] but it was not until 1905 and 1906 that Fry saw Cézanne's work.[55] In appraising the Cézanne in the 1906 International Society Exhibition, he disparaged "those laws of appearance which the scientific theory of the Impressionist School has pronounced to be essential" and praised Cézanne "who had dared to defy them."[56] In March, 1908, in a letter to The Burlington Magazine, he defended Cézanne and Gauguin against a hostile reviewer:

> They are proto-Byzantines rather than Neo-Impressionists. . . . They fill the contour with wilfully simplified and unmodulated masses, and rely for their whole effect upon a well-considered co-ordination of the simplest elements. There is no need for me to praise Cézanne--his position is already assured--but if one compares his still-life in the International Exhibition with Monet's, I think it will be admitted that it marks a great

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[54]Virginia Woolf states that Fry "had always, as his criticism of the New English Art Club shows, . . . been dissatisfied with the Impressionist school. He had asserted in 1902 that we are 'at a dead point in the revolutions of our culture'. One would say, he went on, 'that these artists seem paralysed by the fear of failure, and they lack the ambition to attempt those difficult and dangerous feats by which alone they could increase their resources and exercise their powers by straining them to the utmost'. He had lighted with eagerness upon the work of some of the younger artists, like Augustus John, who 'by going back to an earlier tradition, carry the analysis further, penetrating through values to the causes in actual form and structure'. Here, in the work of the French artists, he found the very qualities that he had been looking for." V. Woolf, Roger Fry, p. 160. See also, Cooper, The Courtauld Collection, p. 49.

[55]Cooper, The Courtauld Collection, p. 48.

[56]Ibid., pp. 40-41. See also, V. Woolf, Roger Fry, pp. 111-12.

> advance in intellectual content. It leaves far less to the casual dictation of natural appearance. The relations of every tone and colour are deliberately chosen and stated in unmistakable terms. In placing of objects, in the relation of one form to another, in the values of colour which indicate mass, and in the purely decorative elements of design, Cézanne's work seems to me to betray a finer, more scrupulous artistic sense.[57]

Fry's admiration for Cézanne's work grew during the following year, confirming for him his preference for the design of Post-Impressionism over Impressionism. Although the Impressionists "upheld, more categorically than ever before, the complete detachment of the artistic vision from the values imposed on vision by everyday life,"[58] and endowed "painting with a quite new series of colour harmonies . . . which had not been cultivated by European painters for many hundreds of years,"[59] they also, in Fry's estimate, "reduced the artistic vision to a continuous patchwork or mosaic of coloured patches without architectural framework or structural coherence."[60] The importance of Impressionism, for Fry, rests in the new data it provides for the artist. Seurat, whose greatness Fry discovered in 1916,[61] was able to use this data effectively, as raw material, as it should be used, according to Fry:

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[57]Roger Fry, "The Last Phase of Impressionism," in "Letters to the Editor," The Burlington Magazine, XII (March, 1908), 375.

[58]Fry, "Art and Life," Vision and Design, p. 10.

[59]Ibid.

[60]Ibid.

[61]See V. Woolf, Roger Fry, p. 204.

> On the one hand he accepted the whole body of Impressionist discovery about appearance even to the point of stating those phenomena which, even while we observe them, we know to be illusory, on the other hand, the mere statement of appearance which so preoccupied the Impressionists has no importance whatever for him. Appearance as revealed by Impressionist researches is nothing to him but the raw material out of which he builds, and his building is so nicely proportioned that the final result is utterly remote from appearance. The question of verisimilitude hardly occurs to one, so little can we refer his pictures to anything outside themselves, so completely does the created reality hold us by the laws of its self-contained system.[62]

The correct method for using the discoveries of Impressionism also concerned Cézanne, in whom Fry finds it "evident that all his life he was continually brooding over one tormenting question; how to conciliate the data of Impressionism with--what he regarded as an essential to style--a perfect structural organization."[63] Cézanne succeeded, foremost among the Post-Impressionists Fry brought to the English public and defended. Two elements Fry observed in the work of those Post-Impressionist painters were instrumental in shaping his aesthetic and in turning him from primarily a student of the old masters to the exponent of modern art in England: 1. Their attempt "to express by pictorial and plastic form certain spiritual experiences"[64] and 2. Their "re-establishment of

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[62]Roger Fry, "Seurat," Transformations: Critical and Speculative Essays on Art (London: Chatto & Windus, 1926), p. 196.

[63]Fry, Cézanne, p. 57.

[64]Fry, "The French Post-Impressionists," Vision and Design, p. 237. Fry first considered calling this new art "expressionism." See MacCarthy, Memories, p. 181.

purely aesthetic criteria in place of the criterion of conformity to appearance--the rediscovery of the principles of structural design and harmony."[65]

Cooper believes that Fry is greatly indebted to the German critic Julius Meier-Graefe for the development of his aesthetic. Meier-Graefe's book Modern Art was published in English translation in 1908:

> . . . whereas Fry knew virtually nothing about 'modern' art in 1908-09, Meier-Graefe, who had an original mind had made a study of the subject, had written the most important book, and could claim to have been the first to define the conscious movement against Impressionism in contemporary painting. Through him Fry was introduced to artists whose work appealed instinctively to his imagination. What Fry did, however, was to pursue Meier-Graefe's 'system of aesthetics' forward into the twentieth century in order to demonstrate the existence of a whole school of 'modern' painters who used 'abstract design' as their 'principle of expression' and who instead of attempting 'to represent what the eye perceives . . . put a line round a mental conception of the object.' Such then was the basis of Fry's original conception of post-Impressionism. And it is a measure of Fry's power (and of the apathetic attitude to modern art of the average Englishman) that he was able to impose his interpretation of and his taste in contemporary art not only on a devoted and enthusiastic band of followers, but ultimately and for many years on a scandalized, submissive and ever-widening public of collectors and art-lovers.[66]

Although Cooper is possibly exaggerating Fry's debt to Meier-Graefe, the foundation of Fry's aesthetic in German thought is generally acknowledged by his contemporaries. The influence they discern, however, comes from a different source,

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[65]Fry, "Art and Life," Vision and Design, p. 12.

[66]Cooper, The Courtauld Collection, p. 51.

from the work of Heinrich Wölfflin. Alfred Werner asserts that Fry's approach, in "his preoccupation with form, . . . was much influenced by the Swiss scholar, Heinrich Woelfflin,"[67] and Herbert Read, in his introduction to an edition of Wölfflin's Classic Art, similarly claims: "There is no doubt that Fry himself was profoundly influenced in his views on art (as well as his method of art criticism) by Wölfflin."[68] This is not surprising, for Wölfflin's great distinction, Read believes, is "that he did perfect such a scientific method in art-historical criticism, and there is no art critic of importance after his time who has not, consciously or unconsciously, been influenced by him."[69] Fry reviewed Wölfflin's Classic Art in the Athenaeum when the book was translated into English in 1903, greeting it with enthusiasm and praising Wölfflin:

> . . . he recalls us in earnest tones to the serious problems and scholarly precepts of the sixteenth century. It is an interesting indication of a possible revolution in taste--a revolution which would bring us back almost to the point of view taken by Reynolds in his discourses, and which would substitute for the minute criticism of the detailed qualities of design the consideration of those large and general effects which are distinguished in the first total impression, and which tell most in the first attack of a work of art.[70]

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[67] Werner, "Roger Fry's Discovery of Cézanne," the introduction to Fry, Cézanne, p. viii.

[68] Herbert Read, "Introduction" to Heinrich Wölfflin, Classic Art: An Introduction to the Italian Renaissance (London: The Phaedon Press, 1959), p. viii.

[69] Read, "Introduction" to Wölfflin, Classic Art, p. v.

[70] [Roger Fry], "The Art of the Italian Renaissance," The Athenaeum, (December 26, 1903), 862.

In 1921, Fry reviewed Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe for The Burlington Magazine, this time praising Wölfflin for going beyond the usual work of the art historian:

> Unlike so many art historians, Dr. Wölfflin looks on art with some understanding of the problems of the creator. He does not merely see what there is in the work of art, but he knows what mental conditions in the artist's mind are implied by that configuration. In fact he begins where most art-historians leave off. They are content to show that a picture was produced by such an artist at such a date. He tries to show why at such a date and in such surroundings the picture has the form that we see.[71]

Sir Kenneth Clark, in a brief survey, "The Study of Art History," finds Wölfflin's critical approach distinguished by the conviction that art works "develop according to their own internal laws. Stylistic changes . . . can be analysed and demonstrated as being part of an inevitable process, hastened perhaps by the genius of certain individuals, but hardly effected [sic] by . . . social and economic upheavals."[72]

Clark believes both Fry and Berenson were influenced by Wölfflin, but he considers all three affiliated with a broader theoretical background:

> Wölfflin's laws were to a large extent borrowed from the theories of the German sculptor Adolf Hildebrand who in turn had derived them from a philosopher named Conrad Fiedler. Indeed I think it can be shown that Fiedler's ideas, contained in letters to Hildebrand and the painter Hans von Marees, were the real origin

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[71]Roger Fry, "The Baroque," The Burlington Magazine, XXXIX (September, 1921), 234. This passage is also incorporated in "The Seicento" in Transformations, p. 96, a chapter, pp. 95-124, which offers high praise to Dr. Wölfflin for both his method and analysis.

[72]Kenneth Clark, "The Study of Art History," Universities Quarterly, X (May, 1956), 234.

> of that new direction in applied aesthetics which led to Mr. Berenson's theory of tactile values and Roger Fry's doctrine of significant form.[73]

Read, too, finds the genesis for many of Wölfflin's ideas in Hildebrand, who learned, Read believes, from Fiedler and also fro. Burckhardt:

> This amounts to saying that Wölfflin was the culmination of a certain development in the science of art, which in its turn was part of the general historical development of thought between 1850 and 1950. We may call it the scientific temper of the age, and it begins, of course, long before 1850. But it was only very slowly and tentatively that the phenomena of art were submitted to intellectual analysis--it was felt, even by such a dispassionate observer as Burkhardt, that mysterious personal factors were involved, and these were beyond analysis. It was Wölfflin's distinction that he, first of all, kept his eye steadily fixed on the work of art, and began to analyse what he saw, and to classify the results of such visual analysis.[74]

Fry's lectures and essays are more aptly labelled "applied aesthetics" than samples of carefully constructed aesthetic philosophy. For the latter one can best turn to Conrad Fiedler who offers philosophic arguments for many of the ideas which Fry expresses and applies.[75] Hildebrand's book, The Problem of Form, similarly offers detailed analysis of "the connection between the artist's inner mental process

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[73] Ibid., 235.

[74] Read, "Introduction" to Wölfflin, Classic Art, p. v.

[75] See Conrad Fiedler, On Judging Works of Visual Art, trans. Henry Schaefer-Simmern and Fulmer Mood (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949), especially pp. x-xi, 11-12, 30-31, 42-44, and 46-48.

and the realization of his ideas in his work."[76] One cannot read Fiedler and Hildebrand without recognizing in them the basis for Fry's approach to works of art. Cooper suggests that Fry did not have a particularly original mind in the realm of aesthetics, but that he did have the power to popularize. Although Fry's applied aesthetic is only an approximation of the aesthetic inquiry pursued by Fiedler and Hildebrand, it is one capable of popular acceptance, while still part of genuine philosophical tradition. His affinity with Fiedler, Hildebrand and Wölfflin also serves as a framework for understanding his scientific and intellectual approach, indeed his formalistic approach, to analyzing his experience before art works.

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[76]Adolf Hildebrand, The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture, trans. Max Meyer and Robert Morris Ogden (New York: G. E. Steckert & Co., 1907), p. 15. Hildebrand is also helpful in understanding Berenson's tactile values, for he studies in detail the union of our faculties of sight and touch in the eye. See especially "Vision and Movement," pp. 21-35.

CHAPTER III

ROGER FRY'S AESTHETIC THEORIES

1. Function of the Critic

Throughout his career Fry believed that the "greatest hope for art . . . lies in the growth of a vigorous, patiently appreciative, but sharply discriminating critical spirit among educated people,"[1] and in his work as a critic he devoted himself to developing that critical spirit and leading the British public away from "snobbism," "the tendency to believe in the value of right opinion--to think that by knowing whom one ought to admire, in order to pass as a man of taste, one achieves aesthetic salvation."[2] Any opinion, if it is accepted as a dogma, Fry considered insignificant:

> The great danger to art of the nineteenth century was Philistinism, an ignorant disinclination to recognize that the appreciation of great art requires more effort and attention than the effort to recognize the likeness of a painted figure to a real one. Its counterpart today is snobbism, the willingness to accept the dogmas of the elite. This too is a labour-saving device. And more serious even than its bad effect on the public is its effect on those artists it has canonized. When once an artist's name has been accepted by snobbism there is no further criticism of his work. It is all good because the name is right.[3]

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[1]Roger Fry, Reflections on British Painting (London: Faber & Faber Limited, 1934), p. 10.

[2]Ibid., p. 19.

[3]Ibid.

Fry attempted to overcome snobbism by illustrating to his audiences, through his example, that they must learn to look at art works critically and attempt to evaluate their responses. He made himself a guinea pig, so to speak, analyzing his own experiences and sharing that analysis with his audience. This critical analysis of experience informs Fry's inquiry into aesthetic theory. In the first essay in Transformations, "Some Questions in Esthetics," he clarifies his intentions as an aesthetician:

> In approaching once again the general problem of Esthetics I wish to enforce two things: one, that such attempts at any general theory that I make are tentative efforts to make clear to myself the principles involved in exercising the critical faculty on works of art, and secondly that the problem is far too complicated, for me, at all events, to approach it by any other than an experimental method. The experiments have to be made by the inquirer and mainly on himself, by watching, with such honesty and detachment as he can command, his own reactions. That honesty is, of course, very difficult to come at, since in this matter we are all excessively auto-suggestible and apt to discover, with suspicious facility, whatever our predisposition of mind may have led us to desire and anticipate. The only guarantee that the inquirer can give under such circumstances is to lay his cards on the table and invite the reader to see whether his own reactions in any given case coincide.[4]

If any progress in the field of aesthetics is to be made by either artists or critics, it must begin, Fry believes, in the analysis of "what goes on inside us when we are confronted by different kinds of works of art and by knowing, or trying to know, or thinking we know, what, as artists, we are after."[5]

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[4]Fry, Transformations, p. 1.

[5]Roger Fry, The Artist and Psychoanalysis ("The Hogarth Essays," II; London: Leonard and Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press, 1924), p. 20.

Such analysis is similar to that which Read attributes to Wölfflin and requires not only an open mind and an attitude of detachment in the critic, but also a deep conviction that it is possible, through constant examination of one's sensations and emotions before a work of art, to determine what produces desireable sensations and emotions, and what produces undesireable ones, to "go beyond mere judgment that a work is excellent, to inquire of what kind its excellence is, and how it stands in regard to other excellences."[6] The critic's only instrument in this is his sensibility which he tries to perfect "by studying the traditional verdicts of men of aesthetic sensibility in the past, and by constant comparison of his own reactions with those of his contemporaries who are specially gifted in this way."[7] In the process of perfecting this tool, his sensibility, ideally the critic continually changes his mind. Fry proudly admits re-evaluating his opinions, considering it an important part of his task as a critic to see the same pictures again and again in order to keep his impressions fresh and to compare his new impressions with his old.

Although a substantial number of Fry's writings and lectures deal with problems of aesthetic inquiry, Fry's interest is practical rather than dogmatic. He regards his inquiries as important only to the extent that they enable him to see better and to help others to see better, and in their

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[6]Sir Joshua Reynolds, Discourses: Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy, ed. Roger Fry (London: Seeley & Co., Limited, 1905), p. 69.

[7]Fry, "Retrospect," Vision and Design, p. 285.

ability to help him order his responses:

> In my work as a critic of art I have never been a pure Impressionist, a mere recording instrument of certain sensations. I have always had some kind of aesthetic. A certain scientific curiosity and a desire for comprehension have impelled me at every stage to make generalisations, to attempt some kind of logical co-ordination of my impressions. But, on the other hand, I have never worked out for myself a complete system such as the metaphysicians deduce from a priori principles. I have never believed that I knew what was the ultimate nature of art. My aesthetic has been a purely practical one, a tentative expedient, an attempt to reduce to some kind of order my aesthetic impressions up to date. It has been held merely until such time as fresh experiences might confirm or modify it.[8]

Fry's attempts to reduce his impressions to order are plentiful and appear in both formal essays on aesthetics and as observations in reviews, essays, and lectures. It is possible, drawing upon these various sources and remembering that with Fry an "essay" is truly an "attempt," to discern a skeleton of beliefs and assumptions which supports Fry's judgments and which provides a base from which many of his ideas develop. In the pages which follow, I propose to examine this skelton, not so much to determine the chronological development of his theories as to determine the ideas which give shape to his judgments, judgments which he was eager to share with others and which found a receptive audience.

2. The Unique Aesthetic Experience

Underlying Fry's aesthetic inquiry is the assumption that the experience one has before a work of art is unique

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[8]Fry, "Retrospect," Vision and Design, pp. 284-85.

among all other experiences:

> . . . whenever we make a favourable esthetic judgment--whenever we say that a work of art is beautiful--we imply by that statement that it is of such a kind as to produce in us a certain positive response, and that if we compare in our minds responses experienced in turn in face of different works of art of the most diverse kinds--as, for instance, architectural, pictorial, musical or literary--we recognise that our state of mind in each case has been of a similar kind, we see in all these different experiences a general similarity in our attitude, in the pattern of our mental disposition, and further that the attitude common to all these experiences is peculiar to them and is clearly distinguishable from our mental attitude in other experiences. . . . We might conveniently label this kind of mental disposition the specifically esthetic state of mind.[9]

Fry also frequently refers to the "aesthetic state of mind" as the aesthetic experience or as the "aesthetic emotion," a term first defined and used by Clive Bell in Art.[10] This aesthetic state of mind is spiritual and comes to the spectator through the art work. Indeed, Fry asserts, "every work of art which one enjoys with complete esthetic apprehension becomes for the time being the spirit's universe. No conscious reference to anything outside the work of art is relevant; we are absorbed and englobed within it."[11] The value of the work rests in the "intensity and significance of its effect upon us,"[12] upon its ability to produce the state of aesthetic

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[9]Fry, "Some Questions in Esthetics," Transformations, pp. 1-2.

[10]Clive Bell, Art (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1913), pp. 6-7.

[11]Roger Fry, A Sampler of Castile (Richmond: Leonard and Virginia Woolf Hogarth Press, 1923), p. 70.

[12]Fry, Last Lectures, p. 9.

consciousness. The state of mind produced in one before an art work varies with one's sensibility, one's sensitive apprehension; and it is of the greatest importance, for without art, Fry earnestly believes, our spiritual life lacks "innumerable shades of feeling, overtones of our normal life of which we should never become aware if the artist did not bring them to our consciousness."[13]

One of the outstanding aspects of this state of mind is that it can be cultivated. Through practice, Fry believes, one can refine one's sensibility, and in stating this belief he takes issue with the theory that art speaks most effectively through the unconscious:

> A very ingenious esthete, Mr. Pritchard, has elaborated a theory of art which may be briefly stated by saying that a work of art is only valuable when one does not look at it. This is not nonsense, as it appears to be, but a quite arguable case. We all know that that queer and 'cussed' creature the unconscious is most affected when the conscious part of us is not keenly active, when we are wool-gathering and day-dreaming, or as nearly as possible vacant-minded. And if we regard art as a means of influencing life, it had best work through the unconscious and therefore when it is making the least appeal to our conscious activities. It all depends upon whether you regard Beauty as an end to be pursued like Truth on its own account or as accessory to the general tone of life. I happen to have a bias towards thinking that the more we are aware of our esthetic reactions, the more consciously and deliberately our apprehension is directed towards the work of art, the more important, in a spiritual sense, is the experience.[14]

What one apprehends is a more complex matter, for the aesthetic state of mind is neither purely intellectual nor purely

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[13] Ibid., p. 17.

[14] Fry, A Sampler of Castile, p. 7.

emotional, but rather a compound. This threatens also to lead Fry into areas alien to his scientific and formalistic approach to aesthetic problems, for Fry cannot define and explain the aesthetic state of mind and its operation with precision:

> It seems to be as remote from actual life and its practical utilities as the most useless mathematical theory. One can only say that those who experience it feel it to have a peculiar quality of 'reality' which makes it a matter of infinite importance in their lives. Any attempt I might make to explain this would probably land me in the depth of mysticism. On the edge of that gulf I stop.[15]

Fry is more at ease and more confident when he can call upon science for assistance. He undertakes a comparison between the pleasurable emotions derived from art with the mental pleasures derived from scientific theorizing, hoping the analogy can increase our understanding of the aesthetic emotion.[16] He even develops categories which he labels the "emotional elements of design," thus attempting to analyze the process by which forms move our emotions. These elements, rhythm, mass, space, light and shade, and color, appeal to our emotions, Fry believes, because they are directly related to our physical existence:

> Now it will be noticed that nearly all these emotional elements of design are connected with essential conditions of our physical existence: rhythm appeals to all the sensations which accompany muscular activity; mass to all the infinite adaptations to the force of gravity which

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[15]Fry, "Retrospect," Vision and Design, p. 302.

[16]See Fry, "Art and Science," Vision and Design, p. 83.

> we are forced to make; the spatial judgment is equally profound and universal in its application to life; our feeling about inclined planes is connected with our necessary judgments about the conformation of the earth itself; light again, is so necessary a condition of our existence that we become intensely sensitive to changes in its intensity. Colour is the only one of our elements which is not of critical or universal importance to life, and its emotional effect is neither so deep nor so clearly determined as the others. It will be seen, then, that the graphic arts arouse emotions in us by playing upon what one may call the overtones of some of our primary physical needs. They have, indeed, this great advantage over poetry, that they can appeal more directly and immediately to the emotional accompaniments of our bare physical existence.[17]

None of his attempts toward understanding and analyzing the aesthetic emotion explains it satisfactorily. Those attempts serve, rather, to confirm Fry's conviction that the aesthetic emotion is unique among human emotions and that the aesthetic experience is different from the other experiences of ordinary life. He explains the distinction between the aesthetic experience and everyday experience in "An Essay in Aesthetics" as a manifestation of the dichotomy he sees between the imaginative life and actual life:

> In the actual life the processes of natural selection have brought it about that the instinctive reaction, such, for instance, as flight from danger, shall be the important part of the whole process, and it is towards this that man bends his whole conscious endeavour. But in the imaginative life no such action is necessary, and, therefore, the whole consciousness may be focussed upon the perceptive and the emotional aspects of the experience. In this way we get, in the imaginative life, a different set of values, and a different kind of perception.[18]

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[17]Fry, "An Essay in Aesthetics," ibid. This essay was written in 1909. Fry gives greater emphasis to the function of color in his later work. See "Plastic Colour," Transformations, pp. 213-24 for the view he held on this subject in 1926.

[18]Fry, Vision and Design, p. 18.

When one considers the great value Fry places on the aesthetic emotion and his zealous efforts toward developing aesthetic sensibility in himself and in the public, his distinction between the response to art and the response to the objects of life suggests a hierarchy in which Fry begins to place a higher value upon the reality of the imaginative life than he does upon that of the active life, and in which the aesthetic experience is in a realm apart from life and on a pedestal above life. His thoughts are not inimical to Shelley's concept of the poet as "unacknowledged legislator" when Fry asserts that the imaginative life offers the true reality, and the active, real life, is to be valued only inasmuch as it approximates the imaginative life:

> And so, too, I think the artist might if he chose take a mystical attitude, and declare that the fullness and completeness of the imaginative life he leads may correspond to an existence more real and more important than any we know of in mortal life.
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> And in saying that, his appeal would find a sympathetic echo in most minds, for most people would, I think, say that the pleasures derived from art were of an altogether different character and more fundamental than merely sensual pleasures, that they did exercise some faculties which are felt to belong to whatever part of us there may be which is not entirely ephemeral and material.
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> It might even be that from this point of view we should rather justify actual life by its relation to the imaginative, justify nature by its likeness to art. I mean this, that since the imaginative life comes in the course of time to represent more or less what mankind feels to be the completest expression of its own nature, the freest use of its innate capacities, the actual life may be explained and justified by its approximation here and there, however partially and inadequately, to the freer and fuller life.[19]

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[19]Fry, "An Essay in Aesthetics," Vision and Design, p. 22.

Fry's proposition here that the best life imitates art involves him in a difficult paradox which he either ignores or fails to recognize, for he uses the assumption that the best life imitates art as part of an involved argument proving that art has no moral responsibility, that morality values "emotion by the standard of resultant action. Art appreciates emotion in and for itself."[20] Yet Fry is asking even more from art than Tolstoy, for in placing art in a higher position than life, yet apart from life, he is placing upon art the burden for the quality of life one lives. He is also limiting the number of people who live a quality life to a select few, to those who have the sensibility to share in the aesthetic emotion or the aesthetic state of mind. Fry did not consider himself a follower of G. E. Moore, nor did Clive Bell, as noted before, count him among the group who espoused and re-articulated Moore's ideas;[21] but Fry is coming very close here to a restatement of the Moorist philosophy that the highest achievement in life, that everything in one's environment, is to be valued by its ability to produce good states of mind, and that when one judges a work of art to be good, that is, capable of producing a good state of mind, one is making, as Bell readily admits, an ethical judgment of religious significance.[22]

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[20] Ibid., p. 27. For Fry's argument see pp. 27-29.

[21] Bell, Old Friends, p. 133.

[22] Moore asserts: "By far the most valuable things, which we know or can imagine, are certain states of consciousness, which may be roughly described as the pleasure of human intercourse and the enjoyment of beautiful objects. No one,

It is extremely important for Fry to demonstrate the autonomy of art and the separation of its accompanying emotions from life if he is to be free from moral and social considerations in determining the nature and function of art and in distinguishing good from bad art. His insistence that the aesthetic state of mind is not only a response to order and harmonious formal relations, qualities which would appeal to the intellect alone, but also a response to something more, assists in widening the gap between art and life:

> It is not a mere recognition of order and interrelation; every part, as well as the whole, becomes suffused with an emotional tone. Now, from our definition of this pure beauty [Fry defines this as the "emotion about forms"], the emotional tone is not due to any recognizable reminiscence or suggestion of the emotional experiences of life; but I sometimes wonder if it nevertheless does not get its

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probably, who has asked himself the question has ever doubted that personal affection and the appreciation of what is beautiful in Art or Nature, are good in themselves; nor if we consider strictly what things are worth having purely for their own sakes, does it appear probable that any one will think that anything else has nearly so great a value as the things which are included under these two heads." George Edward Moore, Principia Ethica (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), pp. 188-89. Moore also believes, regarding material objects, that "to prove that a thing is truly beautiful is to prove that a whole, to which it bears a particular relation as a part, is truly good." Ibid., p. 202. Clive Bell considers art and religion "two roads by which men escape from circumstance to ecstasy. Between aesthetic and religious rapture there is a family alliance. Art and Religion are means to similar states of mind. And if we are licensed to lay aside the science of aesthetics and going behind our emotion and its object, consider what is in the mind of the artist, we may say, loosely enough, that art is a manifestation of the religious sense. If it be an expression of emotion--as I am persuaded that it is--it is an expression of that emotion which is the vital force in every religion, or, at any rate, it expresses an emotion felt for that which is the essence of all. We may say that both art and religion are manifestations of man's religious sense, if by 'man's religious sense' we mean his sense of ultimate reality." Clive Bell, Art, pp. 92-93.

> forces from arousing some very deep, very vague, and immensely generalized reminiscences. It looks as though art had got access to the substratum of all the emotional colours of life, to something which underlies all the particular and specialized emotions of actual life. It seems to derive an emotional energy from the very conditions of our existence by its revelation of an emotional significance in time and space. Or it may be that art really calls up, as it were, the residual traces left on the spirit by the different emotions of life, without however recalling the actual experiences, so that we get an echo of the emotion without the limitation and particular direction which it had in experience.[23]

Here again Fry brings himself to the inexplicable impasse, to the level of emotional response, whether psychological or mystical in origin, which strengthens his conviction that the aesthetic experience is unique among the experiences of which man is capable, but which defies his scientific, formalistic analysis.

3. Nature of the Art Work

Fry's inability to define the aesthetic emotion precisely does not prevent him from directing his attention to the object which arouses that emotion--the art work. Since the aesthetic response is independent of the demands of the active life, whatever arouses the aesthetic response must be independent from the associations of life. Therefore the task of the artist, Fry believes, is to produce works of art capable of producing the aesthetic state of mind without reliance upon associations from real life:

> All art depends upon cutting off the practical responses to sensations of ordinary life, thereby

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[23]Fry, The Artist and Psychoanalysis, pp. 19-20. For Fry's definition of the passion for pure beauty, see ibid., p. 18.

> setting free a pure and as it were disembodied functioning of the spirit; but in so far as the artist relies on the associated ideas of the objects which he represents, his work is not completely free and pure, since romantic associations imply at least an imagined practical activity. The disadvantage of such an art of associated ideas is that its effect really depends on what we bring with us: it adds no entirely new factor to our experience.[24]

In order to create good works of art, free from reliance on associated ideas, the artist must realize forms in their inevitable relations, a process requiring the intellect. Fry breaks down the activity of the intellect in science to two aspects, the curiosity which deals with particular facts and the generalizing intellect which discerns inevitable relations. These two aspects, he finds, have their analogue in art:

> Curiosity impels the artist to the consideration of every possible form in nature: under its stimulus he tends to accept each form in all its particularity as a given, unalterable fact. The other kind of intellectual activity impels the artist to attempt the reduction of all forms, as it were, to some common denominator which will make them comparable with one another. It impels him to discover some aesthetically intelligible principle in various forms and even to envisage the possibility of some kind of abstract form in the aesthetic contemplation of which the mind would attain satisfaction--a satisfaction curiously parallel to that which the mind gets from the intellectual recognition of abstract truth.[25]

The role of the intellect is limited, however, and can create problems for the artist:

> . . . in so far as the artist's curiosity remains a purely intellectual curiosity it interferes with the

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[24]Fry, "The French Post-Impressionists," Vision and Design, p. 242.

[25]Roger Fry, "Introduction" to Catalogue of an Exhibition of Florentine Painting before 1500 (London: Printed for the Burlington Fine Arts Club, 1920), p. 8.

> perfection and purity of the work of art by introducing an alien and non-aesthetic element and appealing to non-aesthetic desires; in so far as it merely supplies the artist with new motives and a richer material out of which to build his designs, it is useful but subsidiary. Thus the objection to a subject picture, in so far as one remains conscious of the subject as something outside of, and apart from, the form, is a valid objection to the intrusion of intellect, of however rudimentary a kind, into an aesthetic whole.[26]

The intellect performs only a part of the activity of the artist; even more important is what he feels, the emotion he has. Fry conceives the form as the "direct outcome of an apprehension of some emotion of actual life by the artist."[27] In seeing the picture, the spectator, ideally, travels in an opposite direction along the same road as the artist and himself feels the original emotion, the form and the emotion being bound together in the aesthetic whole. The work becomes a living thing with life of its own, complete in itself. Fry praises Cézanne's M. Geffroy for this quality, asserting that in this painting Cézanne may "have felt that he had 'realized,' so overwhelming is the impression of living reality," reinforcing "Cézanne's idea that the artist is the means by which nature becomes self-conscious."[28]

Art, then, for Fry is many things. It is the "chief organ of the imaginative life,"[29] and it is "an expression and

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[26]Fry, "Introduction" to Catalogue of an Exhibition of Florentine Painting, pp. 8-9.

[27]Fry, "Retrospect," Vision and Design, p. 294.

[28]Roger Fry, Cézanne, p. 71.

[29]Fry, "An Essay in Aesthetics," Vision and Design, p. 24.

a stimulus of this imaginative life, which is separated from actual life by the absence of responsive action."[30] It is also "one of the chief organs of what, for want of a better word," Fry calls "the spiritual life. It both stimulates and controls those indefinable overtones of the material life of man which all of us at moments feel to have a quality of permanence and reality that does not belong to the rest of our experience."[31] Through art "human beings can communicate to each other the quality and quiddity of their experience,"[32] for the art work communicates the artist's state of mind and can evoke "in ourselves certain states of mind."[33] Art works may then be evaluated by comparing "the state of mind which results from contemplating one work of art with that which results from contemplating another."[34]

4. Formal Relations

The process of spiritual revelation, as analyzed by Fry, is complex. The art work becomes, according to his system, the formal objectification of an emotion felt by the artist. The aesthetic emotion is an emotion about form. In some people, Fry believes, "purely formal relations of certain kinds arouse peculiarly profound emotions, or rather I ought to say the recognition by them of particular kinds of formal relations

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[30] Fry, "An Essay in Aesthetics," Vision and Design, p. 20.

[31] Fry, "Art and Socialism," ibid., p. 55.

[32] Fry, Last Lectures, p. 11.

[33] Ibid., p. 16.

[34] Ibid., pp. 16-17.

arouse these emotions."[35] This response to formal relations first occurs in the artist, who "passes from pure sensations to emotions aroused by means of sensations."[36] He transmits his emotions through the art work, using "natural forms which, in themselves, are calculated to move our emotions," and presenting "these in such a manner that the forms themselves generate in us emotional states, based upon the fundamental necessities of our physical and physiological nature."[37] We respond to the art work for the sake of experiencing the emotions aroused, but not, and here Fry takes issue with Tolstoy, for any influence those emotions might have on life.[38] The ideal spectator, according to Fry, responds only to formal relations:

> We may suppose him to be so absorbed in purely formal relations as to be indifferent even to . . . representation. We may suppose him to be moved by the pure contemplation of the spatial relations of plastic volumes. It is when we have got to this point that we seem to have isolated this extremely elusive aesthetic quality which is the one constant quality of all works of art, and which seems to be independent of all the prepossessions and associations which the spectator brings with him from his past life.[39]

Yet the spectator's response is not purely mechanical. Rather, as Fry has it, it almost mystical in nature, for "there is the consciousness of purpose, the consciousness of a peculiar relation of sympathy with the man who made this thing in order

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[35]Fry, The Artist and Psychoanalysis, p. 7.

[36]Fry, "An Essay in Aesthetics," Vision and Design, p. 37.

[37]Ibid. [38]See ibid., p. 28.

[39]Fry, "Retrospect," ibid., pp. 298-99.

to arouse precisely the sensations we experience."[40] To recognize the artist's purpose, Fry believes, is "an essential part of the aesthetic judgment proper":[41]

> The perception of purposeful order and variety in an object gives us the feeling which we express by saying that it is beautiful, but when by means of sensations our emotions are aroused, we demand purposeful order and variety in them also, and if this can only be brought about by the sacrifice of sensual beauty we willingly overlook its absence.[42]

Not all artists produce works in which "purposeful order and variety" exist. Lecturing to a meeting of psychologists, Fry divides artists into two groups, one which is "preoccupied with creating a fantasy-world in which the fulfilment of wishes is realised" and the other which "is concerned with the contemplation of formal relations."[43] The activity of the second group is the "distinctive esthetic activity" and "as much detached from the instinctive life as any human activity that we know."[44] The activity of this second group is that of the intellect, but of a particular kind, as Fry explains in Cézanne:

> What is here called intellect is not, of course, a purely logical function. All apprehension of formal relations depends on the special sensibility of the

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[40] Fry, "An Essay in Aesthetics," Vision and Design, p. 30.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid. Fry distinguishes between two uses of the term "beauty" in "An Essay in Aesthetics" (1909). See ibid. As noted above, in The Artist and Psychoanalysis (1924), Fry calls an "emotion about forms" the "passion for pure beauty," p. 18.

[43] Fry, The Artist and Psychoanalysis, p. 4.

[44] Ibid.

> artist. . . . But an artist's sensibility to form appears as having two almost distinct functions according as it is applied to the correlation of all the separate forms in a design, and as applied to the detailed texture of form, its minor variations and play of surface. In comparing these two one is tempted to use the word intellectual of the former because it demands capacities of an analogous kind to the pure intellect and because artists who have shown this power in a high degree have generally shown their intellectual force in other respects.[45]

Most artistic productions belong to the class of "popular, commercial or impure art," whose purpose is "to satisfy . . . emotional pleasure in the associated ideas of images which the mass of mankind feel so strongly."[46] The number of artists who carry on the esthetic activity is as limited as the audience for the good works they produce:

> It so happens that these systems of formal relations the meaning of which is apprehended by a comparatively few people in each generation, have a curious vitality and longevity, whereas these works in which appeal is made chiefly to the associated ideas of images rarely survive the generation for whose pleasure they were made. This may be because the emotions about objects change more rapidly than the emotions about form. But whatever the reason, the result is that the accumulated and inherited artistic treasure of mankind is made up almost entirely of those works in which formal design is the predominant consideration.[47]

Beforesuch works "the mind is held in delighted equilibrium by the contemplation of the inevitable relations of all the parts of the whole, so that no need exists to make reference to what is outside the unity, and this becomes for the time being

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[45] Fry, Cézanne, p. 71, see footnote.

[46] Fry, The Artist and Psychoanalysis, p. 9.

[47] Ibid.

a universe."[48] In his discussion of Seurat's "Bathers," Fry illustrates the operation of this:

> It is a mood of utter withdrawal from all the ordinary as well as all the poetic implications of things into a region of pure and almost abstract harmony. For that, indeed, is the secret of this so great composition, the compelling harmony of all these forms, the so evident inevitability of all its correspondences and correlations. Boots and trousers lose their everyday banality when they are implicated in so close-woven a texture of formal harmony, however relentlessly their shapes are defined.[49]

Fry's dissatisfaction with the Impressionist painters stems chiefly from the "want of structural design"[50] he finds in them. In 1920, concluding the essays in Vision and Design with "Retrospect," the reflections upon his past ideas, Fry acknowledges how much Post-Impressionism has in common with Impressionism, but he still emphasizes, as he did following the reaction to the Post-Impressionist exhibition, "that the modern movement was essentially a return to the ideas of formal design which had been almost lost sight of in the fervid pursuit of naturalistic representation."[51] Fry considers a commitment to naturalistic representation as a too severe restriction upon the artist and the spectator, but he also believes that "in order to maintain the quality of vital force in his design," the artist "must always be pressing

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[48]Fry, "Art and Science," Vision and Design, p. 81.

[49]Fry, "Seurat," Transformations, p. 191.

[50]Roger Fry, Characteristics of French Art (New York: Brentano's, 1933), p. 144.

[51]Fry, "Retrospect," Vision and Design, p. 290.

against some resistance. With us the resistance arises out of the intractibility of the phenomena. The artist's difficulty is with the proper organizing of that chaos of sensation into expressive form."[52] That the expression can exist within the form rather than in the objects is evidenced, Fry discovers, in Chardin's pictures which provide "striking proofs that arrangements of form have a direct and profound effect on the mind quite apart from what the forms may represent."[53] As the artist works, he constantly makes choices, limiting the possibility of representation:

> For nature is infinite and a picture is finite. At least it has a frame, it stops somewhere, which nature does not, and how much depends on where you stop. And wherever you stop, you have upset nature, you have plumped for some things and thrown away others: you have created a focus. And it does not end there; at every stage you will be making a choice, and by making a choice you have put something into your image which was not in nature. Most people imagine that there is something really there in nature and that you can say positively and with objective truth what it is, but this is only so of the coarser facts. Those final valuations, those particular accents of forms, tone and colour on which a work of art depends, can never be stated objectively, they depend on the whole system which the artist has set up by his various choices.[54]

Each artist develops his own system for dealing with the diversity of nature. Cézanne, for instance, asserted "that natural forms all tend to the sphere, the cone, and the cylinder."[55]

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[52] M. Dalton, Byzantine Enamels in Mr. Pierpont Morgan's Collection (with a note by Roger Fry) (London: Chatto and Windus for the Burlington Magazine, 1912), p. 16.

[53] Fry, Characteristics of French Art, p. 65.

[54] Ibid., p. 105.

[55] Fry, Cézanne, p. 52.

Fry considers it irrelevant whether Cézanne considered this a law. What is important is that "he found these forms convenient as a kind of intellectual scaffolding to which the actual form could be related and referred," and "that his interpretation of natural form always seems to imply that he is at once thinking in terms of extremely simple geometrical forms, and allowing those to be infinitely and infinitesimally modified at each point by his visual sensations."[56]

5. The Artist's Vision

The success of the design or of the formal relations established in a picture or other art form does not rest, though, for Fry, in precise, mathematical order, in the conscious, intellectual rendering of specific designs. Rather, those designs are best which are expressive of the unique sensibility of the artist. He recognizes that there is, in art, "at once order and uniqueness, which means incessant variation from the precise or mathematical order. . . . The intellect finds satisfaction most definitely in the recognition of a causal sequence."[57] Yet there are also those aspects of the art work which cannot be classified and comprehended with precision which Fry calls "hypothetically," the "vital rhythms, through which the subconscious feelings reveal themselves to us by what we call his sensibility. It is in this region, then, which lies between rigid order and chaos, that the

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[56] Ibid., pp. 52-53.

[57] Fry, Last Lectures, p. 29.

artist's sensibility functions."[58] Fry is really establishing two aspects of design, distinguishing between the design which is the product, more or less, of the intellect acting consciously and purposefully, and the rhythm of the design which is the product of the unconscious of the artist, maintaining that "indeed we may almost declare that all fully rhythmic movement must be carried on more or less unconsciously; whereas the feeling which is expressed in the general design is not so fully divorced from consciousness."[59] The best art, for Fry, has both the unconscious and conscious aspects contributing.[60]

The quality of the design and the nature of the rhythm are dependent upon the artist's vision. If the design, the discernment and recognition of formal relations, is what is left when the associated ideas are gone, then what the artist sees becomes of the utmost importance, especially if what he sees must set up in him an emotion which will be transmitted to the spectator through the art work. Fry finds much of Flemish art wanting because it offers so often only "a minute and detailed verisimilitude," only the "vision of everyday practical life" which is "more accessible to the untrained eye."[61] Fry believes that the "vision of everyday life" concentrates on detail:

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[58]Fry, Last Lectures, p. 33. [59]Ibid., pp. 27-28.

[60]Fry, "On Some Modern Drawings," Transformations, p. 208. See Fry's comparison of Matisse with the Cubists.

[61]Roger Fry, Flemish Art: A Critical Survey (New York: Brentano's, 1927), p. 5.

> To take the simplest example, every one sees at once the features of a face; we are trained for this by the pressing need of reading its expression. No one but an artist who has cultivated the contemplative vision ever sees the head, ever notices those minute gradations of tone, those almost imperceptible changes of distinctness in the contour by which we grasp an idea of the volume of the whole head and the relation of mask to skull.[62]

Artists who have contemplative and disinterested vision view the "phenomena of nature . . . with a more detached eye," in order "to discover those more universal truths which escape the untrained vision, distorted as it is from infancy, by the needs of the practical and instinctive life."[63]

In an essay, "The Artist's Vision," first published in 1919, Fry makes a distinction between four kinds of vision, the vision of the artist, the creative, being the closest to the contemplative and disinterested and also being the one most demanding of both the conscious and unconscious. The first and most mundane of the four is the practical vision, the vision with which we conduct our everyday life, having for us "no more concern after we have read the label on the object," for "vision ceases the moment it has served its biological function."[64] The second kind, above the practical vision in Fry's hierarchy, is the "curiosity vision" which contemplates the object with disinterest. The object itself "has no significance for actual life; it is a play or fancy object, and our vision dwells much more consciously and

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[62]Fry, Flemish Art: A Critical Survey, p. 6.

[63]Ibid., p. 5.

[64]Fry, Vision and Design, p. 48.

deliberately upon it. We notice to some extent its forms and colours, especially when it is new to us."[65] To arouse the third type of vision, the object "must be more than a 'curio': it has to be a work of art."[66] This is the "aesthetic vision," the vision to which the artist appeals. Those works of art to which the aesthetic vision responds result from the artist's need to express his feelings, and the artists "who indulge in this vision are entirely absorbed in apprehending the relation of forms and colour to one another, as they cohere within the object."[67] The fourth and final type of vision, which creates the objects apprehended by the aesthetic vision, is the creative:

> This, I think, is the furthest perversion of the gifts of nature of which man is guilty. It demands the most complete detachment from any of the meanings and implications of appearances. Almost any turn of the kaleidoscope of nature may set up in the artist this detached and impassioned vision, the (aesthetically) chaotic and accidental conjunction of forms and colours begins to crystallise into a harmony; and as this harmony becomes clear to the artist, his actual vision becomes distorted by the emphasis of the rhythm which has been set up within him. Certain relations of directions of line become for him full of meaning; he apprehends them no longer casually or merely curiously, but passionately, and these lines begin to be so stressed and stand out so clearly from the rest that he sees them far more distinctly than he did at first. Similarly colours, which in nature have almost always a certain vagueness and elusiveness, become so definite and clear to him, owing to their now necessary relation to other colours, that if he chooses to paint his vision he can state them positively and definitely. In such a creative vision the objects as such tend to disappear, to lose their separate unities, and to take their places as so many bits in the whole mosaic of vision. The texture of the whole field of vision becomes so close

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[65] Fry, Vision and Design, pp. 48-49.

[66] Ibid., p. 49. [67] Ibid.

> that the coherence of the separate patches of tone and colour within each object is no stronger than the coherence with every other tone and colour throughout the field.[68]

The artist is always seeking, according to Fry, those objects which will arouse the creative vision, particularly objects which "make no strong aesthetic appeal in themselves," which "attract by some oddity or peculiarity of form or colour, and thereby suggest to him new and intriguing rhythms."[69] Just as the artist looks at the object only to apprehend its formal relations, so also must the spectator in order to apprehend the artist's work properly, for "it is only when an object exists in our lives for no other purpose than to be seen that we really look at it."[70] When one adopts the "artistic attitude of pure vision," likeness to nature is irrelevant to him; to the artist it is a negative consideration.[71] Indeed, the artist ought not to let trueness to nature distort his vision any more than he ought to let the emotional state aroused by the vision overwhelm that vision. Fry criticizes Sir Claude Phillips for this latter fault and asserts that he "allowed the vision to set up in his mind an emotional state in which the vision itself was lost in the vague overtones of associated ideas and feelings."[72]

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[68]Fry, "The Artist's Vision," Vision and Design, pp. 51-52.

[69]Ibid., p. 53.

[70]Fry, "An Essay in Aesthetics," Vision and Design, p. 25.

[71]Ibid.

[72]Fry, "Culture and Snobbism," Transformations, p. 59.

It is helpful, in understanding Fry's analysis of the artist's vision, to follow this hypothetical account of the process of creation Cézanne experienced in painting "Provençal Mas":

> We may describe the process by which such a picture is arrived at in some such way as this:--the actual objects presented to the artist's vision are first deprived of all those specific characters by which we ordinarily apprehend their concrete existence--they are reduced to pure elements of space and volume. In this abstract world these elements are perfectly co-ordinated and organized by the artist's sensual intelligence, they attain logical consistency. These abstractions are then brought back into the concrete world of real things, not by giving them back their specific peculiarities, but by expressing them in an incessantly varying and shifting texture. They retain their abstract intelligibility, their amenity to the human mind, and regain that reality of actual things which is absent from all abstractions.
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> Of course in laying all this out one is falsifying the actual processes of the artist's mind. In reality, the processes go on simultaneously and unconsciously--indeed the unconsciousness is essential to the nervous vitality of the texture. No doubt all great art arrives at some such solution of the apparently insoluble problem of artistic creation. Here in certain works of Cézanne we seem to get a particularly clear vision of the process of such creations.[73]

Fry is vague here in his statement of what goes on inside the "artist's sensual intelligence" when the unconscious activity of the artist is most active, for he is again confronted by his inability to dissect the aesthetic emotion. Yet this continues to be one of Fry's chief concerns; and as his aesthetic develops during his career, it is the intensity of the passion aroused by the artist's vision, it is the power of the idea which seizes the artist, and his ability to express

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[73]Fry, Cézanne, pp. 58-59.

that idea without obvious intellectual, mechanical rendering, which determines the quality of the art work.

6. Sensibility and Vitality

When Fry felt obligated as Slade Professor of Art at Cambridge to establish some systematic criteria as a working structure from which to survey and judge the artistic heritage of mankind, he adopted sensibility and vitality as those criteria, for he felt that the presence of these two qualities distinguishes the work of the great artist from the merely capable one. Whether the work of art is beautiful is unimportant, "it is its power of communicating to us the artist's state of mind that gives it its importance. And it is precisely in the region which lies beyond any fixed and determined law that the spirit reveals itself."[74] It is in this region, the region "between rigid order and chaos, that the artist's sensibility functions."[75] The artist may reveal his "subconscious feelings" through a sensibility of texture, a surface sensibility, for the "perpetual slight variations of surface keep the mind and attention fixed in the world of sensation. We are, as it were, forced to abandon our intellectual in favor of our sensual logic."[76]

The work of a craftsman, unlike that of an artist, is likely to lack surface sensibility. In an effort "to rival the infallibility of the machine,"[77] craftsmen may purposefully

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[74] Fry, Last Lectures, p. 32.

[75] Ibid., p. 33.

[76] Ibid., p. 36.

[77] Ibid., p. 39.

suppress sensibility to produce an art object "regarded by its owner primarily as evidence and symbol of his social prepotency."[78] Such works often display what Fry calls the "luxury effect"; that is, "no trace of an artist's sensibility is allowed ever to appear."[79] Although these art objects may be valued by the Philistines, they are not by those who assume, as does Fry, "that the ideal type of the work of art which we keep in mind in our aesthetic enquiries is the outcome of a purely free and biologically gratuitous (or useless) spiritual activity."[80] Inferior works of art are the result when the sensibility of the artist is suppressed and his spiritual activity is dormant.

When the artist's sensibility functions freely, on the other hand, works which have vitality, which "give us a strong illusion that they possess a life of their own,"[81] are frequently the result. This vitality, according to Fry, is "not at all dependent upon its being a likeness of a living thing,"[82] for if the vital image is one which arouses the idea of an inner energy expressing itself in the form, we may also have in inanimate things the impress which they have received from life."[83] Old clothes which "bear the stamp of life" offer an example of this.[84] Vitality must be carefully balanced, for either a lack or an excess may prove detrimental to the art work. Works attempting to express abstractions or ideas,

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[78] Fry, Last Lectures, p. 38. [79] Ibid., p. 39.
[80] Ibid., p. 37. [81] Ibid., p. 40. [82] Ibid., p. 42.
[83] Ibid., p. 45. [84] Ibid.

"the norm from which all individuals have gone astray and failed in one way or another,"[85] are "inimical to vitality, for it is difficult to endow an abstraction with life."[86] Equally inimical is an excess of vitality, for it may detract from our experience of art as art and "we may mistake our reaction to living beings for our reaction to the artist's message."[87] Vitality may also be misused, as it is, for instance, in the works Fry labels "Expressionist," those works in which "the artist tries not only to realize his idea but to express to the world his feeling about his idea."[88] The work is not allowed to speak freely to the spectator, for the artists, "besides expressing their idea . . . attempt to impress the spectator with its significance."[89] Fry discovers the proper vitality in a work like Castagno's "Crucifixion" in which, though the figures are vital, "we are left alone with the vision. We can contemplate it as though we had come upon the scene unawares."[90]

7. Idea

Fry believes that conceptualization is a problem for the artist only if he suppresses his sensibility in order to conform to his idea of the finished art work or if he attempts to create an art work in the image of an idea, inspired, let us say, by an abstraction rather than by an object. It is

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[85] Fry, Last Lectures, p. 43.

[86] Ibid., p. 44. [87] Ibid., p. 48. [88] Ibid., p. 46.

[89] Ibid. [90] Ibid., p. 47.

when the conscious aspect of the artist overwhelms the unconscious, when the intellectual overwhelms the instinctual, when the logical and mental overwhelm the emotional that the artist produces sterile, mechanical works. The intellect is instrumental in determining the design of the art work, in discerning the formal relations, yet for Fry something more is also involved, what he calls "idea," the thought which endows the form with significance.

Fry attempts, in analyzing the response to a Sung Bowl, to explain the "idea" of the artist:

> Now while we are thus occupied there comes to us, I think, a feeling of purpose; we feel that all these sensually logical conformities are the outcome of a particular feeling, or of what, for want of a better word, we call an idea; and we may even say that the pot is the expression of an idea in the artist's mind.[91]

If Fry were to reconsider this statement, he might qualify the word "mind," perhaps expanding it to encompass more completely the spiritual activity of the artist, but this is, as he states, a tentative thought, not a declaration. The term "idea" has been borrowed by Fry from Flaubert. Attempting to define "significant form," a convenient label coined by Clive Bell,[92] Fry uses "idea" in his explanation:

> I think we are all agreed that we mean by significant form something other than agreeable arrangements of form, harmonious patterns, and the like. We feel that a work which possesses it is the outcome of an endeavour to express an

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[91]Fry, "The Artist's Vision," Vision and Design, p. 33.

[92]See Fry, "Retrospect," ibid., p. 301, and Clive Bell, Art, p. 8.

> idea rather than to create a pleasing object. Personally, at least, I always feel that it implies the effort on the part of the artist to bend to our emotional understanding by means of his passionate conviction some intractible material which is alien to our spirit.
>
> I seem unable at present to get beyond this vague adumbration of the nature of significant form. Flaubert's 'expression of the idea' seems to me to correspond exactly to what I mean, but, alas! he never explained and probably could not, what he meant by the 'idea.'[93]

Fry often uses the term "idea" to embody what it is that Cézanne endeavors to express, what Cézanne himself termed "his little sensation."[94] It is not surprising that Fry borrows this term, for he notes interesting parallels between Flaubert and Cézanne:

> Cézanne then was a Classic artist, but perhaps all great Classics are made by the repression of a Romantic. In this respect we find a curious parallel to Cézanne in Flaubert. These two men indeed, though so isolated, were both typical of a certain aspect of the spiritual process of the nineteenth century, and though so different in character, described in their lives such similar curves that the comparison between them is not altogether unilluminating. Both were children of the Romantic movement, both shared the sublime and heroic faith in art which that movement engendered, its devotion and absolutism. Both found their way by an infinitely laborious process out of the too facile formulae of their youth to a somewhat similar position, to an art based on passionate study of actual life, but ending in a complete transformation of its data. Both were fortunately entrenched in the solid position of a modest but assured income which enabled them to brave the violent storms of indignation which each in his own life, provoked, not indeed from any desire for advertisement or self-assertion, but as an inevitable result of following the dictates of aesthetic expression. Without this accidental protection it is unthinkable that either should have been able to function. But that condition

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[93] Fry, "Retrospect," Vision and Design, p. 302.

[94] Fry, "Paul Cézanne," ibid., p. 260.

> being given, the perfect devotion of their lives to an idea, their utter disregard of all recognition by the world, have in each case something of heroic magnanimity.[95]

Cézanne's "devotion" to an idea, to "his little sensation," led him to seek the proper material quality to embody it, such as Fry claims he achieves in one of his still-lifes, "Compotier":

> So perfect a correspondence of material quality to the idea as this picture shows is by no means of common occurrence in art. It is not always possible for the artist to find in the material to his hand the perfect embodiment of his feeling.[96]

Impressionism, according to Fry, supplied the material for Cézanne: Cézanne supplied the idea:

> He always said, 'If I could only realize.' Realizing, for him, did not mean verisimilitude, of that he had a horror, but the discovery in appearances of some underlying structural unity which answered a profound demand of the spirit. His problem was how to use the new revelations of Impressionism to give that result. How, without missing the infinity of nature, the complexity and richness of its vibrations, how to build that solidly and articulately co-ordinated unity in which the spirit can rest satisfied. And it was the extent to which he succeeded in solving this problem that gives his work that significance which seems to me to appear more impressive and more profound as it grows more familiar to us.[97]

The reality beneath appearance which Cézanne discovered, the expression of the spiritual response, the idea which stirred in Cézanne as he contemplated his subject, Fry discovers particularly in Cézanne's still lifes: "If the words tragic, menacing, noble or lyrical seem out of place before Cézanne's still lifes, one feels none the less that the emotions they

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[95]Fry, Cézanne, pp. 87-88. [96]Ibid., p. 43.

[97]Fry, Characteristics of French Art, pp. 144-45.

arouse are curiously analogous to these states of mind."[98] The undramatic nature of Cézanne's still lifes, Fry believes, does not derive from a lack of emotion, but rather from an absence of "dramatic incident. One may wonder whether painting has ever aroused graver, more powerful, more massive emotions than those to which we are compelled by some of Cézanne's masterpieces in this genre."[99] In his youth Cézanne had tried to be a visionary painter, attempting to paint objects existing in his imagination. He produced his masterpieces when, influenced by Pissaro's example, he looked to external objects for the source of his vision:

> It is true that the inner vision and the ambition to create a priori constructions corresponding to the demands of his subjective imaginative life never ceased to haunt him, but from this moment the 'motive,' the idea accepted from the visible world, claimed an ever greater proportion of his indefatigable energy.[100]

To a great extent, the "idea" bears the mystical burden for the aesthetic emotion. "Idea" for Fry is not merely a thought or a concept expressed in form and color; it is the whole emotional, sensational, intellectual construct set up in the artist by something in the visible world which is then transmitted or "realized" in the art work. It is what the artist sees when he penetrates beneath the cloak of appearance and discovers the true reality, the reality he is forced, passionately, Fry would claim, to express.

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[98] Fry, Cézanne, p. 42.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Ibid., p. 35.

8. Plasticity

When one considers Fry's admiration for Cézanne's still-lifes and his discovery in them of what, for want of better words, I shall call his aesthetic ideal, it is not surprising that the still-life should be Fry's test for the greatness of a painter, that he should consider it "a kind of acid test of the passion for disinterested and contemplative vision . . . the proof that the artist is so preoccupied with purely visual values that he can dispense with any other raison d'être for his picture."[101] The still-life enables the artist to detach himself from his feelings toward humanity and from the associated demands and emotions of everyday life:

> . . . in the still-life . . . we frequently catch the purest self-revelation of the artist. In any other subject humanity intervenes. It is almost impossible that other men should not influence the artist by their prejudices and partizanship. If the artist rebels against these, the art of rebellion is itself a deformation of his idea. If he disregards them and frees himself from all the commonplaces of sentiment, the effort still leaves its traces on his design. But the still-life excludes all these questions and guards the picture itself from the misconstruction of those whose contact with art is confined to its effect as representation. In still-life the ideas and emotions associated with the objects represented are, for the most part, so utterly commonplace and insignificant that neither artist nor spectator need consider them. It is this fact that makes the still-life so valuable to the critic as a gauge of the artist's personality.[102]

The still-life, as the purest form of self-revelation of the artist, his emotions and ideas, and as the product of his

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[101] Fry, Reflections on British Painting, p. 26.

[102] Fry, Cézanne, p. 41.

disinterested and contemplative vision, is important to Fry in attempting to distinguish between "visual plastic art," which he favors, and a "descriptive conceptual art,"[103] which he does not. Although he admits that others, like Herbert Read, consider the distinction between "pictorial consciousness," such as Fry observes expressed in most British painting, and a "plastic consciousness" a mere quibbling over a technical detail, Fry believes that the difference between the two is a fundamental issue:

> . . . this plastic consciousness is of prime importance in the spiritual value of visual art. For the power to see and feel plastic form is almost a measure of an artist's power to free himself from the interest of ordinary life and attain to an attitude of detachment in which the spiritual significance of formal relations becomes apparent.[104]

The term "plasticity" is used frequently in Fry's criticism, and always honorifically. He considers it an essential quality of good art and in his essay "On Some Modern Drawings," published in Transformations in 1926, he asserts that "the imagination is only strongly affected through vision by the vivid realisation of plastic forms."[105] Plasticity is not defined precisely by Fry, yet it appears to be similar to Berenson's concept of tactile values:

> I prefer to the word 'form' to use the expression 'tactile values,' for form in the figure arts gives us pleasure because it has extracted and presented to us the corporeal and structural significance of objects more quickly and more completely than we . . . could have grasped them by ourselves. This

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[103] Fry, Reflections on British Painting, p. 26.

[104] Ibid., p. 27.

[105] Fry, Transformations, p. 200.

> intimate realisation of an object comes to us only when we unconsciously translate our retinal impressions of it into ideated sensations of touch, pressure, and grasp--hence the phrase 'tactile values.'[106]

In praising Gainsborough for feeling plastically, Fry explains that "he felt the whole body and volume of the figure, felt the intimate connection of each part with all the rest, so that the figure revealed by its poise and movement, that essential unity."[107] Fry's use of the verb feel in describing plasticity suggests that it is not merely a formal quality, but that it is the formal expression of a feeling associated with the apprehension of an object in space. It is Chardin's plasticity which brings Fry to consider him one of the greatest French painters, for "he expressed, by his handling of the medium, the full density and complexity of real things, there are no gaps in his plastic sequence, we realize here the full volume of the figure, the exact situation of every plane, the recession of the floor."[108] The concern for volume of the figure alone is not sufficient for perfect plasticity as Fry conceived it. Thus Seurat, though he claimed a vital interest in volume, is inferior to Cézanne, plastically, in Fry's estimation:

> To begin with, his contours are a kind of concentrated abstract of the complex appearances of nature, they are boiled down and reduced to an almost geometrical simplicity, and within the contours the modelling has been flattened and ironed out. We need not fear that

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[106]Bernard Berenson, The Central Italian Painters of the Renaissance (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1907), p. 33.

[107]Fry, Reflections on British Painting, p. 57.

[108]Fry, Characteristics of French Art, p. 69.

> his figures will move and destroy his composition--they cannot move, they are pressed specimens of humanity held for ever isolated and fixed in the pellucid amber of Seurat's space. For here lies the paradox of Seurat's art. His figures tell in the design almost as flat arabesques on the surface of his canvas and yet he used to define painting as 'l'art de creuser une toile', 'the art of making a canvas a hollow'. And in fact he does hollow out his picture space and feels so intensely about that that he will not fill it with anything more bulky than his flattened and scarcely modelled figures.
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> Both Seurat and Cézanne reacted against Impressionism, but they travelled in different directions. Cézanne finally conceived of space as permeated by a continuous plastic rhythm, Seurat suppressed, or rather compressed his plastic relief and his flattened figures merely measure intervals in the all-embracing space.[109]

Plasticity, of course, is not a quality distinct from design, but rather an element in the perfection of the design. Fry believes that Gainsborough, for instance, "is one of the few English artists who leave no holes in their designs."[110] By this expression Fry means "that the construction is complete throughout, that there are no gaps in the texture, no places where the artist is not sure what is happening. It means that every plane holds in its proper place and is consistent with all others."[111] In Cézanne Fry sees the meeting of the plastic and formal elements in perfect conjunction, a result of the influence of Poussin and El Greco, each contributing to Cézanne's greatness. Cézanne "studied both, taking from Poussin his discretion and the subtlety of his rhythm, and from El Greco

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[109] Fry, Characteristics of French Art, p. 148.

[110] Fry, Reflections on British Painting, p. 76.

[111] Ibid.

his great discovery of the permeation of every part of the design with a uniform and continuous plastic theme."[112]

9. Great Art

It often seems that Fry is evaluating art works predominantly on the basis of formal qualities, especially since stylistic analyses of painting and other art forms comprise the bulk of his critical works. The formal qualities are more easily analyzed and more easily discussed by a critic and are also more tangibly grasped by a spectator. Yet the greatest art works, for Fry, possess not only the formal qualities he praises, but also those more elusive qualities discussed above: expression of the artist's sensibility, evidence of the creative vision at work, passionate apprehension of an idea, and that "indefinable quality," an illusion of "vitality in artistic images."[113] The subject of the work has little relation to vitality, for Fry finds it present in a wide range of works from a New Guinea pig by an anonymous artist who "has somehow seized the principle of the animal's life," unmodified by "human preconceptions" and demands,[114] to Cézanne's "Card-players" in which the "feeling of life is no less intense than that of eternal stillness and repose."[115] This vitality can only exist, Fry feels, in original invention, for "whenever an

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[112]Fry, "El Greco," Vision and Design, p. 212.

[113]Fry, Last Lectures, p. 40.

[114]Ibid., p. 41.

[115]Fry, Cézanne, p. 73.

artist accepts the idea of another he is overtaken by a peculiar discouragement and uneasiness."[116]

Fry constantly reiterates the importance of the sensibility,[117] and consistently in the artists whom he praises for their vision, that vision is the result of the artist's sensibility. For instance, he praises Manet for the "distinction" and "air of nobility" in his style which "comes unconsciously out of Manet's honesty and sympathy of vision and his frank and vigorous directness of statement."[118] Likewise Fry praises Corot for his "instinctive sense of the placing of his volumes in the picture space," for the "penetrating intensity of his contemplation of the actual vision."[119] The challenge to the artist is to express his sensibility and vision while maintaining a disinterested contemplation of an existing scene. Fry makes detachment from the subject one test of great art throughout his career, praising Bellini's altarpiece at Pesaro in Giovanni Bellini, 1899, for "that aloofness on the artist's part from any one emotional parti pris" from which "there comes a wider range of sympathetic observation and the power of conceiving and visualizing a number of distinct types with varying

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[116] O. M. Dalton, Byzantine Enamels, p. 15.

[117] In "Speculations in Languedoc" Fry asserts: "For the production of the greatest art there is needed not only great sensibility and creative energy, but also the synapsis between them must put up just the right amount of resistence to hold back the sensibility from too immediate an outlet in creation." Fry, Transformations, p. 176. See also "The Seicento" in Transformations, p. 117.

[118] Fry, Characteristics of French Art, p. 120.

[119] Ibid., pp. 94-95.

ranges of emotions."[120] In one of his latest works, Characteristics of French Art, published in 1933, Fry asserts "that the greatest art does nothing to gratify the imaginative fulfilment of our personal egoistic wishes--it lifts us to a complete detachment in which we lose sight of our own personal life altogether."[121]

Yet for all his emulation of detachment, Fry maintains that "art is a passion or it is nothing," and that the artist, whether draughtsman or colourist or whatever, "has no reason to feel moral superiority because of the nature of his passion. He is fortunate to have it, and there is an end of the matter."[122] Fry is able to untangle himself from any ostensible contradiction by reasserting the importance of idea to great art. In a Chou vessel, for example, he observes the expression of the proper balance between the passionate grasp of the idea and the detached expression of it by the artist, "between the vehemence with which he has grasped his idea, the blunt frankness with which he has stated it, and that controlling influence which has made him shun any undue emphasis, any flourish of the virtuoso as a piece of vulgar self-assertion."[123]

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[120]Roger Fry, Giovanni Bellini (The Artist's Library, ed. Laurence Binyon; London: At the Sign of the Unicorn, 1899), pp. 29-30.

[121]Fry, Characteristics of French Art, p. 54.

[122]Fry, "Drawings at Burlington," Vision and Design, p. 247.

[123]Fry, "Some Aspects of Chinese Art," Transformations, p. 71.

10. Inferior Art

The qualities by which Fry distinguishes great art from inferior are limited to a few; the qualities which may relegate an art work to the status of inferior are more plentiful. Not only may those basic elements essential to good art works--design, plasticity, vision, sensibility, idea, passion, and vitality--all be missing, but also the artist may try to substitute an attention-getting device which might lead the spectator away from formal and spiritual qualities. Fry recognizes the pleasure which one may derive from the contemplation of "mere skill," for especially "when the curves . . . drawn describe vividly some object in life towards which we have pleasing associations we get a complex pleasure which is only too likely to be regarded as an aesthetic experience when in fact it is nothing of the kind."[124] In Sargent, for instance, Fry discovers an artist who lacked artistic vision, substituting in its place "the undifferentiated eye of the ordinary man trained to its finest acuteness for observation, and supplied with the most perfectly obedient and skilful hand to do the bidding."[125] Fry considers the work of such an artist applied rather than pure, "for, just as the man of applied science, having no particular passion for truth, applies the results, discovered by those who have, to some ulterior social end,

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[124]Fry, "Drawings at Burlington," Vision and Design, p. 246.

[125]Fry, "J. S. Sargent," Transformations, p. 133.

so Sargent knows how to use for his purposes the discoveries of pure art."[126] Fry also condemns decoration as a quality which marks the work of the craftsman, "the craftsmen always hugging safely the decorative surface, the masters already conceiving spatial and plastic relations so clearly that they cannot allow decorative considerations to interfere."[127] He dislikes the lack of vitality in both decorative works and in works of realistic representation in which the artist depends upon the represented object to supply the vitality. These works are in a sense descriptive, for they present the actual rather than the spiritual reality and whenever anything in a picture "ceases to serve towards the edification of the whole plastic volume, the moment it depends on reference to something outside the picture, it becomes descriptive of some other reality, and becomes part of an actual, and not a spiritual, reality."[128] Descriptive works have their greatest appeal to the "non-aesthetic public" which responds to the object represented rather than the formal qualities.[129]

The objects, persons, and ideas contained in a work of art, arousing associated emotions, can take various forms, all of them detracting from the quality of the art work, according to Fry. He believes that the anecdotal quality of Wilkie's works, for instance, detracts from the design so that "his

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[126]Fry, "J. S. Sargent," Transformations, p. 133.

[127]Fry, "Plastic Colour," ibid., p. 214.

[128]Fry, "Some Questions in Esthetics," ibid., p. 42.

[129]Fry, The Artist and Psychoanalysis, p. 8.

desire to make the point of his anecdote is too evident and leads him to sacrifice too much to it."[130] Fry is also impatient with sentimentality in art, a disease which he laments in much late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century art, although he acknowledges that "only the stronger intellects could keep their balance in the tornado of sentiment which raged in the mid-nineteenth century."[131] The "stronger intellect" is the greater artist, for such an abandonment to daydream hardly produces an art which will endure when the object arousing the sentimentality has lost its interest. Fry considers sentimentality expressionistic, and he denounces Expressionism on the grounds that the artist does not allow the work of art to stand alone as a self-consistent unity:

> He wishes to tell us not only what the experience was which led him to make the work of art, but what he felt about it. In effect the artist comes out from his work of art and nudges our elbow; he points to this and that and says, Don't you see what I mean? Or like a writer who cannot trust words to tell us his idea he underlines his adjectives.[132]

Formal qualities and relationships are not allowed, Fry believes, to speak for themselves in Expressionist works. The artist may depend upon poses as a "partly conventional language of gesture. . . . They are what we may call rhetorical poses, in

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[130]Fry, Reflections on British Painting, pp. 96-97.

[131]Fry, Characteristics of French Art, p. 97.

[132]Fry, Last Lectures, p. 46. Fry seems to have German art generally in mind here. He identifies by painter only two works: Grünewald's Crucifixion and a Chinese painting attributed to Liang K'ai which has no name. See ibid., p. 47. Fry's discussion of expressionism occurs in a lecture on "vitality" and is both general and unsatisfactory.

that they are not so much the result of the emotions as of the desire to express these emotions to the onlooker."[133] Such gesture plays an important role in dramatic representation. About this Fry's attitude changes. In 1901 in his essay, "Giotto," Fry praises the artist for his use of dramatic presentation.[134] When that essay is republished in Vision and Design in 1920, Fry is compelled to footnote it, admitting the discrepancy between its statement and his present ideas:

> I should be inclined to disagree wherever in this article there appears the assumption not only that the dramatic idea may have inspired the artist to the creation of his form, but that the value of the form for us is bound up with recognition of the more dramatic idea. It now seems to me possible by a more searching analysis of our experience in front of a work of art to disentangle our reaction to pure form from our reaction to its implied associated ideas.[135]

Not only does Fry attack works which are sentimental, anecdotal, expressionist, and dramatic, but also the works which are visionary, moralistic, symbolical, and illustrational. Blake is his example of a visionary artist:

> Blake, indeed, was an almost perfect example of the visionary. Now you will notice that the striking thing about the visionary is that he is not interested in vision, in the sense in which we use that word of artists, of people who happen to be deeply interested in the appearances of nature as revealed by sight. The visionary is not interested in vision because he keeps his eyes shut, as we do while we dream; for the visionary is one who dreams whilst he is awake and, in extreme cases, like that of Blake, even with his eye open. Of course those inner visions, whether of

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[133] Fry, "El Greco," Vision and Design, p. 208.

[134] Ibid., pp. 168-69.

[135] Ibid., p. 131. See footnote.

> ordinary dreams or wide-awake dreams, make use of our stored-up visual memories, but everyone, from early childhood on, has inevitably garnered a large number of these. But just as a great many people go through life without looking attentively at appearances, so the visionary has no need to probe any further; he has enough ready to hand for the fabrication of innumerable dream structures. Thus it came about that Blake scarcely looked at the external world at all, or only with a casual, superficial glance, never with the intense, contemplative gaze of the artist. He was far too much excited and interested in that vast interior phantasmagoria which passed across the screen of his inner vision. It was to the record of that he bent his executive powers.[136]

Fry's objection to an artist who paints, as does Blake, the vision from within rather than the vision aroused in response to an object or scene, is that he is little interested in formal relations, and the spectator must attempt to tune into the subconscious reality of the super-sensitive, mystical being, in order to share this experience, something limited to the few. The vision is but one form of the dream which, Fry asserts, is antagonistic to the aesthetic faculty:

> . . . nothing is more contrary to the essential esthetic faculty than the dream. The poet Mallarmé foresaw this long before Freud had revealed the psychological value of dreams, for in his poem in memory of Théophile Gautier he says that 'the spirit of Gautier, the pure poet, now watches over the garden of poetry from which he banishes the Dream, the enemy of his charge.' You notice that in this connection he calls him deliberately the pure poet, knowing that in proportion as poetry becomes impure it accepts the Dream.[137]

Fry believes similarly that the vision and the dream are inimical to pure plastic art, for they lead the spectator away from the plastic values that inhere in a work, providing a crutch for

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[136] Fry, Reflections on British Painting, pp. 83-84.

[137] Fry, The Artist and Psychoanalysis, p. 15.

those who cannot perceive formal relations. Symbolism provides a similar kind of crutch: "Since most people are unable to perceive the meaning of purely formal relations, . . . they always look for some meaning that can be attached to the values of actual life, they always hope to translate a work of art into terms of ideas with which they are familiar."[138]

11. Psychological vs. Plastic Values

Those works which arouse moral feelings or which illustrate familiar scenes are more likely to appeal to the spectator who is insensitive to formal qualities or who is interested only in a more immediate response to an art work, who appreciate art for what Fry calls "psychological values," values especially highly regarded by the British who attach "a superstitious reverence to certain ethical values."[139] The artist who emphasizes psychological values easily becomes an illustrator, Fry has discovered, and illustration for him is not great art. Breughel seems to be Fry's choice example of illustrator, for "his eye is the eye of a caricaturist picking out from appearance just those telling contours which give character, those movements that express states of mind."[140] Fry's list of illustrators includes many fine artists, among them Daumier, Van Gogh, Leonardo,[141] and it is often difficult

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[138] Fry, The Artist and Psychoanalysis, p. 15.

[139] Fry, "Some Questions in Esthetics," Transformations, p. 41.

[140] Fry, Flemish Art, pp. 35-36.

[141] See Fry, Characteristics of French Art, p. 114; "Vincent Van Gogh," Transformations, p. 185; and Catalogue of

to understand his insistence upon a pure art which must be valued and appreciated in a realm apart from the experiences and values of everyday life. I. A. Richards' Principles of Literary Criticism reputedly sets out to challenge Fry's aesthetic principles,[142] and it appears that his challenge was accepted, for Fry's "Some Questions in Æsthetics" in Transformations is his attempt to answer Richards. The basis for their disagreement rests in the assumptions upon which they formulate their theories. Fry assumes that the "aesthetic emotion" is unique and different from all other human responses and emotions. Richards assumes that the response to a work of art is fundamentally the same as the response to any other situation. Fry's position from at least 1909 when he wrote "An Essay in Aesthetics" is that form is what is important in the art work, what is significant, for the "aesthetic emotion" is in response to form. He realizes that this limits the audience, as he explains in the lecture The Artist and Psychoanalysis:

> Now since very few people are so constituted by nature or training as to have developed the special feeling about formal design, and since everyone has in the course of their lives accumulated a vast mass of feeling about all sorts of objects, persons, and ideas, for the greater part of mankind the associated emotions of a work of art are far stronger than the purely esthetic ones.[143]

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an Exhibition of Florentine Painting before 1500, p. 13.

[142]See The Dictionary of National Biography, 1931-1940, ed. L. G. Wickham Legg (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), p. 300, s.v. "Roger Fry."

[143]Fry, The Artist and Psychoanalysis, p. 8.

As one analyzes Fry's statement here, one soon realizes that the artist whose work appeals to the few is superior for Fry, and the artist whose work appeals to "the greater part of mankind" is the inferior. The role of representation is crucial here for Fry. Although he acknowledges that the artist uses the materials of his environment, he does not agree with Richards about the degree to which representation in art works is important and the amount of representation it is possible to have without producing a thoroughly inferior, undesirable work. Fry does not assent completely to Clive Bell's idea "that representation of nature was entirely irrelevant,"[144] but Fry does feel that Bell's Art has had important repercussions; in particular, it has freed the artist "to choose any degree of representational accuracy which suits the expression of his feeling."[145] With respect to what is represented, Fry believes "the greatest art seems to concern itself more with the universal aspects of natural form," and the "greatest artists appear to be most sensitive to those qualities of natural objects which are the least obvious in ordinary life precisely because, being common to all visible objects, they do not serve as marks of distinction and recognition."[146]

I. A. Richards thinks that representation can cooperate effectively with the formal qualities of a picture and that its presence does not necessarily result in an inferior work of art:

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[144] As restated by Fry in "Retrospect," Vision and Design, p. 295.

[145] Ibid. [146] Ibid., pp. 295-96.

> It may be freely granted that there are great pictures in which nothing is represented, and great pictures in which what is represented is trivial and may be disregarded. It is equally certain that there are great pictures in which the contribution to the whole response made through representation is not less than that made more directly through form and colour. To those who can accept the general psychological standpoint already outlined, or indeed any modern account of the working of the mind, the assertion that there is no reason why representative and formal factors in an experience should conflict, but much reason why they should co-operate, will need no discussion. The psychology of 'unique aesthetic emotions' and 'pure art values' upon which the contrary view relies is merely a caprice of the fancy.[147]

In "Some Questions in Esthetics" Fry attempts to examine Richards' assertion by studying a group of paintings: Breughel's "Carrying of the Cross," Daumier's "Gare St. Lazare," Poussin's "Ulysses discovering Achilles among the daughters of Lycomedon," and Rembrandt's "Christ before Pilate," among others. His examination is controlled by equating representation with the psychological, the literary, and illustrational. This becomes immediately evident in his discussion of Brueghel's "Carrying the Cross." Fry begins by describing the canvas generally:

> Here we look out upon a large stretch of country filled with crowds of figures which are inevitably so small in scale that they canhardly be related plastically with the picture space. Nor is any attempt made to do this. Rather we are invited by the whole method of treatment to come close and peer at each figure in turn, and read from it those details which express its particular state of mind so that we may gradually, almost as we might in a novel, bring them together to build up a highly complex psychological structure.[148]

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[147] I. A. Richards, Principles of Literary Criticism (2d ed. rev.; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1955), p. 159.

[148] Fry, Transformations, p. 15.

From his examination Fry concludes that the work is "purely literary, and throughout this picture it is clear that Brueghel has suborinated plastic to psychological considerations. It is indeed to my mind entirely trivial and inexpressive when judged as a plastic and spatial creation."[149]

By equating representation with illustration and literature, Fry is able to discuss cooperation between the representative and plastic elements in paintings in particular, but also to regard different aspects of a single work as separate arts, so that a work which has both psychological and plastic aspects is an example of mixed arts, these arts cooperating or not cooperating, dependent upon the skill of the artist and other factors. He contends that the mixed arts in some of the works cooperate better than in others, and that cooperation "between the two experiences derived from the psychological and plastic aspects of a picture does not appear to be inevitable. I have not sought to prove that it is impossible or that it never occurs."[150] Fry's experience before Rembrandt's "Christ before Pilate" in which he discovers "perhaps as good an instance as one can get of that co-operation of the dramatic and plastic experience in a single picture,"[151] proves to him that even though the elements cooperate, they remain distinct. To value the representational element, one

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[149]Fry, Transformations, p. 15-16.

[150]Fry, "Some Questions in Esthetics," Transformations, p. 21.

[151]Ibid., p. 23.

"almost always depends on a reference to something outside the actual work of art, to what is brought in by the title and such knowledge as the title implies to the spectator, whereas plastic values inhere in the work itself."[152] Works, then, in which representation plays a predominant role, Fry concludes, are mixtures of arts and can never be contemplated as self-contained plastic constructions: "Pictures in which representation subserves poetical or dramatic ends are not simple works of art, but are in fact cases of the mixture of two distinct and separate arts."[153] "Such pictures," Fry asserts, "imply the mixture of the art of illustration and the art of plastic volumes--the art of Art, our horribly incorrect vocabulary almost forces us to say."[154]

Fry considers his distinction both a simplification and an improvement over Richards' assertion that "representation in painting corresponds to thought in poetry,"[155] for that "view has led to innumerable difficulties in attempting to explain plastic relations by fancied analogies with the dramatic or poetic idea."[156] Richards' view places him in an awkward position, Fry notes, for "when he admits that there are great pictures with no representation at all or only of trivial and negligible import," he also admits that "some

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[152]Fry, "Some Questions in Esthetics," Transformations, p. 24.

[153]Ibid., p. 27. [154]Ibid.

[155]Richards, Principles of Literary Criticism, p. 160.

[156]Fry, "Some Questions in Esthetics," Transformations, p. 27.

pictures . . . have only form without content, in others content is of supreme importance."[157] Fry believes that "it is a great simplification to be rid of the whole business and to look upon both illustration and plastic as having each their proper form, the one psychological, the other spatial."[158] Fry's reflections on opera and on the pictures of Rembrandt further confirm his suspicion that cooperation between the two different arts "becomes difficult in proportion as they reach a high pitch of intensity or completeness of expression. Of course, if either art definitely preponderates in intensity or completeness the attention is kept focused on that one and receives only vague suggestions from the other."[159] Representation in a picture does not preclude a mixture of plastic and literary art, for there is a choice between two kinds of representation in a picture, Fry believes, "one in which, by the choice of objects and the manner of their presentment they invite us to apprehend 'psychological volumes,' the other in which they serve to the construction of spatial and plastic wholes."[160] Since Fry feels that paintings which are judged great over the centuries receive that judgment on the basis of formal, plastic elements rather than psychological, it is obvious that Fry prefers representation which serves plastic rather than psychological ends.

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[157] See Fry's note, ibid. [158] Ibid.

[159] Fry, "Some Questions in Esthetics," Transformations, p. 34.

[160] Ibid.

Realism, then, one might anticipate, would be regarded by Fry as a mixed art in which psychological considerations would predominate over plastic, thus rendering it inferior both in intent and execution. Fry does not treat the matter so simply, however, and distinguishes between kinds of realism, finding it helpful to discuss the issue of realism "from the point of view of its success in helping to create either a psychological or a spatial volume."[161] Zola and Courbet both attacked the view previously current "that realistic representation held the spirit in contact with the banality of everyday life, . . . and literal matter-of-factness was the lot of the realist."[162] They argued from an analogy between "esthetic and scientific truth," that there was a "need for objective validity in representation, claiming that their work was good because it was true."[163] Fry considers Courbet's theoretical justification for realism "gratuitous and cumbersome," but his practical adherence effective:

> He was right in practice, because for him personally, as for many other great artists, the fullest liberation, the most effective functioning of his plastic imagination occurred when his whole sensibility, was intent upon the thing seen. It was then and then only that the full significance of plastic relations could be apprehended. His aptitudes were such that images called up before his 'inner vision' either lacked coherent relations or held together by some other principle than plastic necessity. When he had not some object clearly before his eyes he either substituted a theatrical

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[161] Fry, "Some Questions in Esthetics," Transformations, p. 35.

[162] Ibid. [163] Ibid.

> convention or became a realist in the photographic sense, that is to say, he sacrificed plastic significance for a crude and meaningless verisimilitude to actual objects.[164]

Fry attacks those who have criticized Courbet "to the effect that though he was manifestly a great painter his art was purely material, that it revealed nothing of the spirit, and was therefore inferior."[165] Such criticism, Fry asserts, is "based on a false assumption that spiritual values could only be attained through psychological structures, that spatial and plastic ones had no such function."[166] This is the assumption of one who equates spiritual values with ethical values. Spiritual values which adhere in a work of art are related, for Fry, to the aesthetic emotion, and aesthetic justification of realistic representation is a plastic issue unclouded by moral and ethical considerations:

> We can say, supposing the picture to envisage plastic expression, that the moment anything in it ceases to serve towards the edification of the whole plastic volume, the moment it depends on reference to something outside the picture, it becomes descriptive of some other reality, and becomes part of an actual, and not a spiritual, reality. That process of incorporating any given visual datum in a spiritual whole is what I endeavour to describe by the words interpretation or transmutation. That transmutation of the visual values of natural objects into plastic and spatial values is the great problem of most modern artists, since the majority of them take some actual coup d'œil as their point of departure for plastic construction.[167]

This coup d'œil is connected with the artist's vision; and the role representation plays in his work, whether dramatic

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[164] Fry, "Some Questions in Esthetics," Transformations, p. 36.

[165] Ibid., p. 41. [166] Ibid. [167] Ibid., p. 42.

or purely plastic, is dependent upon the artist's use of the materials grasped in his glance:

> I have contrasted the plastic purpose of painting with representation, since it is only by representation of persons or events that any dramatic element can enter into a picture. But though all drama in pictures is due to representation, all representation is not dramatic. Since the painter realises his vision on a flat surface he is bound to have recourse to representation in order to create any three-dimensional volume, and a great deal of very precise and detailed representation may yet envisage purely plastic and spatial expression.[168]

12. Fry's Conception of Literature

Fry takes issue with Richards, indeed with anyone, who believes that plastic art may have ulterior ends, and he would apply the same principle to literature which lends itself as easily, if not more easily than the plastic arts, to "mixture":

> With regard to literature, much misunderstanding is likely to arise owing to the absence of any proper classification and nomenclature of the very various purposes which are covered by the term. We have no words to distinguish between writing used for exposition, speculation, criticism or exhortation, and writing used for the creation of a work of art. Moreover, the medium allows of sudden and often concealed shifts from its uses for one purpose to those for another. It is a medium which admits the mixture of esthetic and non-esthetic treatment to an almost unlimited extent. Even in the novel, which as a rule has pretensions to being a work of art, the structure may be so loose, the esthetic effects may be produced by so vast an accumulation of items that the temptation for the artist to turn aside from his purpose and interpolate criticisms of life, of manners or morals, is very strong. Comparatively few novelists have even conceived of the novel as a single perfectly organic esthetic whole.[169]

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[168] Fry, "Some Questions in Esthetics," Transformations, p. 10.

[169] Ibid., pp. 6-7.

The novel conceived as a "single perfectly organic esthetic whole" is concerned with formal qualities alone and is free from impurities imposed by the desires, beliefs, or fantasies of the novelist. This is what distinguishes a good novelist from a bad. Bad novelists, Fry tells the psychologists, unlike good novelists, day-dream in print; good novelists produce works that are not dependent on wish-fulfilment for effect:

> They depend on the contrary for their effect upon a peculiar detachment from the instinctive life. Instead of manipulating reality so as to conform to the libido, they note the inexorable sequence in life of cause and effect, they mark the total indifference of fate to all human desires, and they endeavour to derive precisely from the inexorability of fate an altogether different kind of pleasure--the pleasure which consists in the recognition of inevitable sequences; a pleasure derived from the contemplation of the relations and correspondences of form. To give you instances--no one who hoped to get an ideal wish-fulfilment would go to Mme. Bovary or Anna Karenina or even Vanity Fair.[170]

The good novelists will not sacrifice the sequence they know to be "esthetically inevitable"[171] to satisfy popular demands, will not distort the harmony of formal relations. The effect of great tragedy, Fry feels, results from the "esthetically inevitable":

> . . . it became evident to me that the essential of great tragedy was not the emotional intensity of the events portrayed, but the vivid sense of the inevitability of their unfolding, the significance of the curve of crescendo and diminuendo which their sequence describes, together with all the myriad subsidiary evocations which, at each

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[170] Fry, The Artist and Psychoanalysis, p. 12.

[171] Ibid., p. 13.

> point, poetic language can bring in to give fullness and density to the whole organic unity.[172]

Fry agrees with Bradley that poetry ought to be written and read for the experience it affords as an aesthetic whole:

> The consideration of ulterior ends, whether by the poet in the act of composing or by the reader in the act of experiencing, tends to lower poetic value. It does so because it tends to change the nature of poetry by taking it out of its own atmosphere. For its nature is to be not a part, nor yet a copy, of the real world (as we commonly understand that phrase), but to be a world by itself, independent, complete, autonomous.[173]

Just as the painting, no matter what object is represented in it, ought to stand alone, independent of demands or associations of the real world, so, would Fry assert, agreeing with Bradley, ought literature. This is not limited to poetry, for Fry extends Bradley's statement to any literature "used as a pure art," finding in Bradley the suggestion "that the purpose of literature is the creation of structures which have for us the feeling of reality, and that these structures are self-contained, self-sufficing, and not to be valued by their reference to what lies outside."[174]

Charles Mauron's essay, The Nature of Beauty in Art

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[172]Fry, "Some Questions in Esthetics," Transformations, p. 10.

[173]Quoted by Fry in Transformations, p. 8 and by I. A. Richards in Principles of Literary Criticism, p. 74. A. C. Bradley makes this statement in the first of his Oxford Lectures on Poetry (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1909), pp. 4-5.

[174]Fry, "Some Questions in Esthetics," Transformations, p. 8.

and Literature,[175] which Fry translated into English and the Hogarth Press published, influenced Fry's attitude toward literature, especially in terms of analogy with the plastic arts. He depends upon Mauron to help him explain how a literary work can be a pure, self-contained entity or structure, briefly sketching an essential point of Mauron's argument, the idea of "psychological volumes":

> The idea of volumes here implies of course, any kind of spatial construction which may further contain other volumes seen in plastic relief within it. Volumes are for the plastic artist the material in which and through which he works. M. Mauron suggests that we should, for literature, transpose the idea of volumes from the domain of space to the domain of spirit and conceive the literary artist as creating 'psychological volumes.' This analogy proves, in his hands, full of fruitful suggestions, for the details of which I must refer the reader to his work. It may be no more than an analogy, but it enables us for the first time dimly to grasp what it is of which the relations are felt by us when we apprehend esthetically a work of literature. Up to now, owing to the extreme complexity and rich variety of evocation in literature, we have not been able to isolate its special and peculiar substance. I believe M. Mauron has at least pointed in the right direction, and he is able to show in some detail how the different types of literary structure correspond to different aspects of 'psychological volumes.'[176]

Mauron states his idea of "psychological volumes" as a hypothesis, and in support of that hypothesis establishes the autonomy of the literary work, enabling him to compare it with plastic art:

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[175]Charles Mauron, The Nature of Beauty in Art and Literature, trans. Roger Fry ("The Hogarth Essays: Second Series," VI; London: Leonard and Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press, 1927).

[176]Fry, "Some Questions in Esthetics," Transformations, pp. 8-9.

> The study of an existent reality and the creation of a new one ought not to be confounded. It is possible, it is certain, even, that creation is favoured by study, and this is enough to explain all the precepts which teach the respect of 'nature.' But we must be careful not to regard as an end what is only a means. A novel ought to be living but not impartial nor exact; it is not a source of information. . . . The assimilation here suggested of literature to the plastic arts, and the idea that the writer's end is solely to model a spiritual volume, would relegate sternly to the background the documentary value of a work of literature.[177]

Mauron meets the possible objections of those who separate form and content by asserting that it is the "spiritual shape" of the literary work that is important, not structure and superimposed dichotomies.[178] The end of all literature, for Mauron, "is the creation of psychological beings as that of the plastic arts is the creation of spatial beings."[179] He admits, though, that it is easier to discover pure works of plastic art than pure works of literary art, works which are presumably composed of relations between emotions systematically arranged and modeled by the writer in order to convey his "moment of the spirit." Most literary works are complexes of "pure types": states of mind, character and situation.[180] And although he considers any distinction between form and content useless, Mauron makes one distinction, "that which separates the thought and the written text,"[181] for "it too often happens that the thought is vague and lacks force; a portion of the volume is then missing, and the text appears made of empty words, of

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[177] Mauron, The Nature of Beauty, pp. 69-70.

[178] Ibid., pp. 71-72.

[179] Ibid., p. 73.

[180] Ibid., pp. 74-78.

[181] Ibid., p. 81.

words that have not their full sense. . . . It is curious that one finds the analogue of this in the plastic arts."[182] Through his analogy, through his concept of literature as a "psychological volume" Mauron believes literature may one day be more successful as pure art:

> Music has been for long the purest art, the art of which the effects are apprehended by purest feeling; painting and sculpture are to-day almost approaching this. But literature remains encumbered with accessories, philosophical, psychological, social demonstration, with sentimentalities and opinions. A great step would be made if we could savour, appreciate, and discuss pure literary qualities.[183]

Fry, in his concern for the novel conceived as an "esthetic whole" and in his belief that in literature one responds to formal relations in that an emotion is "aroused by rhythmic changes of states of mind due to the meanings of the words,"[184] is approaching the idea of literature as a pure art.

Mauron and Fry conducted long, intimate conversations on the arts, and it is to be expected that the echo of one should be heard in the other, that they should share many of the same ideas. In literature, as in art, Mauron is seeking a fusion between the spiritual experience of the writer--the experience which Fry has called the "aesthetic emotion" and Mauron has called a "moment of the spirit"--and the writer's translation of that experience into words, his style. He is asking that the formal relations be such, that the situation,

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[182] Mauron, The Nature of Beauty, pp. 81-82.

[183] Ibid., p. 87.

[184] Fry, "Some Questions in Esthetics," Transformations, p. 5.

in literary terms, be such, that they adhere, hold together, even if the characters be nameless and faceless. The characters, too, are important, not for social roles which they represent or ethical values which they emulate, but for their vitality as spiritual beings. As generalizations they are more effective than as specific replicas of actual beings. The art of literature as conceived by Mauron is similar to the plastic art which Fry regards as superior. The relations between emotions within the literary work are analyzable, and the work itself is infused with a communicable aesthetic emotion, a moment of the spirit of the writer. If anyone has written for Fry a chapter on literature, it is Mauron.

13. Summary

The formal aspect of Fry's aesthetic is more concretely discernible and capable of definition. Fry believes that design is essential in a good art work, that some basic principle must be followed in its creation whether it be according to Cézanne's dictum that all shapes tend to the sphere, the cylinder, and the cone or according to some other system. Fry's approach to a picture is always through design, through determining the basic geometric pattern, the balance of light and shade, the plan behind the placing of masses. Such design does not exist in nature, for in the act of making a picture the artist puts a frame around nature, distorting it; but if his distortion is good, distorting it according to a certain plan. Objects may be represented in a painting, in fact they usually are, but verisimilitude is not the purpose of the painting. Whatever

the content of the picture, the picture ought to have plasticity; one ought to be able to believe that the picture space recedes, that there is a back to objects represented as well as a front, that one could presumably go inside the frame and walk around, that one could touch the objects represented and find them real. Just as important, these plastic elements ought to be infused with the emotion felt by the painter. If a picture continues to appeal as a genuine work of art over the centuries, it appeals because of the purity of the design, because of the carefully arranged elements of the picture, but not for that alone.

Thus we come to the other aspect of Fry's aesthetic, the aspect which flees from definition, which Fry at one point, to the irritation of I. A. Richards, calls "unanalysable." Suppose we follow the steps which the artist follows in painting a picture according to Fry's theory. First, he is struck by some scene or some object, not necessarily because it is beautiful, but because the arrangement of the scene, the vision he has of it, engenders in him an emotional response, valued for its own sake and independent of any requirements of everyday life. The artist contemplates this scene, this vision, so that within his vision the elements become distinct, separate, so that he discerns a certain design or pattern in his vision. This design may not look like the actual scene, but it is the design which the artist discerns. In the contemplation of this design, of the formal relations and harmonies into which the vision is dissolved, the artist is overwhelmed by a glimpse of the reality

beneath appearance and is consequently enveloped by the aesthetic emotion which he feels, by an idea, in a Flaubertian sense, which he needs to transmit, which he needs to make concrete, to express. He expresses this idea in his painting, transferring the design he sees to his art work by recreating the formal relations and harmonies, by putting down the significant form he has discovered. The form is significant, Fry believes, because the artist has discovered it and because it has worked through the artist's sensibility to its realization in the art work. If the form is truly significant, the rhythm of the lines will reveal the artist's sensibility at work. They will not be hard, straight, ruler-perfect, but may quiver with sensibility. And if the artist is successful, if the form is significant, if the aesthetic emotion is transmitted, the art object will possess vitality; it will have a life of its own transfused by the artist, and it will reveal the reality beneath appearance discovered by the artist. And the spectator, stirred by the vitality, will be attracted to the art work. If he looks at it long enough, he will gradually discern the formal relations and harmonies, will grasp the significant form, will rediscover the idea which seized the artist, will share the glimpse of the reality beneath appearance, and will experience the aesthetic emotion.

One can trace the development of Fry's ideas chronologically[185] and discover that the distinctive aesthetic emotion,

[185]This task is remarkably performed in Solomen Fishman's The Interpretation of Art: Essays on the Art Criticism of John

removed from all other emotions, evolves from "An Essay in Aesthetics" in 1909, that the concept of a creative vision distinct from all other types of vision is established in "The Artist's Vision" in 1919, that Fry confirms Bell's "significant form" and discusses the Flaubertian idea and its unanalysable nature in "Retrospect" in 1920, and that Fry finally gives full discussions of sensibility and vitality as Slade Professor at Cambridge in 1934. Dating and ordering the development of Fry's ideas is, though, it seems to me, less important than the knowledge that over the years Fry worked out a practical aesthetic which alters frequently, and which is based upon his perpetually honest analysis of his own experience and grounded in his understanding of the creative process of the artist. Fry's approach to his critical task and to aesthetics is that of an explorer; he discovers in Cézanne his ideal artist, and he discovers in Post-Impressionism his explanation of artistic creation.

As one examines Fry's theories, it is immediately evident that he insists upon separating the aesthetic experience from all other human experiences, with the possible exception of mathematical theorizing for the sake of theorizing. It is also evident that the act of the artist in creating combines the intellectual and the emotional, as does the act of seeing an art work. The demands on both the intellect and the emotions are so great that very few artists can create great, pure works

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Ruskin, Walter Pater, Clive Bell, Roger Fry and Herbert Read (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), pp. 101-42.

of art which can be valued plastically; and very few people can apprehend them. This experience then is one of the most highly prized of which man is capable, and only a select circle can participate. Fry stops on the edge of mysticism, he says, and tries to explain, as scientifically as he can, our reactions to color, mass, space, rhythm, line; yet what results is a mystical experience in which only a few can share, in which the artist expresses his emotions, gives them form and offers them to a few kindred sensibilities. The aim, then, of one who wishes to participate in this aesthetic kinship, is to develop his sensibility, his emotions, and his intellect to the point where he is prepared to experience the aesthetic emotion. Although this is difficult, beginners are given an opportunity, for to the few, like Fry and Bell, the value of this experience is so great that they are willing to share their perceptions with an almost religious enthusiasm and unlimited devotion.

Berel Lang, in an essay "Significance or Form: The Dilemma of Roger Fry's Aesthetic," regards the formalist element and Fry's insistence that the artist has an emotion, the "aesthetic emotion" which he must share, as creating a dilemma in Fry's aesthetic.[186] In this respect Fry's aesthetic theory is suspect when evaluated logically. Yet Fry was remarkably successful in the application of his theory as a critic. To a great extent Fry's success results from his

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[186]Berel Lang, "Significance or Form: The Dilemma of Roger Fry's Aesthetic," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, II (Winter, 1962), 174.

development of an aesthetic based on Post-Impressionism and his application of that aesthetic most effectively to Post-Impressionist painters. We go to Fry for what he can contribute to our appreciation of the Post-Impressionists. If we followed him completely, however, we would be forced to turn away from, most notably, the Dutch and Flemish painters with the exception of Rembrandt, from the German expressionists, and from much of Greek art. The formalist aspect of Fry's theories is the more acceptable, for the formal elements in a painting are more tangible and more easily discussed, and formal relations are more readily articulated and apprehended. The other aspect, dependent upon the aesthetic emotion which is either successfully or unsuccessfully felt by the artist, transmitted to the work, and again felt by the spectator, in dealing with the transmission of the spiritual state, is liable to failure; for there are many places where transmission can be disrupted and there is no way of proving that it actually exists to one who does not apprehend it. Fry sincerely believes that great works contain and express the aesthetic emotion, distinct from all other emotions, which is conveyed through the formal relations. Yet he also knows that the aesthetic emotion is not experienced by everyone. As one who can apprehend its presence in an artist's work, Fry becomes one of the greatest contributers to "snobbism"; for as his aesthetic develops, formal designs which lack the expression of the aesthetic emotion are judged inferior. Fry decides whether that emotion is expressed, all the while hoping that his audience will become

as sensitive to the aesthetic emotion, with his help and instruction, as he is. Fry is the great formalist and, in his belief in the "aesthetic emotion," the great romantic. He is, in an insulated, Bloomsbury way, a proselytizer. He does not limit his efforts to the plastic arts, for he wishes to de-literalize literature and make it plastic as well. He wishes to make all the arts aspire to the condition of music--but pure music, music which arouses emotions through form, through design.

Fry, according to Douglas Cooper,[187] established trends in England in the plastic arts for twenty years. Fry, then, we must assume, influenced aesthetic attitudes for twenty years. If he had this effect on the general public, what effect did he have on his inner circle, on those who were closest to him, his Bloomsbury friends? In particular, what effect did he have upon his biographer, the one person to whom he would entrust his life story, Virginia Woolf?

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[187]See Cooper, The Courtauld Collection, p. 52.

PART II

VIRGINIA WOOLF'S THEORY OF FICTION

CHAPTER IV

THEORETICAL CONCERNS IN VIRGINIA WOOLF'S CRITICAL ESSAYS

Virginia Woolf began keeping a diary in 1915, the year in which she published her first novel, The Voyage Out. Although she had been writing reviews since 1905, most of them for the Times Literary Supplement, 1915 serves to mark the beginning of her public career as a novelist. By 1915, Roger Fry had known Mrs. Woolf for five years; and if one accepts Douglas Cooper's appraisal,[1] had already formulated the basic aesthetic theories which he continued to elaborate until his death in 1934. Mrs. Woolf, in 1915, was thirty-three years old; Roger Fry was forty-nine. Their difference in age was, however, evidently of no consequence to them, and certainly Mrs. Woolf's intellectual relationship with Roger Fry was not that of student with teacher. As the daughter of Leslie Stephen, Mrs. Woolf was not one to be easily impressed, having grown up in a home frequently visited by important literary men. Her memories of Henry James began, not with the reading of his novels, but with his visits to the Stephen home when Mrs. Woolf was still a child.

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[1]See above, p. 35, or Cooper, The Courtauld Collection, p. 52.

Her father had given her access to his library, and Mrs. Woolf was allowed to read whatever and whenever she chose.[2] The habit she acquired of reading and writing in her notebook led her to write her first reviews and to send them to the Times Literary Supplement,[3] to which she eventually became a regular contributor. She also began to write frequently for the Nation and Athenaeum, the New Statesman, the Dial, the New Republic, and Fortnightly, to name just a few of the periodicals in which her articles and reviews were published. She regularly reviewed the works of her contemporaries. Many of the writers whose works she read for reviews have long since been forgotten,[4] but she also read the works of some who have not only continued to be read, but who also are important in terms of literary history. In March, 1919, for instance, Mrs. Woolf writes in her diary: "But oh, dear, what a lot I've got to read! The entire works of Mr. James Joyce, Wyndham Lewis, Ezra Pound, so as to compare them with the entire works of Dickens and Mrs. Gaskell; besides that George Eliot; and finally Hardy."[5]

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[2]See Pippett, The Moth and the Star, p. 14 and "Leslie Stephen," The Captain's Death Bed, p. 68.

[3]See Winifred Holtby, Virginia Woolf (London: Wishart & Co., 1932), p. 26.

[4]The most recent edition of Virginia Woolf's critical reviews, Contemporary Writers (London: The Hogarth Press, 1965), edited by Jean Guiguet, gives evidence of the breadth of her reading among the works of her contemporaries.

[5]V. Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 8.

In 1917, Leonard and Virginia Woolf began the Hogarth Press,[6] and their work with it constantly brought them into contact with the young intellectuals in England, particularly those whose works were considered too much of an innovation to be taken on as risks by established publishers.

Mrs. Woolf's reading was extensive, her intellectual acquaintances and friendships brought her into contact with many different fields of study and activity, and her work kept her knowledge of the thoughts of her contemporaries fresh and vital. If, indeed, her intellectual relationship with Fry had any impact upon shaping her ideas, her theories, her judgments, and her creative work, the impact must have been a gradual one which grew out of the frequent and intimate exchange of thoughts. We have Mrs. Woolf's own testimony that she was indebted to Fry for her knowledge of painting,[7] and her diary reveals how important she considered her relationship with him to be.[8] Further, and of greatest significance for this study,

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[6]Leonard Woolf gives an account of the history of the Hogarth Press in Beginning Again, pp. 231-55.

[7]See above, p. 10, or V. Woolf, "Preface," Orlando, p. vii.

[8]Just before Roger Fry's funeral, Mrs. Woolf writes in her diary, "I think the poverty of life now is what comes to me; and this blackish veil over everything. . . . The substance gone out of everything. I don't think this is exaggerated." (A Writer's Diary, p. 223.) In October, 1934, a month later, Mrs. Woolf has difficulty in continuing her work with The Years and writes: "This time Roger makes it harder than usual. . . . Yes, his death is worse than Lytton's [Strachey]. Why, I wonder? Such a blank wall. Such a silence: such a poverty. How he reverberated!" (A Writer's Diary, p. 230.)

when we come to Mrs. Woolf's theory of fiction as it is expressed in her critical writings, we find many of the assumptions upon which she bases her criticism are also those of Fry, and many of her formulations of theory are similar to those of Fry.

Mrs. Woolf believes that there are two realities, a surface reality and an inner reality, and she believes that the writer brings both his intellect and sensibility to bear upon surface reality in order to penetrate through it to the inner reality. She believes that the shape, the design which the writer gives his novel, is of the utmost importance and is what is ultimately of enduring significance to the reader. That design is the outcome of the writer's vision, and if the writer does not have that vision, the design of the novel, and therefore the novel, is inferior. Mrs. Woolf also believes that the novel as a form is particularly susceptible to verisimilitude to life; and inasmuch as the novel produces a continuation of life rather than a new and self-sustaining reality, it is a failure. The novelist succeeds in creating a new reality when he is able to stop life for a moment, to penetrate beneath the surface reality to the inner reality, and to express the relations between emotions and the relations between emotions and objects. These assumptions also form the basic tenets of Fry's aesthetic, but with Mrs. Woolf we are in a different genre, literary art, and her criticism therefore assumes a different shape. Yet, as Fry's aesthetic developed essentially as support for Post-Impressionism and reaction

against Impressionism, so also is Mrs. Woolf's critical stand based upon a reaction against the fiction of her contemporaries, in particular the materialists, and in support of the novel of the future, the novel she predicts, the novel which she tried to write.

In 1926, in an essay, "Life and the Novelist," Mrs. Woolf asserts that "stridently, clamorously, life is forever pleading that she is the proper end of fiction and that the more he [the novelist] sees of her and catches of her the better his book will be."[9] A year later in "The Narrow Bridge of Art," Mrs. Woolf tells her readers what the novelist of the future is going to do with this subject, life. She believes particularly that the future novelist is going to stop recording exact facts and details of everyday life, that he is going to "stand further back from life" as the poet does and to give "not only or mainly people's relations to each other and their activities together as the novel has hitherto done, but it will give the relation of the mind to general ideas and its soliloquy in solitude."[10] The new novel will concern itself not only with people's emotions towards each other, but also toward "such things as roses and nightingales, the dawn, the sunset, life, death and fate."[11] It will be written in prose by a writer who combines logic and imagination, who is able to bring order to tumult, who can "generalize and split up.

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[9]Virginia Woolf, Granite and Rainbow (London: The Hogarth Press, 1960), p. 46.

[10]Ibid., pp. 18-19. [11]Ibid., p. 19.

Instead of enumerating details he will mould blocks."[12] And he will concentrate on the moment, for "every moment is the centre and meeting-place of an extraordinary number of perceptions which have not yet been expressed."[13] This new novel "will give the relations of man to nature, to fate: his imagination; his dreams. But it will also give the sneer, the contrast, the question, the closeness and complexity of life. It will take the mould of that queer conglomeration of incongruous things--the modern mind."[14]

Mrs. Woolf divides the mind into two parts, the inner and outer or the upper and under. This division of the mind concerns her practically in her work,[15] and leads her to theoretical speculation about whether the creative power of the poet and the novelist comes "from a fusion of the two minds, the upper and the under?--that creates characters that live, poems that we all remember, that have had a power which, if literature continues, may prove to be of great value in the future."[16] This view of the mind as divided[17] shapes Mrs. Woolf's theory of fiction, for a novel which takes the mould of

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[12]V. Woolf, "The Narrow Bridge of Art," Granite and Rainbow, pp. 22-23.

[13]Ibid., p. 23. [14]Ibid., pp. 19-20.

[15]See below, p.160, or V. Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 139.

[16]Virginia Woolf, "The Leaning Tower," The Moment, p. 120.

[17]Although Roger Fry does not divide the mind into layers as strictly as does Mrs. Woolf, he does, in his attempt to isolate the aesthetic state of mind from others, state that the "pattern of our mental disposition" is different in responding to art than it is in response to other experiences. See above, p. 48, or "Some Questions in Esthetics," Transformations, pp. 1-2.

the mind is itself divided into an upper and an under, an inner and an outer. The reality which the novelist creates in his work is similarly the fusion of two aspects--the surface and the inner reality, but only the great novelists can penetrate the surface. Thus it is the presence of the inner reality which becomes the test of greatness. Mrs. Woolf takes the reader with her as she skims through the work of her lady novelist, Mary Carmichael, in A Room of One's Own, first published in 1929. Mrs. Woolf finds that Mary has a wide, eager and free sensibility, but she observes that these gifts are useless unless Mary is also capable of building up "out of the fleeting and the personal the lasting edifice which remains unthrown."[18] Mrs. Woolf proposes to test Mary's skill as a builder by seeing how she handles a situation, "until she proves . . . that she was not a skimmer of surfaces merely, but had looked beneath into the depths. Now is the time, she would say to herself, at a certain moment, when without doing anything violent I can show the meaning of all this."[19] Such discovery of meaning requires the simultaneous operation of two faculties, Mrs. Woolf asserts, the eye and the brain, "for the ordinary eye, the English unaesthetic eye, is a simple mechanism which takes care that the body does not fall down coal-holes, provides the brain with toys and sweetmeats to keep it quiet, and can be

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[18]Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own (New York and Burlingame: Harbinger Books, 1963), pp. 96-97.

[19]Ibid., p. 97.

trusted to go on behaving like a competent nursemaid."[20] In labeling the eye as "unaesthetic" Mrs. Woolf is distinguishing between mere sensuous perception which she calls "unaesthetic" and the perception which also calls upon the faculties of the brain for a kind of interpretation and appreciation which stands apart from the mere fulfilment of life-sustaining functions. Mrs. Woolf uses the example of the cinema where the brain interprets for the eye the objects which are flashed on the screen, so that the brain sees that together those objects form something different from a photograph of life: "They have become not more beautiful in the sense in which pictures are beautiful, but shall we call it . . . more real, or real with a different reality from that which we perceive in daily life? We behold them as they are when we are not there. We see life as it is when we have no part in it."[21] This is the reality which the novelist discovers, and it exists in the most commonplace of objects or people, "now to be found in a dusty road, now in a scrap of newspaper in the street, now in a daffodil in the sun."[22] It can be discovered anywhere, and sometimes even "seems to dwell in shapes too far away for us

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[20]Virginia Woolf, "The Cinema," The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays (London: The Hogarth Press, 1950), pp. 166-67. Fry makes a similar distinction between kinds of vision (See above, pp. 66-68, or "The Artist's Vision" in Vision and Design, pp. 48-52), and he also distinguishes between the reactions to everyday experience and the aesthetic experience. See above, p. 51, or "An Essay in Aesthetics," Vision and Design, p. 18.

[21]V. Woolf, "The Cinema," The Captain's Death Bed, pp. 166-67.

[22]V. Woolf, A Room of One's Own, pp. 113-14.

to discern what their nature is. But whatever it touches, it fixes and makes permanent. This is what remains over when the skin of the day has been cast into the hedge; that is what is left of past time and of our loves and hates."[23] This is of great import for the writer, Mrs. Woolf believes, for he "has the chance to live more than other people in the presence of this reality. It is his business to find it and collect it and communicate it to the rest of us."[24] Mrs. Woolf recommends a reading list of Lear, Emma or A la recherche du temps perdu as works communicating this reality, "for the reading of these books seems to perform a curious couching operation on the senses; one sees more intensely afterwards; the world seems bared of its covering and given an intenser life."[25]

To get beneath the surface and capture the true reality, as have Shakespeare, Jane Austen, and Proust, requires a kind of unconsciousness[26] which enables a writer to capture a moment he

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[23] V. Woolf, A Room of One's Own, pp. 113-14.

[24] Ibid., p. 114. Art objects, Fry believes, are made by artists who have "creative vision." See above, pp. 67-68, or "The Artist's Vision," Vision and Design, pp. 51-53. An artist who has "creative vision" creates in order "to express a feeling of his own." The importance of this rests, Fry believes, in that the imaginative life, of which the art work is a product, offers the true reality which actual life attempts to approximate. See above, p. 52, or "An Essay in Aesthetics," Vision and Design, p. 22.

[25] V. Woolf, A Room of One's Own, p. 114.

[26] V. Woolf, "The Leaning Tower," The Moment, p. 121. Although Fry believes that "the more we are aware of our esthetic reaction, the more consciously and deliberately our apprehension is directed towards the work of art, the more important, in a spiritual sense, is the experience" (see above, p. 49, or A Sampler of Castile, p. 7), he also acknowledges

perceives both emotionally and intellectually. This experience of the writer is similar to that of the patient under gas, as Mrs. Woolf describes him, seeking a truth before unknown:

> And as we plunge deeper and deeper away from shore, we seem to be drawn on in the wake of some fast flying always disappearing black object, drawn rapidly ahead of us. We become aware of something that we could never see in the other world; something that we have been sent in search of. All the old certainties become smudges and dispersed, because in comparison with this they are unimportant, like old garments crumpled up and dropped in a heap, because one needs to be naked, for this chase, this pursuit; all our most cherished beliefs and certainties and loves become like that. Scudding under a low dark sky we fly on the trail of this truth by which, if we could grasp it, we should be for ever illuminated.[27]

The task of the novelist is to grasp this truth, to be a fisherman. After reading Yeats, Mrs. Woolf wonders whether "to remove veils from trees it is necessary to fish?--our conscious mind must be all body, and then the unconscious mind leaps to the top and strips off veils?"[28]

The fish, the truth, the illumination, the reality apprehended by the unconscious are the enduring and immutable,

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that "it looks as though art had got access to the substratum of all the emotional colours of life, to something which underlies all the particular and specialized emotions of actual life." See above, p. 55, or The Artist and Psychoanalysis, pp. 19-20. Fry also believes that the rhythm of the design is the product of the artist's unconscious. See above, p. 65, or Last Lectures, pp. 27-28.

[27]V. Woolf, "Gas," The Captain's Death Bed, p. 201. Fry attempts to explain the "aesthetic emotion" as something that "seems to be as remote from actual life and its practical utilities as the most useless mathematical theory. One can only say that those who experience it feel it to have a peculiar quality of 'reality' which makes it a matter of infinite importance in their lives. Any attempt I might make to explain this would probably land me in the depth of mysticism." See above, p. 50, or "Retrospect," Vision and Design, p. 302.

[28]V. Woolf, "Fishing," The Moment, p. 177.

that which remains untouched when the transitory passes away. Mrs. Woolf's Mrs. Brown, her proper object of the novelist's attention, "human nature," is similarly enduring and immutable, for "Mrs. Brown changes only on the surface, it is the novelists who get in and out--there she sits and not one of the Edwardian writers has so much as looked at her. They have looked very powerfully, searchingly, and sympathetically out of the window; . . . but never at her, never at life, never at human nature."[29] The facts of a man's life, that he lives at Liverpool and is named Smith, does not make him "real." Such reality has a "chameleon quality, the fantastic becoming . . . often the closest to the truth, the sober the furthest from it, and nothing proving a writer's greatness more than his capacity to consolidate his scene by the use of what, until he touched them, seemed wisps of cloud and threads of gossamer."[30] For Mrs. Woolf there are two realities, the reality of our daily existence where the "unaesthetic" eye is enough to carry on necessary activities, the reality that changes, that shifts, that comes and goes, the surface reality; and the other reality, the reality perceived by the eye and brain acting together, the aesthetic sensibility. This is the reality of the mind and the heart, a kind of collective unconsciousness which the artist can perceive and transmit, which he knows as the essence of

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[29]V. Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," The Captain's Death Bed, p. 103.

[30]Virginia Woolf, "Notes on an Elizabethan Play," The Common Reader (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., Harvest Books, 1925), p. 51.

human life. If, as Mrs. Woolf believes, the modern mind is the subject of the new novel, and if the novelist is going to make the reality of that mind his subject, it is to be expected that the characters will assume great importance.

Mrs. Woolf's emphasis on character in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" is well known, especially her insistence that character has for the novelists more than a practical meaning and value, and indeed, that the "study of character becomes to them an absorbing pursuit."[31] Since Mrs. Woolf is convinced that human life is the source for the novelist's inspiration and his search for the true reality, her assertion that all novels begin with a Mrs. Brown is the logical consequence of her theory:

> Here is character imposing itself upon another person. Here is Mrs. Brown making someone begin to write a novel about her. I believe that all novels begin with an old lady in the corner opposite. I believe that all novels, that is to say, deal with Character, and that it is to express character--not to preach doctrines, sing songs or celebrate the glories of the British Empire, that the form of the novel, so clumsy, verbose, and undramatic, so rich, elastic, and alive, has been evolved.[32]

For Mrs. Woolf, the germ of the novel may spring from an encounter with Mrs. Brown, but the Mrs. Browns the novelist creates may have little superficial likeness to the Mrs. Brown

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[31] V. Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," The Captain's Death Bed, pp. 92-93. Fry believes that "all art depends upon cutting off the practical responses to sensations of ordinary life, thereby setting free a pure and as it were disembodied functioning of the spirit." See above, pp. 55-56, or "The French Post-Impressionists," Vision and Design, p. 242.

[32] V. Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," The Captain's Death Bed, pp. 96-97.

observed by others. That Mrs. Brown upon whom the writer focuses his attention is determined by his perspective, and the treatment of her given by the writer is determined by his particular temperament.[33] The character whom one encounters in a novel is the novelist's creation; it is this, Mrs. Woolf observes, the novelist's invention, that makes the characters portrayed by the biographer so different from a novelist's characters:

> For the invented character lives in a free world where the facts are verified by one person only--the artist himself. Their authenticity lies in the truth of his own vision. The world created by that vision is rarer, intenser, and more wholly of a piece than the world that is largely made of authentic information supplied by other people.[34]

Not only do the invented characters live in a more ordered world, but also they anticipate a longer life, for "they are made of more enduring matter. The artist's imagination at its most intense fires out what is perishable in fact; he builds with what is durable."[35] The invented character is the product of the novelist's mind--the facts of the surface reality exist commonly for everyone, but the mind of the character which the novelist temporarily shares and transmits to the reader is the novelist's invention. Mrs. Woolf muses upon the various

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[33] V. Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," The Captain's Death Bed, p. 97. Fry places great emphasis on the artist's unique sensibility. See above, pp. 70-71, or Last Lectures, pp. 22-36.

[34] Virginia Woolf, "The Art of Biography," The Death of the Moth and Other Essays (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1942), pp. 193-94.

[35] Ibid., p. 196.

possibilities open to the novelist for imaginatively entering the lives of the people he meets,[36] and as she looks forward to the novelist of the future, she predicts that his characters will have greater dramatic power and that the novelist will become more interested in dramatizing the influences on the life of his characters:

> . . . the power of music, the stimulus of sight, the effect on us of the shape of trees or the play of colour, the emotions bred in us by crowds, the obscure terrors and hatreds which come so irrationally in certain places or from certain people, the delight of movement, the intoxication of wine. Every moment is the centre and meeting-place of an extraordinary number of perceptions which have not yet been expressed. Life is always and inevitably much richer than we who try to express it.[37]

The most difficult task of the novelist, Mrs. Woolf asserts, is knowing what, from all the richness of life, is the most important for inclusion in his characterization, in his creation of that surface reality through which he will reveal his characters' true reality. As one reads through Mrs. Woolf's criticism of novelists, one discovers that it is to the shape, the design, the architecture with which the novelist informs his material, that she most frequently turns her attention; for in order to convey character, in order to convey the true reality, the writer needs to provide a focus, and it is through

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[36] See V. Woolf, "Street Haunting: A London Adventure," The Death of the Moth, p. 35.

[37] V. Woolf, "The Narrow Bridge of Art," Granite and Rainbow, p. 23. Roger Fry takes great pains to relate "the emotional elements of design" to the "essential conditions of our physical existence." See above, pp. 50-51, or "An Essay in Aesthetics," Vision and Design, pp. 33-35, and "Plastic Colour," Transformations, pp. 213-24.

the architecture of his novel that he provides this focus.

Mrs. Woolf asserts that the "fascination of novel writing lies in its freedom; the dull parts can be skipped, and the excitements intensified; but above all the character can be placed artistically, set, that is, in fitting surroundings and composed so as to give whatever impression you choose."[38] In her discussion of Pater's essay on Leonardo da Vinci, Mrs. Woolf praises Pater's fusion of material, the shape which he has given his facts so that what remains is not knowledge of Leonardo, "but a vision, such as we get in a good novel where everything contributes to bring the writer's conception as a whole before us."[39] In offering advice to readers of books, Mrs. Woolf suggests that in reading they try to be a writer, so that they can discover how difficult it is to fuse material and to convey a conception:

> Recall, then, some event that has left a distinct impression on you--how at the corner of the street, perhaps, you passed two people talking. A tree shook; an electric light danced; the tone of the talk was comic, but also tragic; a whole vision, an entire conception, seemed contained in that moment.
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> But when you attempt to reconstruct it in words, you will find that it breaks into a thousand conflicting impressions. Some must be subdued; others emphasised; in the process you will lose, probably, all grasp upon the emotion itself.[40]

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[38] V. Woolf, "Sterne," Granite and Rainbow, p. 168.

[39] V. Woolf, "The Modern Essay," The Common Reader, p. 218.

[40] Virginia Woolf, "How Should One Read a Book," The Second Common Reader (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., Harvest Books, 1932), pp. 235-36.

The novelist must control his material, must do something with it. Prose, Mrs. Woolf asserts in 1926, does not have the "intensity" or the "self-sufficiency" of poetry, and therefore significant moments must be linked into some structure, for a "prose writer may dream dreams and see visions but they cannot be allowed to lie scattered, single, solitary upon the page. So spaced out they die."[41] Prose, unlike poetry, "rises slowly off the ground; it must be connected on this side and on that. There must be some medium in which its ardours and ecstasies can float without incongruity, from which they receive support and impetus."[42] Some of the best contemporary work, Mrs. Woolf discovers, "has the appearance of being noted under pressure, taken down in a bleak shorthand which preserved with astonishing brilliance the movements and expressions of the figures as they pass across the screen. But the flash is soon over, and there remains with us a profound dissatisfaction. The irritation is as acute as the pleasure was intense."[43]

A good novel, Mrs. Woolf believes, "would seem to be a creation owning a certain looking-glass likeness to life, though of course with simplifications and distortions innumerable. At any rate, it is a structure leaving a shape on the mind's eye."[44] Mrs. Woolf believes that the shapes stay in the

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[41] V. Woolf, "Impassioned Prose," Granite and Rainbow, p. 35.

[42] Ibid.

[43] V. Woolf, "How It Strikes a Contemporary," The Common Reader, p. 242.

[44] V. Woolf, A Room of One's Own, p. 74.

reader's mind and that readers can learn to evaluate what they read by comparing the shape of great novels, which last, with that of the novel they have just read.[45] It is the novelist's ability to combine the disparate elements of his novel into a convincing world that makes it survive, showing the relations between human beings:

> The whole structure, it is obvious, thinking back on any famous novel, is one of infinite complexity, because it is thus made up of so many different judgments, so many different kinds of emotions. The wonder is that any book so composed holds together for more than a year or two. . . . And what holds them together in these rare instances of survival . . . is something that one calls integrity. What one means by integrity, in the case of the novelist, is the conviction that he gives one that this is the truth. . . . One holds every phrase, every scene to the light as one reads--for Nature seems, very oddly, to have provided us with an inner light by which to judge the novelist's integrity or disintegrity.[46]

The novelist expends tremendous effort to attempt to convey life and yet to shape his work. The shape has somehow to fit the material, yet, Mrs. Woolf believes, the architecture most commonly used is not successful: "Whether we call it life or spirit, truth or reality, this, the essential thing, has moved off, or on, and refuses to be contained any longer in such

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[45] See V. Woolf, "How Should One Read a Book," The Second Common Reader, pp. 242-43.

[46] V. Woolf, A Room of One's Own, p. 75. What Mrs. Woolf is doing here is insisting that giving impressions alone will not suffice and that design is necessary. This is similar to Fry's dissatisfaction with Impressionism (see above, p. 62, or Characteristics of French Art, p. 144 and Cézanne, pp. 37-38) and his insistence that the form of the art work and the emotion felt by the artist are bound together (see above, p. 57, or "Retrospect," Vision and Design, p. 294), and that what is lasting in an art work, what gives the work its lasting vitality is its form or system of "formal relations." See above, p. 61, or The Artist and Psychoanalysis, p. 9.

ill-fitting vestments as we provide."[47] The novelists have continued to try to encase their vision in set numbers of chapters. The answer is for the novelist to be more flexible with the design of his work, to concern himself chiefly with conveying the "semi-transparent envelope" which is life:

> Look within and life, it seems, is very far from being 'like this.' Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impression--trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old; the moment of importance came not here but there; so that if a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style, and perhaps not a single button sewn on as the Bond Street tailors would have it. Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; but 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?[48]

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[47] V. Woolf, "Modern Fiction," The Common Reader, p. 153.

[48] Ibid., p. 154. It might be fruitful to compare this statement from Charles Mauron with Mrs. Woolf's: "Before reading a poem on the sadness of death, we know that sadness, and no words can avail in comparison with a direct experience. But sadness is only the pretext, the poem is not sadness; it is something different: a new direct experience of the spirit (not of the ear): an unforeseen mixture of sensations, ideas, memories, and emotions which find themselves miraculously in unison, and compose, one knows not how, a single whole. . . . Herein lies the poet's art. Mallarmé banished from it the dream; we must also keep out of it any idea of the transcription of a sentiment as regards the new reality which the poet profers, we are just as far off if we explain it as being a matter of sadness or joy as if we explain it as a matter of caesuras. To find it we must let the words themselves fall one by one into the mind, listen

But the presentation of a series of sensations will not suffice, either.[49] The writer who conveys life, yet gives his novel a suitable architecture does not recreate the everyday life that the reader is living. He forces the reader to accept a new reality: "We feel that we are being compelled to accept an order and to arrange the elements of the novel--man, nature, God--in certain relations at the novelist's bidding."[50] The great novelist balances verisimilitude to life with design and order, balancing the style, arrangement, and construction of the novel with its most characteristic qualities," that it registers the slow growth and development of feeling, that it follows many lives and traces their unions and fortunes over a long stretch of time."[51]

Mrs. Woolf takes issue, however, with Percy Lubbock's view, expressed in The Craft of Fiction, that the "book itself is equivalent to its form," and with Lubbock's "seeking with admirable subtlety and lucidity to trace out those methods by which novelists build up the final and enduring structure of their books."[52] Mrs. Woolf proposes to substitute for "form,"

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long, be sincere and not believe too surely that one will understand, even if it should be Ronsard, for instance, rather than Verlaine." Mauron, The Nature of Beauty, pp. 74-76.

[49]Mrs. Woolf states in "Phases of Fiction": "The mind cannot be content with holding sensation after sensation passively to itself; something must be done with them; their abundance must be shaped." Granite and Rainbow, p. 124.

[50]Ibid., p. 143.

[51]Ibid., p. 143. Roger Fry also insists that vision and design must work together to create an aesthetic unity. See for example Fry's hypothetical account of Cézanne's process of creation in painting "Provençal Mas." Above, p. 69, or Cézanne, pp. 58-59.

[52]V. Woolf, "On Re-reading Novels," The Moment, p. 129.

a word which "comes from the visual arts, and for our part we wish that he could have seen his way to do without it,"[53] the emotion expressed by the writer. Working through Flaubert's Un cœur simple, she concludes that the thing that does not change is the emotion that is felt:

> Therefore the 'book itself' is not form which you see, but emotion which you feel, and the more intense the writer's feeling the more exact without slip or chink its expression in words. And whenever Mr. Lubbock talks of form it is as if something were interposed between us and the book as we know it. We feel the presence of an alien substance which requires to be visualised imposing itself upon emotions which we feel naturally, and name simply, and range in final order by feeling their right relations to each other. Thus we have reached our conception of Un Cœur Simple by working from the emotions outwards, and, the reading over, there is nothing to be seen; there is everything to be felt. And only when the emotion is feeble and the workmanship excellent can we separate what is felt from the expression.[54]

What Mrs. Woolf is asserting is that form is not something diagrammed on paper, but something that emerges from an inner state and assumes the shape that it must take in order to be expressed. Indeed, her speculations about re-reading novels and her examination of Lubbock's ideas has led her to certain conclusions:

> First, that when we speak of form we mean that certain emotions have been placed in the right relations to each other; then that the novelist is able to dispose these emotions and make them tell by methods which he inherits, bends to his purpose,

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[53] V. Woolf, "On Re-reading Novels," The Moment, p. 128.

[54] Ibid., p. 130. Roger Fry agrees that the emotion is inseparable from the form in a great work of art. Indeed, it is Flaubert's "expression of the idea" which Fry uses in his attempt to explain "significant form." Fry also found many similarities between Flaubert and Cézanne. See above, p. 74, or "Retrospect," Vision and Design, p. 302 and p. 260, and Cézanne, pp. 87-88.

> models anew, or even invents for himself. Further, that the reader can detect these devices, and by so doing will deepen his understanding of the book, while, for the rest, it may be expected that novels will lose their chaos and become more and more shapely as the novelist explores and perfects his technique.[55]

The writer, Mrs. Woolf observes, faces a sufficiently serious problem in attempting to present emotion without being forced by the reader to provide the aura of real life, especially since it is so easy to drift into the life of the novel.

> The engaging lack of artifice and the strength of the emotion that he is able to excite are great advantages to the novelist, but they are also great dangers. For it is inevitable that the reader who is invited to live in novels as in life should go on feeling as he feels in life.[56]

Novels which are built around the reader's desire to live life vicariously through the pages of the books, which satisfy the "vanities and emotions" of the reader, are usually disastrous, Mrs. Woolf believes, over the long term, for "the accuracy of representation, the looseness and simplicity of its method, its denial of artifice and convention, its immense power to imitate

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[55] V. Woolf, "On Re-reading Novels," The Moment, p. 134. Fry believes that the novel should be conceived as a "single perfectly organic esthetic whole" and that great novels "endeavour to derive precisely from the inexorability of fate an altogether different pleasure--the pleasure which consists in the recognition of inevitable sequences; a pleasure derived from the contemplation of relations and correspondences of form." He believes that the essential of great tragedy is not "the emotional intensity of the events portrayed, but the vivid sense of the inevitability of their unfolding, the significance of the curve of crescendo and diminuendo which their sequence describes." See above, pp. 98-99, or "Some Questions in Esthetics," Transformations, pp. 6-7 and p. 10, and The Artist and Psychoanalysis, pp. 12-13.

[56] V. Woolf, "Phases of Fiction," Granite and Rainbow, p. 142.

the surface reality--all the qualities that make a novel the most popular form of literature--also make it . . . turn stale and perish on our hands."[57] The human mind, Mrs. Woolf observes, if "full of monstrous, hybrid, unmanageable emotions."[58] The modern writer is forced to work with these emotions and with all of his other perceptions, which are manifold.[59] The novelist is likewise flooded with impressions; it is a habit of life for him, and from his impressions, he must create:

> He can no more cease to receive impressions than a fish in mid-ocean can cease to let the water run through his gills.
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> But if this sensibility is one of the conditions of the novelist's life, it is obvious that all writers whose books survive have known how to master it and make it serve their purposes. . . . They have mastered their perceptions, hardened them and changed them into the fabrics of their art.
>
> So drastic is the process of selection--that in its final state we can find no trace of the actual scene upon which the chapter was based. For in that solitary room, whose door the critics are for ever trying to unlock, processes of the strangest kind are gone through. Life is subjected to a thousand disciplines and exercises. . . . There emerges from the mist something stark, something formidable and enduring, the bone and substance upon which our rush of undiscriminating emotion was founded.
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> Of these two processes, the first--to receive impressions--is undoubtedly the easier, the simpler,

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[57] V. Woolf, "Phases of Fiction," Granite and Rainbow, p. 142. Fry is critical of art works in which the appeal is verisimilitude to life and to which response is based on associations with life rather than to the formal qualities of the art work. See above, p. 85, or "Some Questions in Esthetics," Transformations, p. 42, and The Artist and Psychoanalysis, p. 8. Fry also considers novelists who day-dream in print, providing a means of wish-fulfillment for their readers, inferior. See above, p. 99, or The Artist and Psychoanalysis, p. 12.

[58] V. Woolf, "The Narrow Bridge of Art," Granite and Rainbow, p. 12.

[59] See ibid., p. 16.

> and the pleasanter. And it is quite possible provided one is gifted with a sufficiently receptive temperament and a vocabulary rich enough to meet its demands, to make a book out of this preliminary emotion alone.[60]

A novel fashioned out of this preliminary emotion, out of this flood of impressions, is not the best of novels, nor is it the novel that Mrs. Woolf predicts for the future. The future novelist, she believes, will be forced to select carefully the tools with which and from which his novel will be fashioned.[61] Once the novelist has chosen his tools, has selected from among his impressions and felt his emotions, he must shape these in creating a world of the novel which reflects his perceptions and convictions. Mrs. Radcliffe's novels fail, Mrs. Woolf believes, because she lacks conviction, because she cannot make her readers feel any emotion about the murdered bodies which multiply in her novels. And, Mrs. Woolf believes, "directly the power which lives in a book sinks, the whole fabric of the book, its sentences, the length and shape of them, its inflections, its mannerisms, all that it wore proudly and naturally under the impulse of a true emotion become stale, forced, unappetizing."[62]

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[60] V. Woolf, "Life and the Novelist," Granite and Rainbow, pp. 41-42. Mrs. Woolf's description of the process followed by the novelist who creates something from his impressions rather than merely recording them is similar to Fry's account of the creative vision. See above, pp. 67-68, or "The Artist's Vision," Vision and Design, pp. 51-52.

[61] See V. Woolf, "The Narrow Bridge of Art," Granite and Rainbow, p. 22.

[62] "Phases of Fiction," ibid., p. 109.

The works of the great novelists succeed, Mrs. Woolf has discovered, because in part those novelists keep their convictions, because they are true to their personal perspectives.[63] The great novelist, Mrs. Woolf asserts, "feels, sees, believes with such intensity of conviction that he hurls his belief outside himself and it flies off and lives an independent life of its own, becomes Natasha, Pierre, Levin, and is no longer Tolstoy."[64] The writer who truly believes creates a world which is self-sufficient and sustained, which remains fresh and whole over the centuries:

> To believe that your impressions hold good for others is to be released from the cramp and confinement of personality. It is to be free, as Scott was free, to explore with a vigour which still holds us spell-bound that whole world of adventure and romance. It is also the first step in that mysterious process in which Jane Austen was so great an adept. The little grain of experience once selected, believed in, and set outside herself, could be put precisely in its place, and she was then free to make of it, by a process which never yields its secrets to the analyst, into that complete statement which is literature.[65]

One of the greatest problems Mrs. Woolf discerns among her contemporaries is that they do not have this kind of belief.[66] This belief, this conviction, is the result of the writer's vision, for "if there is one gift more essential to a novelist than another it is the power of combination--the single vision.

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[63] See V. Woolf, "How Should One Read a Book," The Second Common Reader, p. 236.

[64] V. Woolf, "George Moore," The Death of the Moth, p. 157.

[65] V. Woolf, "How It Strikes a Contemporary," The Common Reader, p. 244.

[66] See ibid.

The success of the masterpieces seems to live . . . in the immense persuasiveness of a mind which has completely mastered its perspective."[67] Many elements make up a novel; it is the writer's vision that controls them:

> For a novel, after all, is a statement about a thousand different objects--human, natural, divine; it is an attempt to relate them to each other. In every novel of merit these different elements are held in place by the force of the writer's vision.[68]

In A Room of One's Own, Mrs. Woolf counsels the writer never to sacrifice his vision: "So long as you write what you wish to write, that is all that matters. . . . But to sacrifice a hair of the head of your vision, a shade of its colour, in deference to some Headmaster with a silver pot in his hand or to some professor with a measuring-rod up his sleeve, is the most abject treachery."[69]

A novel which conveys the emotion felt by a writer, which is not bound by representation but is rather bound by the perspective, conviction and vision of the writer, is potentially a work of art. Mrs. Woolf asserts, with excessive severity and criticism perhaps, that too often English novels have not been works of art; and in so doing, she fails to give adequate acknowledgement to the efforts of her contemporaries:

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[67] V. Woolf, "The Novels of E. M. Forster," The Death of the Moth, p. 166.

[68] V. Woolf, "Women and Fiction," Granite and Rainbow, p. 81. Fry discovers in Cézanne an artist whose work is great because his vision controls the design. See above, pp. 75-76, or Cézanne, p. 42, and Characteristics of French Art, pp. 144-45.

[69] V. Woolf, A Room of One's Own, p. 110.

> There are none to be stood beside War and Peace, The Brothers Karamazov, or A la Recherche du Temps Perdu. But while we accept the fact, we cannot suppress one last conjecture. In France and Russia they take fiction seriously. Flaubert spends a month seeking a phrase to describe a cabbage. Tolstoy writes War and Peace seven times over. Something of their pre-eminence may be due to the pains they take, something to the severity with which they are judged. If the English critic were less domestic, less assiduous to protect the rights of what it pleases him to call life, the novelist might be bolder, too. He might cut adrift from the eternal tea-table and the plausible and preposterous formulas which are supposed to represent the whole of our human adventure. But then the story might wobble; the plot might crumble; ruin might seize upon the characters. The novel, in short, might become a work of art.[70]

The novel of the future, should Mrs. Woolf's prediction prove true, will be a work of art. It will be a novel which contains many of the characteristics of poetry and the drama, a novel that will express the emotions of its characters, not only their emotions toward each other, but also to objects and acts which have impact upon the emotions.[71] It will be a novel carefully constructed and written in a language adapted to fit both the form of the novel and the conviction and sensibility of the writer:

> To survive, each sentence must have, at its heart, a little spark of fire, and this, whatever the risk, the novelist must pluck with his own hands from the blaze. His state then is a precarious one. He must expose himself to life; he must risk the danger of being led away and tricked by deceitfulness. . . . But at a certain moment he must leave the company and withdraw,

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[70] V. Woolf, "The Art of Fiction," The Moment, p. 93.

[71] See "The Narrow Bridge of Art," Granite and Rainbow, pp. 18-19. This novel predicted by Mrs. Woolf is similar to the kind of novel desired by Charles Mauron. See above, pp. 100-104, or Charles Mauron, The Nature of Beauty, pp. 66-87.

> alone, to that mysterious room where his body is hardened and fashioned into permanence by processes which, if they elude the critic, hold for him so profound a fascination.[72]

When Mrs. Woolf the theorist becomes Mrs. Woolf the critic, she leaves the novelist in his mysterious room working and approaches his works as a reader, a most uncommon common reader. Yet she carries her theories with her and they dominate her judgments. Those aspects of the novel which receive her harshest criticism are inimical to the novel which she predicts for the future, the novel she thinks novelists ought to be writing. This novel predicted by Mrs. Woolf is an aesthetic whole, designed by the novelist in order that the impressions selected from his experience are shaped in such a way that they best convey his own peculiar vision or perspective. This novel does not deal with surface reality only, but also endeavors to convey the reality beneath the surface, the reality of human life and emotions which remains constant even though surface elements and values change. This novel deals with characters, but with characters in relation to one another, not merely in social intercourse, but even more in emotional and spiritual relationships.

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[72] V. Woolf, "Life and the Novelist," Granite and Rainbow, p. 47.

CHAPTER V

VIRGINIA WOOLF'S CRITICISM OF THE NOVEL AND NOVELISTS

In Mrs. Woolf's criticism of the works of her fellow novelists, her preference for an aesthetically conceived and executed work which concurs with her theory of fiction controls that criticism. This is evident as one reviews her critical essays in order to discover what she selects for praise and what for blame, what she prefers and what she condemns. Her most severe judgment is brought against those writers who fail to approach their work aesthetically. For instance, in reviewing E. M. Forster's "The Art of Fiction," she asserts that all of Forster's criticism stems from a point of view which measures all books by life, "a humane as opposed to the aesthetic view of fiction."[1] Mrs. Woolf's view, on the contrary, is aesthetic, and when she comes to criticize Forster's novels, she finds that the humane rather than the aesthetic view has also controlled his work as a novelist and has resulted in his failure to create a convincing world within the novel. She criticizes his self-consciousness, his obvious method that forces the reader to change faculties in mid-stream,

[1]"It is to this that he brings the books of Meredith, Hardy, or James for comparison. Always their failure is some failure in relation to life. It is the humane as opposed to the aesthetic view of fiction." V. Woolf, "The Art of Fiction," The Moment, p. 91.

so that "exerting ourselves to find out the meaning, we step from the enchanted world of imagination, where our faculties work freely, to the twilight world of theory, where only our intellect functions dutifully."[2] This happens, Mrs. Woolf observes, when Forster is making his most conscious effort to convey his meaning, at those "great scenes" such as that at the close of Howard's End when the sword falls. Forster's failure to create an aesthetic whole is in part the result, Mrs. Woolf believes, of his devotion to recording objective reality too literally[3] and his failure to blend realism and mysticism with Ibsen's subtle and deft treatment:

> Ibsen has the same realistic power. . . . At the same time, the paraphernalia of reality have at certain moments to become the veil through which we see infinty. When Ibsen achieves this, as he certainly does, it is . . . by putting us into the right mood from the very start and by giving us the right materials for his purpose. He gives us the effect of ordinary life, as Mr. Forster does, but he gives it us by choosing a very few facts and those of a highly relevant kind. Thus when the moment of illumination comes we accept it implicitly. We are neither roused nor puzzled; we do not have to ask ourselves, what does this mean? We feel simply that the thing we are looking at is lit up, and its depths revealed. It has not ceased to be itself by becoming something else.[4]

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[2]V. Woolf, "The Novels of E. M. Forster," The Death of the Moth, pp. 172-73. Roger Fry remarked about Forster's Passage to India: "I think it's a marvellous texture--really beautiful writing. But Oh lord I wish he weren't a mystic, or that he would keep his mysticism out of his books. . . . I'm certain that the only meanings that are worth anything in a work of art are those that the artist himself knows nothing about. The moment he tries to explain his ideas and his emotions he misses the great thing." V. Woolf, Roger Fry, pp. 240-41.

[3]See V. Woolf, "The Novels of E. M. Forster," The Death of the Moth, p. 169.

[4]Ibid., p. 168.

In attempting to give all of life, Forster does not, Mrs. Woolf believes, deal adequately with the problem of "how to connect the actual thing with the meaning of the thing and to carry the reader's mind across the chasm which divides the two without spilling a single drop of its belief."[5] Forster, according to Mrs. Woolf's standards, is too much realist, satirist, and moralist before he is artist:

> The poet is twitched away by the satirist; the comedian is tapped on the shoulder by the moralist; he never loses himself or forgets himself for long in sheer delight in the beauty or the interest of things as they are. For this reason the lyrical passages in his books, often of great beauty in themselves, fail of their due effect in the context. Instead of flowering naturally--as in Proust, for instance--from an overflow of interest and beauty in the object itself, we feel that they have been called into existence by some irritation, are the effort of a mind outraged by ugliness to supplement it with a beauty which, because it originates in protest, has something a little febrile about it.[6]

Although Forster does concern himself with things of the spirit, in his attempt to observe everything of real life and his failure to practice selectivity he shares some of the condemnation Mrs. Woolf directs toward Wells, Bennett, and Galsworthy, whom she labels as materialists. Unlike Forster, however, the materialists neglect the spirit and write of unimportant things, spending "immense skill and immense

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[5]See V. Woolf, "The Novels of E. M. Forster," The Death of the Moth, p. 168.

[6]Ibid., pp. 171-72. Roger Fry also believes that literature, like painting, ought to be autonomous, free from the demands of the outside world. See above, p. 100, or "Some Questions in Esthetics," Transformations, p. 8.

industry making the trivial and the transitory appear the true and the enduring."[7] Joyce, in spite of his failure to satisfy Mrs. Woolf's aristocratic personal taste,[8] does at least overcome many of the problems of the materialists, for "Mr. Joyce is spiritual; he is concerned at all costs to reveal the flickerings of that innermost flame which flashes its messages through the brain, and in order to preserve it he disregards with complete courage whatever seems to him adventitious."[9] Yet Mrs. Woolf does not consider Ulysses a masterpiece of the caliber of Youth or The Mayor of Casterbridge. She is not certain whether the "comparative poverty of the writer's mind"[10] is responsible for this or whether "we may not refer our sense of being in a bright yet narrow room, confined and shut in, rather than enlarged and set free, to some limitation imposed by the method as well as by the mind," whether it is "the method that inhibits the creative power."[11]

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[7] V. Woolf, "Modern Fiction," The Common Reader, p. 155.

[8] See V. Woolf, A Writer's Diary, pp. 47 and 17, and James Strachey and Leonard Woolf (eds.), Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey: Letters (London: The Hogarth Press Ltd. & Chatto & Windus Ltd., 1956), pp. 73-74.

[9] V. Woolf, "Modern Fiction," The Common Reader, p. 155.

[10] Ibid., p. 156.

[11] Ibid. Mrs. Woolf, although acknowledging in 1920 that "What I'm doing is probably being better done by Mr. Joyce," (A Writer's Diary, p. 28), she objects to Joyce's method at the time of her first reading of Ulysses, when the Hogarth Press was approached about publishing it. In 1918 she writes to Strachey: "I don't believe that his method, which is highly developed, means much more than cutting out the explanations and putting in the thoughts between dashes." Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey: Letters, pp. 73-74. When the book is

Mrs. Woolf's objection to lack of formal design and thoughtful construction is as strong as that to an overdone, labored, and ostentatious method. She finds that D. H. Lawrence's sentences, which "spurt" up "as round, as hard, as direct as water thrown out in all directions by the impact of a stone," give the impression "that not a single word has been chosen for its beauty, or for its effect upon the architecture of the sentence."[12] The architecture of Sons and Lovers, like the sentences, does not, Mrs. Woolf observes, hold the novel together as an aesthetic whole:

> . . . perhaps because Lawrence lacks the final power which makes things entire in themselves, the effect of the book is that stability is never reached. The world of Sons and Lovers is perpetually in process of cohesion and dissolution. . . . Hence whatever we are shown seems to have a moment of its own. Nothing rests secure to be looked at. All is being sucked away by some dissatisfaction, some superior beauty, or desire, or possibility. The book therefore excites, irritates, moves, changes, seems full of stir and unrest and desire for something withheld, like the body of the hero. The whole world--it is a proof of the writer's remarkable strength--is broken and tossed by the magnet of the young man who cannot bring the separate parts into a unity which will satisfy him.[13]

Not only does the novel fail to hold together in a single unity,

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published in 1922, and she reads it through, she remarks in her diary, "I finished Ulysses and think it a mis-fire. Genius it has, I think; but of the inferior water. The book is diffuse. It is brackish. It is pretentious. It is underbred, not only in the obvious sense, but in the literary sense. A first rate writer, I mean, respects writing too much to be tricky; startling; doing stunts. I'm reminded all the time of some callow board school boy, full of wits and powers, but so self-conscious and egotistical that he loses his head, becomes extravagant, mannered, uproarious, ill at ease. . . ." A Writer's Diary, p. 49.

[12] V. Woolf, "Notes on D. H. Lawrence," The Moment, p. 82.

[13] Ibid., pp. 81-82.

Mrs. Woolf feels, but also Lawrence tends to use the parts within the novel as a means for reaching beyond, outside the aesthetic whole so that the scenes and characters do not exist within the novel for themselves alone as they do, Mrs. Woolf believes, in Proust: "The impatience, the need for getting on beyond the object before us, seem to contract, to shrivel up, to curtail scenes to their barest, to flash character simply and starkly in front of us. We must not look for more than a second; we must hurry on. But to what?"[14]

The failure of a novelist to regard his work aesthetically and his use of the novel as a vehicle for something outside always evokes Mrs. Woolf's criticism. Whether she is rebuking Forster for moralizing, satirizing, or teaching; whether she is condemning the materialists for trying to make the world of the novel the real world without focus or selectivity; whether she is repudiating Joyce for using method as a means of egotistical exhibition; or whether she is objecting to Lawrence's use of objects and people as a means for getting "beyond" to something outside the novel; it is this aesthetic failure, a lack of design and integrity that disturbs her. The self-expressionism of Gissing[15] constitutes an aesthetic

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[14] V. Woolf, "Notes on D. H. Lawrence," The Moment, pp. 80-81.

[15] "For Gissing is one of those imperfect novelists through whose books one sees the life of the author faintly covered by the lives of fictitious people. With such writers we establish a personal rather than an artistic relationship. We approach them through their lives as much as through their work." V. Woolf, "George Gissing," The Second Common Reader, p. 198. Fry also objects to expressionism in art. See above, p. 86, or Last Lectures, p. 46.

failure for Mrs. Woolf, as does Meredith's didactic use of the comic spirit. His philosophy, rather than being "consumed" in the novel, "obtrudes"; and "when we can underline this phrase with a pencil, and cut out that exhortation with a pair of scissors and paste the whole into a system, it is safe to say that there is something wrong with the philosophy or with the novel or with both."[16] Meredith's didacticism, Mrs. Woolf asserts, has an especially devastating effect on the characters in his novels, for their function seems to be merely the expression of Meredith's views. Once those views are expressed, the characters die, and "a novel that is full of dead characters, even though it is also full of profound wisdom and exalted teaching, is not achieving its aim as a novel."[17]

Dickens' characters, unlike Meredith's, are lively and win Mrs. Woolf's praise.[18] His method, she observes, is to force the reader to analyze the characters for himself,[19] but the method does not extend to placing the characters in close relationship with each other in the novel. Rather, one of Dickens' novels "is apt to become a bunch of separate characters loosely held together, often by the most arbitrary conventions, who tend to fly asunder and split our attention into so many different parts that we drop the book in despair."[20] According

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[16] V. Woolf, "The Novels of George Meredith," The Second Common Reader, p. 211.

[17] Ibid.

[18] See V. Woolf, "David Copperfield," The Moment, pp. 67-68.

[19] See ibid., p. 68. [20] Ibid.

to Mrs. Woolf's standards, Dickens lacks a certain sensitivity desirable in the novelist:

> His great figures are on too large a scale to fit nicely into each other. They do not interlock. They need company to show them off and action to bring out their humours. They are often out of touch with each other. In Tolstoy, in the scenes between Princess Marya and her father, . . . the pressure of character upon character is never relaxed. The tension is perpetual, every nerve in the character is alive. It may be for this reason Tolstoy is the greatest of novelists. In Dickens the characters are impressive in themselves but not in their personal relations.[21]

The failure to explore personal relations, the failure to analyze, results, Mrs. Woolf believes, from a certain inadequacy in Dickens the writer, for "of the men who go to make up the perfect novelist and should live in amity under his hat, two--the poet and the philosopher--failed to come when Dickens called them."[22]

One would expect, considering what Mrs. Woolf selects for praise and for blame, that the novelist whose works exhibit design, who explores personal relations, who combines the poet and the philosopher, would satisfy Mrs. Woolf; one would think certainly that Henry James would measure up to her standards. In many ways he does. Mrs. Woolf especially praises James's use of the novel form, noting that in The Wings of the Dove and The Ambassadors "there is not the hint of a yawn, not a sign of condescension. The novel is his job. It is the

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[21] V. Woolf, "Phases of Fiction," Granite and Rainbow, pp. 113-14.

[22] V. Woolf, "David Copperfield," The Moment, p. 67.

appropriate form for what he has to say. It wins a beauty from this fact--a fine and noble beauty which it has never worn before."[23] Mrs. Woolf also finds in James a poet of sorts, for he continually seeks to find the image which will express a state of mind, using intellectual imagery which makes his readers "conscious of using faculties hitherto dormant, ingenuity and skill, a mental nimbleness and dexterity such as serve to solve a puzzle ingeniously; our pleasure becomes split up, refined, its substance infinitely divided instead of being served to us in one lump."[24] If James has a fault as a writer, it is, Mrs. Woolf believes, that his planning of architecture and relationships in his novels is so carefully conducted that the vitality is drained from the works, that he sometimes sacrifices the importance of his subject for the sake of symmetry. His readers, thus, sense his manipulation of his characters, "nipping, repressing; dexterously evading and ignoring, where a writer of greater depth or natural spirits would have taken the risk which his material imposes, let his sails blow full and so, perhaps, achieved symmetry and pattern, in themselves so delightful, all the same."[25]

Mrs. Woolf divides writers into two kinds, those "conscious of everything" and those "unconscious of many things":

> Some, like Henry James and Flaubert, are able not merely to make the best use of the spoil their

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[23] V. Woolf, "On Re-reading Novels," The Moment, p. 133.

[24] V. Woolf, "Phases of Fiction," Granite and Rainbow, p. 121.

[25] Ibid., p. 123.

> gifts bring in, but control their genius in the act of creation; they are aware of all the possibilities of every situation, and are never taken by surprise. The unconscious writers, on the other hand, like Dickens and Scott, seem suddenly and without their own consent to be lifted up and swept onwards. The wave sinks and they cannot say what has happened or why. Among them--it is the source of his strength and of his weakness--we must place Hardy. His own word, 'moments of vision,' exactly describes those passages of astonishing beauty and force which are to be found in every book that he wrote. With a sudden quickening of power which we cannot foretell, nor he, it seems, control, a single scene breaks off from the rest.[26]

Mrs. Woolf ultimately prefers the "conscious" writers, but she dislikes repression of the emotions which must be arranged and expressed by the novelist. Hardy's power, she finds, is "to make us believe that his characters are fellow-beings driven by their own passions and idiosyncrasies, while they have--and this is the poet's gift--something symbolical about them which is common to us all."[27] The reader does not know Hardy's characters, though, by looking into their hearts or by exploring their relations with other human beings, for "his light does not fall directly upon the human heart. It passes over it and out on to the darkness of the heath. . . . Each man or woman is battling with the storm, alone, revealing himself most when he is least under the observation of other human beings.[28] Hardy's characters are known "in their relations to time, death, and fate," revealing themselves through their battles against the elements, expressing "their attitude towards some of the most

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[26]V. Woolf, "The Novels of Thomas Hardy," The Second Common Reader, p. 224.

[27]Ibid., p. 228. [28]Ibid., p. 229.

tremendous problems that can confront mankind, They take on a more than mortal size in memory. We see them, not in detail but enlarged and dignified."[29] Hardy's novels succeed, Mrs. Woolf believes, because he creates an aesthetic whole, a convincing vision of the world: "Thus it is no mere transcript of life at a certain time and place that Hardy has given us. It is a vision of the world and of man's lot as they revealed themselves to a powerful imagination, a profound and poetic genius, a gentle and humane soul."[30]

There are those novelists who express the human heart and human relations in a manner Mrs. Woolf finds particularly pleasing. Perhaps if one could sum up Mrs. Woolf's ideal novelist it would be the Jane Austen whom Jane did not live long enough to become, the Jane predicted by Mrs. Woolf:

> Those marvellous little speeches which sum up, in a few minutes' chatter, all that we need in order to know an Admiral Croft or a Mrs. Musgrove for ever, that shorthand, hit-or-miss method which contains chapters of analysis and psychology, would have become too crude to hold all that she now perceived of the complexity of human nature. She would have devised a method, clear and composed as ever, but deeper and more suggestive, for conveying not only what people say, but what they leave unsaid; not only what they are, but what life is. She would have stood farther away from her characters, and seen them more as a group, less as individuals. Her satire, while it played less incessantly, would have been more stringent and severe. She would have been the forerunner of Henry James and of Proust--but enough. Vain are these speculations: The most perfect artist among women, the writer whose

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[29] V. Woolf, "The Novels of Thomas Hardy," The Second Common Reader, pp. 229-30.

[30] Ibid., p. 233.

> books are immortal, died 'just as she was beginning to feel confidence in her own success.'[31]

This most perfect artist among women did, though, according to Mrs. Woolf, contribute impeccable taste and values, for "it is against the disc of an unerring heart, an unfailing good taste, and almost stern morality, that she shows up those deviations from kindness, truth, and sincerity which are among the most delightful things in English literature."[32] Jane Austen's novels, especially Pride and Prejudice, have a carefully conceived form,[33] and even more important, especially for the psychological novelists who come after her, Mrs. Woolf among them, Jane Austen forces the reader to perceive below the surface; so that she offers the reader something that expands in his mind and "endows with the most enduring form of life scenes which are outwardly trivial. . . . Think away the surface animation, the likeness to life, and there remains to provide a deeper pleasure, an exquisite discrimination of human values."[34]

All of those novelists for whom Mrs. Woolf has an especial sympathy explore beneath the surface. In Sterne Mrs. Woolf discovers a true forerunner of the moderns who explores the human mind and heart by seeing into his own. This is

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[31] V. Woolf, "Jane Austen," The Common Reader, pp. 148-49.

[32] Ibid., pp. 144-45.

[33] See V. Woolf, "Phases of Fiction," Granite and Rainbow, p. 117.

[34] V. Woolf, "Jane Austen," The Common Reader, p. 142.

particularly evident in his "preference for the winding of his own mind to the guidebook and its hammered high road," and in his "interest in silence rather than in speech."[35] In style and intent, also, Sterne foresees the attempt of Mrs. Woolf and her contemporaries to bring the reader closer to life:

> The jerky, disconnected sentences are as rapid and it would seem as little under control as the phrases that fall from the lips of a brilliant talker. The very punctuation is that of speech, not writing, and brings the sound and associations of the speaking voice in with it. The order of the ideas, their suddenness and irrelevancy, is more true to life than to literature. There is a privacy in this intercourse which allows things to slip out unreproved that would have been in doubtful taste had they been spoken in public. Under the influence of this extraordinary style the book becomes semi-transparent. The usual ceremonies and conventions which keep the reader and writer at arm's length disappear. We are as close to life as we can be.[36]

Mrs. Woolf finds Sterne's attempt to reveal the mind at work continued in Proust who reveals character not through outward action but "through what people think and what is thought about them, through the knowledge and thoughts of the author himself," so "that we come to understand them very slowly and laboriously, but with the whole of our minds."[37] Proust lays open his mind and senses to the world in order to probe human emotions, creating the "common stuff" of the book out of a "deep reservoir of perception. It is from these

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[35] V. Woolf, "The 'Sentimental Journey,'" The Second Common Reader, p. 71.

[36] Ibid., p. 69.

[37] V. Woolf, "Phases of Fiction," Granite and Rainbow, p. 129.

depths that his characters rise, like waves forming, then break and sink again into the moving sea of thought and comment and analysis which gave them birth."[38] Mrs. Woolf believes that "the analysis of emotion is carried further by Proust than by any other novelist."[39] He sees situations whole, with a dual vision:

> It is as though there were two faces to every situation; one full in the light so that it can be described as accurately and examined as minutely as possible; the other half in shadow so that it can be described only in a moment of faith and vision by the use of metaphor. The longer the novelist pores over his analysis, the more he becomes conscious of something that forever escapes. And it is this double vision that makes the work of Proust to us in our generation so spherical, so comprehensive. Thus, while Emily Brontë and Herman Melville turn the novel away from shore out to sea, Proust on the other hand rivets his eyes on men.[40]

Through metaphor, Mrs. Woolf observes, Proust links the true reality with surface reality by exercising his dual vision, making "the great characters in Proust and the whole world from which they spring more like a globe, of which one side is always hidden, than a scene laid flat before us, the whole of which we can take in at one glance."[41] Yet Proust's works, with all their revelation of human emotion, lack a stable framework. Mrs. Woolf praises him for bringing "the light of an immensely civilized and saturated intelligence to bear upon this chaos" and for revealing "the infinite range and complexity of human sensibility," but she discerns that "in following him

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[38] V. Woolf, "Phases of Fiction," Granite and Rainbow, p. 125.

[39] Ibid., p. 139. [40] Ibid. [41] Ibid., pp. 125-26.

we lose the sense of outline."[42]

Turgenev also explores human emotions, but in him Mrs. Woolf finds a novelist whose works retain a "sense of outline" by showing emotions in symmetrical relationship. His books, rather than being conceived by him as a succession of events, are conceived as a succession of emotions:

> In spite of his defects as a storyteller Turgenev's ear for emotion was so fine that even if he uses an abrupt contrast, or passes away from his people to a description of the sky or of the forest, all is held together by the truth of his insight. He never distracts us with the real incongruity--the introduction of an emotion that is false, or a transition that is arbitrary.[43]

Mrs. Woolf observes that Turgenev works according to a double process which enables him to combine fact and vision:

> Many novelists do the one; many do the other--we have the photograph and the poem. But few combine the fact and the vision; and the rare quality that we find in Turgenev is the result of this double process. For in these short chapters he is doing two very different things at the same time. With his infallible eye he observes everything accurately. Solomin picks up a pair of gloves; . . . but he stops when he has shown us the glove exactly; the interpreter is at his elbow to insist that even a glove must be relevant to the character, or to the idea. But the idea alone is not enough: the interpreter is never allowed to mount unchecked into the realms of imagination; again the observer pulls him back and reminds him of the other truth, the truth of fact. . . . On one and the same page we have irony and passion; the poetic and the commonplace; a tap drips and a nightingale sings. And yet, though the scene is made up of contrasts, it remains the same scene; our impressions are all relevant to each other.[44]

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[42] V. Woolf, "Phases of Fiction," Granite and Rainbow, p. 140.

[43] V. Woolf, "The Novels of Turgenev," The Captain's Death Bed, pp. 57-58.

[44] Ibid., p. 56.

Turgenev's scenes remain with the reader and reverberate in his mind: "The scene has a size out of all proportion to its length. It expands in the mind and lies there giving off fresh ideas, emotions, and pictures much as a moment in real life will sometimes only yield its meaning long after it has passed."[45]

Turgenev combines the fact and the vision, Proust effectively conveys both sides of a situation, and Dostoevsky shares with Proust, Mrs. Woolf asserts, "the same power of illuminating the consciousness from its roots to the surface."[46] Dostoevsky is a writer of the soul,[47] and if his method as a writer reveals anything about the relations between the surface and reality, it is, Mrs. Woolf discerns, that beneath the surface is chaos. In his novels, "simplification is only on the surface; when the bold and ruthless process, which seems to punch out characters, then to group them together and then to set them all in violent emotion, so energentically, so impatiently, is complete, we are shown how beneath this crude surface, all is chaos and complication."[48] In these three writers whom Mrs. Woolf especially praises, it is the power of bringing together the facts of reality with the inner conscious-

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[45]V. Woolf, "The Novels of Turgenev," The Captain's Death Bed, p. 54.

[46]V. Woolf, "Phases of Fiction," Granite and Rainbow, p. 126.

[47]See V. Woolf, "The Russian Point of View," The Common Reader, p. 183.

[48]V. Woolf, "Phases of Fiction," Granite and Rainbow, p. 127.

ness that particularly appeals to her. It is the conjunction of the inner and outer into an aesthetic whole, successfully expressing the emotions of mind, heart, and soul in their relation to objective reality. Mrs. Woolf's theory of fiction, without question, influences her evaluation of these fellow writers and even, one may safely assert, her interpretation of their works.

Mrs. Woolf has called Tolstoy the greatest of novelists, for he has the ability to reveal the inner beings of his characters so intimately that a simple act reveals everything; he creates what Mrs. Woolf calls the "poetry of situation":

> When Natasha in War and Peace looks out of the window at the stars, Tolstoy produces a feeling of deep and intense poetry without any disruption or that disquieting sense of song being sung to people who listen. He does this because his poetic sense finds expression in the poetry of the situation or because his characters express it in their own words, which are often of the simplest. We have been living in them and knowing them, so that, when Natasha leans on the window sill and thinks of her life to come, our feelings of the poetry of the moment do not lie in what she says so much as in our sense of her who is saying it.[49]

So perfectly does Tolstoy place his characters in relation to one another and reveal the true reality through the surface,

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[49] V. Woolf, "Phases of Fiction," Granite and Rainbow, p. 137. In this emphasis upon the "poetry of situation," Mrs. Woolf is actually asserting that the perfect novelist reveals a moment, really a "moment of the spirit," not by isolating that moment and expounding upon it but by placing that moment in time in relation to the rest of the world of the novel, giving the novel such a shape that no part can be removed without disrupting the whole spiritual world. Mauron asserts that the "reality of a poem is in the spiritual shape that if offers us" and that the "simplest entities that literary art admits are states of mind, or perhaps one ought to say moments of the spirit." See Mauron, The Nature of Beauty, pp. 71-76.

that the innermost feelings and beings of his characters are indicated through their outward responses; "and what his infallible eye reports of a cough or a trick of the hands his infallible brain refers to something hidden in the character so that we know his people, not only by the way they love and their views on politics and the immortality of the soul, but also by the way they sneeze and choke."[50]

So subtle is the perfect novelist in establishing and outlining relations between his characters, their emotions, and their dealings with actual reality, that his works do not for a moment cease to convince the reader that the world of the novel is steady and true. The perfect novelist creates an aesthetic whole from which nothing detracts. Mrs. Woolf objects to anything in a novel which does detract from this aesthetic whole, anything which demands that the novel fulfill a specific function in creating social awareness or anything which reflects an imbalance or lack of proportion in the novelist's attention or perspective. Thus she objects to didacticism and to moralizing, to novels which are too obviously controlled by a strict method and to novels which seem to have no coherent architectural structure. She objects to novelists who place expression of their personal emotions and ideas before understanding and expressing the emotions and ideas of the characters in their works, to novelists who fail to penetrate below the surface action to the heart and soul of the character.

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[50] V. Woolf, "The Russian Point of View," The Common Reader, p. 185.

Those novelists to whom she is most generous in her praise place their focus on their characters and explore those characters in relation to their environment as well as to one another. Their novels display sound architecture, and as novelists they are not satisfied with what appears on the surface, but rather they probe and analyze the emotion and souls of their characters, linking the surface reality with the true reality. They are writers guided by a vision of life and human nature which they single-mindedly seek to express. Proust, with his dual vision which Mrs. Woolf compares to a globe, perhaps today seems to win excessive praise from her, but his dual vision, as she describes it, corresponds most closely with Mrs. Woolf's own concept of the inner and outer.

In this survey of Mrs. Woolf's critical attitudes toward her fellow novelists, a pattern of emphasis does emerge. She is preoccupied as much as critic as she was as a theorist with certain aspects of the novel, with the novelist's revelation of the reality beneath the surface, with the architecture or design of the novel, with characterization and the treatment of relations between characters, and with the novelist's ability to create an aesthetic whole which expresses the writer's vision, perspective, conviction, and sensibility without seeking to teach or to moralize. These novelists know that human life is composed of practical, everyday activities and moments of spiritual significance. The great novelists make such moments their subject, but they do so by creating a convincing world of the novel which is an aesthetic entity, complete in and

for itself. Not only does this emphasis in her criticism correspond with her theory of fiction, but also it corresponds with her aspirations as a novelist, for those attributes which she praises most are those which she most conscientiously seeks to attain in her own work.

CHAPTER VI

VIRGINIA WOOLF'S CRITICISM OF HER WORK IN PROGRESS

Mrs. Woolf's accounts in her diary and letters of her struggles in writing her novels reveal her to be a visionary writer in the sense that she has visions of various kinds which she seeks to express and which, indeed, on certain occasions, she feels compelled to express. She has the ability to penetrate beneath surface reality to an inner reality, to see people and events as interrelated emotionally and spiritually. As a writer she experiments with techniques for expressing the inner reality, the inner emotions of her characters and the moments of great spiritual significance in their lives. This forces her to experiment with realistic representation, with design, with the staging of scenes, with symbolism, with characterization, with anything integral to the expression of her vision as a novelist.

It is the concern with the inner reality of the human mind and spirit as contrasted with the surface reality of daily activity which guides her experimentation with the design and characterization in her novels. In her novels, Mrs. Woolf attempts to convey her vision of the inner reality, yet to do so she is faced with using the surface reality as a vehicle for her expression of that inner reality. The meaning

she attaches to the word "reality" varies in her diary. For instance, frequently she uses the word "reality" to describe the surface, the superficial aspect of daily living which is distinguished from the "true reality." As she writes Mrs. Dalloway in 1923, she debates the merits and demerits of surface reality with herself, stating her determination to avoid it in her novels:

> In this book I have almost too many ideas. I want to give life and death, sanity and insanity; I want to criticise the social system, and to show it at work, at its most intense. But here I may be posing. . . . People, like Arnold Bennett, say I can't create, or didn't in Jacob's Room, characters that survive. . . . It's only the old argument that character is dissipated into shreds now; the old post-Dostoevsky argument. I daresay it's true, however, that I haven't that 'reality' gift. I insubstantise, wilfully to some extent, distrusting reality--its cheapness. . . . Have I the power of conveying the true reality?[1]

Five years later, in 1928, as she is preparing to begin The Waves, the enthusiastic response to Orlando causes her to weigh the advantages of the "outer" and the "inner," the surface and the true reality:

> People say this was so spontaneous, so natural. And I would like to keep those qualities if I could without losing the others. But those qualities were largely the result of ignoring the others. They came of writing exteriorly; and if I dig, must I not lose them? And what is my own position toward the inner and the outer? I think a kind of ease and dash are good;--yes: I think even the externality is good; some combination of them ought to be possible. The idea has come to me that what I want now to do is to saturate every atom. I mean to eliminate all waste, deadness, superfluity: to give the moment whole; whatever it includes. Say that the moment is a

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[1]V. Woolf, A Writer's Diary, pp. 57-58.

> combination of thought; sensation; the voice of the sea. Waste, deadness, come from the inclusion of things that don't belong to the moment; this appalling narrative business of the realist: getting on from lunch to dinner: it is false, unreal, merely conventional.[2]

The inner receives Mrs. Woolf's greatest attention, for she is chiefly preoccupied with the flux of life, with its simultaneous solidity of emotions and transitoriness of substance: "Now is life very solid and very shifting? I am haunted by the two contradictions. . . . Perhaps it may be that though we change, one flying after another, so quick, so quick, yet we are somehow successive and continuous we human beings, and show the light through."[3] The nature of the inner, of the true reality is revealed to Mrs. Woolf almost mystically, and it is often accompanied by a severe depression. In one of her earlier records of this experience, in 1926, she relates how it comes to her, and how it suggests itself as the germ of another book:

> I wished to add some remark to this, on the mystical side of this solicitude; how it is not one-self but something in the universe that one's left with. It is this that is frightening and exciting in the midst of my profound gloom, depression, boredom, whatever it is. One sees a fin passing far out. What image can I reach to convey what I mean? Really there is none, I think. The interesting thing is that in all my feeling and thinking I have never come up against this before. Life is, soberly and accurately, the oddest affair; has in it the essence of reality. . . . I hazard the guess that it may be the impulse behind another book.[4]

In 1928, while she is living once more at Monk's House, Rodmell, she recalls her "mystical" experiences, her moments

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[2] V. Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 139.

[3] Ibid., p. 141. [4] Ibid., pp. 101-12.

of illumination:

> Often down here I have entered into a sanctuary; a nunnery; had a religious retreat; of great agony once; and always some terror; so afraid one is of loneliness; of seeing the bottom of the vessel. That is one of the experiences I had had here in some Augusts; and got then to a consciousness of what I call 'reality': a thing I see before me: something abstract; but residing in the downs or sky; beside which nothing matters; in which I shall rest and continue to exist. Reality I call it. And I fancy sometimes this is the most necessary thing to me: that which I seek. But who knows--once one takes a pen and writes? How difficult not to go making 'reality' this and that, whereas it is one thing. Now perhaps this is my gift: this perhaps is what distinguishes me from other people: I think it may be rare to have so acute a sense of something like that--but again, who knows? I would like to express it too.[5]

Mrs. Woolf gradually discovers, though, that the true reality is conveyed by means of the surface reality, establishing a relationship between the surface appearance and the reality beneath by some kind of combination of the two.[6] Her recognition that she cannot completely disregard the surface reality, the kind of representation she finds in the materialists, develops gradually. As she admits to Lytton Strachey, her attempt to break with representation completely in Jacob's Room is not as successful as she had hoped: "Of course you put your infallible finger upon the spot--romanticism. . . . But some of it, I think, comes from the effort of breaking with complete representation. One flies into the air. Next time, I mean to stick closer to the facts."[7]

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[5]V. Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 132.

[6]See ibid., pp. 215-16.

[7]Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey: Letters, p. 104.

Her work with The Years begins late in 1932 and is not completed until the end of 1936. It becomes for her a struggle with representation more than any of her other novels, and, as such, provides a good example of how seriously she regards the problems of inner and outer, the lasting and the transitory, the true reality and the surface, of conveying her vision without neglecting everyday, factual life. She set for herself the task of combining and balancing representation with vision in this novel, of combining "The Waves going on simultaneously with Night and Day."[8] She finds in attempting this that it is difficult "to get the depth without becoming static,"[9] to give "intellectual argument in the form of art: I mean how give ordinary waking Arnold Bennett life the form of art? These are rich hard problems for my four months ahead."[10] Her original conception of The Years is of "a curiously uneven time sequence--a series of great balloons, linked by straight narrow passages of narrative" in which she "can take liberties with the representational form."[11] As her work progresses, she finds her "brain threatens to split with all the meaning I could press into it," and believes her chief discovery in it is "the combination of the external and the internal. I am using both freely. And my eye has gathered in a good many externals in its time."[12] Her diary becomes the sketch sheet for her plans, and she uses it for calculating relationships

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[8] V. Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 197.

[9] Ibid. [10] Ibid., p. 208. [11] Ibid., p. 193.

[12] Ibid., p. 237.

between layers:

> What I have discovered in writing The Years is that you can only get comedy by using the surface layer--for example, the scene on the terrace. The question is can I get at quite different layers by bringing in music and painting together with certain groupings of human beings? This is what I want to try for in the raid scene: to keep going and influencing each other: the picture; the music; and the other direction--the action--I mean character telling a character--while the movement (that is the change of feeling as the raid goes on) continues. Anyhow, in this book I have discovered that there must be contrast; one strata or layer can't be developed intensively, as I did I expect in The Waves, without harm to the others. Thus a kind of form is, I hope, imposing itself, corresponding to the dimensions of the human being; one should be able to feel a wall made out of all the influences; and this should in the last chapter close round them at the party so that you feel that while they go on individually it has completed itself.[13]

At the conclusion of her work, she feels she has succeeded in achieving a balance and fluidity between the outer and inner: "Yet, heaven help me, [I] have a feeling that I've reached the no man's land that I'm after: and can pass from outer to inner and inhabit eternity. A queer very happy free feeling, such

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[13] V. Woolf, A Writer's Diary, pp. 157-58. Mrs. Woolf avoided meeting Roger Fry after the publication of The Waves (see A Writer's Diary, pp. 176-77) because she suspected that he did not like it. Although Fry would go as far as the verge of mysticism in discussing the quality of "reality" apprehended when one experiences the aesthetic emotion (see above, p. 50, or "Retrospect," Vision and Design, p. 302), he prefers to avoid landing in the depths of it. Mrs. Woolf is willing to consider her visions as frankly of a mystical nature. The vision behind The Waves, that elusive fin in the water, is more of the kind Fry discusses as inspiring the early works of Cézanne and the works of Blake. Fry does not care for visionary painting, as he calls it. See above, pp. 87-88, or Reflections on British Painting, pp. 83-84, and Cézanne, p. 28. Mrs. Woolf's purposeful avoidance of objective reality in The Waves did probably not appeal much to Fry, although as a system of relations he would surely have considered it exemplary. In The Years Mrs. Woolf is much more dependent upon concrete reality to express the reality beneath, the true reality.

as I've not had at the finish of any other book."[14]

It is doubtful whether Mrs. Woolf did indeed balance the representational and the visionary, the inner and outer, in The Years, for the machinery of the novel, the sheer weight of the design emphasizes the representational more than she would have liked. Her division into two dimensions no longer satisfies her after The Years. Before its completion, even, she feels she has reached a new stage as a writer, that she has added two more dimensions to the material of the novelist: "I see that there are four? dimensions: all to be produced, in human life: and that leads to a far richer grouping and proportion. I mean: I; and the not I; and the outer and the inner. . . . New combination in psychology and body--rather like painting. This will be the next novel, after The Years."[15]

However one may measure Mrs. Woolf's success, as her struggles over her various novels are reiterated, it becomes increasingly clear that her attempt to achieve the proper balance between inner and outer and between the representational and the spiritual is part of her larger search for the proper design for conveying her vision or her conception, her glimpse of the inner reality which she desires to express. From the beginning of her work with Mrs. Dalloway in 1923, for instance, she regards the design as "the devil of a struggle," and one which she is "always having to wrench my substance to fit."[16]

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[14] V. Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 260.

[15] Ibid., p. 259.

[16] Ibid., p. 58.

That she was continually beset by problems of design tells in the finished product where her method is perhaps too much in evidence, but through her labor she does discover her "tunnelling process," that process "by which I tell the past by instalments, as I have need of it. This is my prime discovery so far; and the fact that I've been so long finding it proves, I think, how false Percy Lubbock's doctrine is--that you can do this sort of thing consciously."[17]

The greatest innovation in To the Lighthouse, published in 1927, is the "Time Passes" chapter to which Mrs. Woolf refers in her diary as "the impersonal thing, which I'm dared to do by my friends, the flight of time and the consequent break of unity in my design."[18] In The Waves Mrs. Woolf attempts her first truly elaborate design, and her struggles, as revealed in her diary, illustrate how much she regards design as a practical problem, yet one informed and controlled by the conviction that her vision must be expressed. Midway in the writing of The Waves, in 1929, she finds her work drudgery:

> One thinks one has learnt to write quickly; and one hasn't. And what is odd, I'm not writing with gusto or pleasure: because of the concentration. I am not reeling it off; but sticking it down. Also, never in my life, did I attack such a vague yet elaborate design; whenever I make a mark I have to think of its relation to a dozen others. And though I could go on ahead easily enough, I am always stopping to consider the whole effect. In particular is there some radical fault in my scheme? I am not quite satisfied with this method of picking out things in the room and being reminded by them of other things.

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[17] V. Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 61.

[18] Ibid., p. 80.

> Yet I can't at the moment divine anything which keeps so close to the original design and admits of movement. . . . I have never stopped 'seeing' people--Nessa and Roger. . . . And for all this, there is vacancy and silence somewhere in the machine. . . . If I could catch the feeling, I would; the feeling of the singing of the real world, as one is driven by loneliness and silence from the habitable world; the sense that comes to me of being bound on an adventure; of being strangely free now.[19]

The intricacy of her design is reflected in the plan for making Bernard's speech bring the whole work together. The idea for merging "all the interjected passages into Bernard's final speech" and of ending "with the words O solitude," occurs to her as she listens to a Beethoven quartet.[20] This, she feels, makes "him absorb all those scenes" without "further break" and also enables her "to show that the theme effort, effort, dominates: not the waves; and personality: and defiance: but I am not sure of the effect artistically: because the proportions may need the intervention of the waves finally so as to make a conclusion."[21] Near the completion of The Waves in 1930, she feels that she has succeeded, that she has "kept starkly and ascetically to the plan" and has made her "reach after that vision I had the unhappy summer . . . at Rodmell, after finishing the Lighthouse."[22] What she hoped to achieve most in the novel was a unity, a complete integration, without breaks, without chapters, "so as to make the blood run like a torrent from end to end; . . . that indeed is my achievement, if any, here: a saturated unchopped completeness; changes of

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[19] V. Woolf, A Writer's Diary, pp. 146-48.

[20] Ibid., p. 162. [21] Ibid., p. 162.

[22] Ibid., p. 158.

scene, of mind, of person, done without spilling a drop."[23]

Mrs. Woolf's career as a writer is a history of experimentation, of breaking moulds in order to find the proper design, the proper method of expression.[24] Two convictions guided her experimentation: that writing is a formal matter, and that the writer must be inspired by an "irregular fire" or conception or vision.[25] The art of writing, once an idea or a vision and a form is conceived, soon becomes agonizing labor for Mrs. Woolf, for "the creative power which bubbles so pleasantly in beginning a new book quiets down after a time, and one goes on more steadily. . . . Determination not to give in, and the sense of an impending shape keep one at it more than anything."[26] This sense of an impending shape or form[27]

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[23]V. Woolf, A Writer's Diary, pp. 163-64.

[24]Mrs. Woolf muses about her experimentation in her diary: "Perhaps Bob T. was right in his poem when he called me fortunate above all--I mean in having a mind that can express--no, I mean in having mobilised my being--learnt to give it complete outcome--I mean, that I have to some extent forced myself to break every mould and find a fresh form of being, that is of expression, for everything I feel or think. So that when it is working I get the sense of being fully energised--nothing stunted. . . . Here in Here and Now [The Years] I am breaking the mould made by The Waves." Ibid., p. 220.

[25]"What I was going to say was that I think writing must be formal. The art must be respected. This struck me reading some of my notes here, for if one lets the mind run loose it becomes egotistic; personal, which I detest. At the same time the irregular fire must be there; and perhaps to loose it one must begin by being chaotic, but not appear in public like that." Ibid., p. 69.

[26]Ibid., p. 26.

[27]At one point in 1933 Mrs. Woolf defines "form" simply as "the sense that one thing follows another rightly." Ibid., p. 210.

focused Mrs. Woolf's attention on method. She views To the Lighthouse, for instance, as an exercise of her method:

> If my feeling is correct, this is the greatest stretch I've put my method to, and I think it holds. By this I mean that I have been dredging up more feelings and characters, I imagine. . . . This is only my own feeling in process. Odd how I'm haunted by that damned criticism of Janet Case's 'it's all dressing . . . technique.' (Mrs. Dalloway) . . . And this last lap, in the boat, is hard, because the material is not so rich as it was with Lily on the lawn. I am forced to be more direct and more intense. I am making more use of symbolism, I observe; and I go in dread of 'sentimentality'.[28]

Her problems with the conclusion of To the Lighthouse, 1926, present themselves to her less as working out emotion than as tying up the strings of her method, of bringing Lily and Mr. Ramsay together at the end: "I had meant to end with R. climbing on to the rock. If so, what becomes of Lily and her picture? Should there be a final page about her and Carmichael looking at the picture and summing up R's character? In that case I lose the intensity of the moment."[29] When she completes Between the Acts she expresses her satisfaction with the method: "I am a little triumphant about the book. I think it's an interesting attempt in a new method. I think it's more quintessential than the others."[30]

Mrs. Woolf's intention to continue experimenting with the method becomes a conviction as she nears completion of Mrs. Dalloway in 1924, for she believes she had found the proper direction for her work: "If this book proves anything, it proves that I can only write along those lines, and shall never

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[28] V. Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 101.

[29] Ibid., p. 99. [30] Ibid., p. 359.

desert them, but explore further and further and shall, heaven be praised, never bore myself an instant."[31] If Mrs. Woolf has been called cold or technical, or if she has been charged with more interest in form than content, it may well be because what she desires to convey is emotional and spiritual and of necessity abstracted rather than material and tangible. Her endeavor to get at this and to convey it led her to emphasize the technique, for it is through the proper technique that she is able to transmit emotions. Readers of "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" might expect that in her work as a novelist, Mrs. Woolf would begin with a character, with a Mrs. Brown as the subject matter to be so carefully designed; but as one reads her diary, one discovers that Mrs. Woolf, if she does begin with a character, begins with a vision of a character--not so much as an actual person whom she has seen, but more as a flash of illumination in her mind. Before she begins To the Lighthouse her vision is that of the "Old Man" who is to be Mr. Ramsay.[32] On another occasion she has a vision of the life of a woman.[33] Such visions are not based on Mrs. Browns; these

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[31] V. Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 63.

[32] After she completes Mrs. Dalloway, on October 17, 1924, Mrs. Woolf writes, "Anyhow, I feel that I have exorcised the spell which Murry and others said I had laid myself under after Jacob's Room. The only difficulty is to hold myself back from writing others. My cul de sac, as they called it, stretches so far and shows such vistas. I see already the Old Man." Ibid., p. 68.

[33] "Yet I am now and then haunted by some semi-mystic very profound life of a woman, which shall all be told on one occasion; and time shall be utterly obliterated; future shall somehow blossom out of the past. . . . My theory being that the actual event practically does not exist." Ibid., p. 102.

visions have more affinity, as Mrs. Woolf frequently acknowledges, with mystical experiences, and usually a vision which forces itself into objective being as a novel is preceded by an illness. Such illnesses Mrs. Woolf thought were "partly mystical. Something happens in my mind. It refuses to go on registering impressions."[34] Mrs. Woolf, in this respect, is a visionary writer, and these visions which come to her during an illness, which frequently form the germ of her novels, may well be termed mystical visions in a limited sense.[35] Mrs. Woolf also has visions of a different sort, visions which result from a sensuous response to events, people, or objects which she encounters in objective reality.

These sensuous visions may have their genesis in things that happen, in personal things, such as her feelings following the death of Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson: "I get the strangest feeling now of our all being in the midst of some vast operation: of the splendour of this undertaking--life: of being capable of dying: an immensity surrounds me. No--I can't get it--shall let it brood itself into 'a novel' no doubt."[36] Her vision can

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[34] V. Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 153.

[35] The distinction I am making between Mrs. Woolf's mystical visions and sensuous visions is similar to the distinction Fry makes between the visions of the "visionary" painter like Blake and the "creative vision" of an artist like Cézanne. Whether Fry would disapprove of the work of a "visionary" writer as strongly as he does that of the "visionary" painter is open to question and would ultimately be determined by the use the writer made of his mystical visions. It was, however, the mystical aspect of Forster's novels that disturbed Fry so much. See above, p. 140, or V. Woolf, Roger Fry, pp. 240-41. The mystical aspect of The Waves, as I point out below, might also have very well proved distasteful to him.

[36] V. Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 184.

also be aroused by something she is doing, even simply walking down the street:

> Yet I have some restless searcher in me. Why is there not a discovery in life? Something one can lay hands on and say 'This is it'? My depression is a harassed feeling. I'm looking: but that's not it--that's not it. What is it? And shall I die before I find it? Then (as I was walking through Russell Square last night) I see mountains in the sky: the great clouds; and the moon which is risen over Persia; I have a great and astonishing sense of something there, which is 'it'. It is not exactly beauty that I mean. It is that the thing is in itself enough: satisfactory; achieved. A sense of my own strangeness, walking on the earth is there too: of the infinite oddity of the human position; trotting along Russell Square with the moon up there and those mountain clouds. Who am I, what am I, and so on: these questions are always floating about in me: and then I bump against some exact fact--a letter, a person, and come to them again with a great sense of freshness. And so it goes on. But on this showing, which is true, I think, I do fairly frequently come upon this 'it'; and then feel quite at rest.[37]

She also has times when she is moved by a situation or a scene in real life, and where what she sees actually has such an impact upon her emotionally that she is forced to attempt to give shape to that scene in words. The simple sight of rooks fighting against the wind has this impact upon her:

> The look of things has a great power over me. Even now, I have to watch the rooks beating up against the wind, which is high and still I say to myself instinctively 'What's the phrase for that?' . . . But what a little I can get down into my pen of what is so vivid to my eyes, and not only to my eyes; also to some nervous fibre, or fanlike membrane in my species.[38]

The sight of a train carrying wounded soldiers forces her to imagine even more, so that she sees imaginatively, a faculty that "always leaves me so suffused with something partly visual,

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[37] V. Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 86. [38] Ibid., p. 131.

partly emotional, I can't, though it's very pervasive, catch it when I come home--the slowness, cadaverousness, grief of the long heavy train, taking its burden through the fields."[39] Sometimes Mrs. Woolf's visions force themselves into the shape of novels, sometimes into the scenes which comprise the novels, and sometimes into brief sketches which are aesthetic unities within themselves. Whether her visions are mystical or sensuous, they are informed by the compelling power of Mrs. Woolf's imagination and controlled by her keen intellect.

We have discussed Mrs. Woolf's struggles with design in The Waves for the insight which they afford us of her practical concern as a writer with the problem of design. The genesis of The Waves as a vision and Mrs. Woolf's constant comparison of her achievement in the novel with that vision is also illuminating. The Waves begins as a vision, a fin in the water which forces itself into the form of a novel. On May 1, 1930, as her work is progressing, she writes in her diary, "The truth is, of course, I want to be back at The Waves. Yes that is the truth. Unlike all my other books in every way, it is unlike them in this, that I begin to re-write it, or conceive it again with ardour, directly I have done. I begin to see what I had in my mind; and want to begin cutting out masses of irrelevance."[40] On February 2, 1931, she writes, "Oh Lord the relief when this week is over and I have at any rate the feeling that I have wound up and done with that long

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[39] V. Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 334.

[40] Ibid., p. 159.

labour: ended that vision. I think I have just done what I meant."[41] The day before her husband is to read her final draft, July 17, 1931, Mrs. Woolf writes, "Anyhow I had a shot at my vision--if it's not a catch, it's a cast in the right direction. But I'm nervous. It may be small and finicky in general effect."[42] When The Waves is receiving favorable notice and she is being informed by calls and letters that it is liked, she writes, on October 5, 1931, "Ah Hah--so it wasn't all wasted then. I mean this vision I had here has some force upon other minds."[43]

Visions, similarly, are the focus of Mrs. Woolf's attention in other works. For example, a scene, like that of Mrs. Woolf's father, Leslie Stephen, in a boat crushing a dying mackerel,[44] controls the final boat scene in To the Lighthouse. Her experience of seeing an eclipse of the sun[45] forms part of the skeleton for "The Sun and the Fish."[46] Mrs. Woolf has a variety of kinds of vision, and the shape which the visions take and the use to which they are put varies with their impact. Mrs. Woolf even occasionally has a vision of a

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[41] V. Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 167.

[42] Ibid., p. 173. [43] Ibid., p. 175.

[44] "This is going to be fairly short; to have father's character done complete in it; and mother's; and St. Ives; and childhood; and all the usual things I try to put in--life, death, etc. But the centre is father's character, sitting in a boat, reciting We perished, each alone, while he crushes a dying mackerel." Ibid., pp. 76-77.

[45] See ibid., pp. 109-113.

[46] V. Woolf, The Captain's Death Bed, pp. 193-99.

form before she is aware of the substance to be expressed by that form:

> It came over me suddenly last night as I was reading The Shooting Party . . . that I saw the form of a new novel. It's to be first the statement of the theme: then the restatement: and so on: repeating the same story: singling out this and then that until the central idea is stated . . . but all the scenes must be controlled and radiate to a centre. I think this is a possible idea; and would admit of doing it in short bursts: could be a concentrated small book: could contain many varieties of mood. And possibly criticism.[47]

Mrs. Woolf's expressed concerns with the characters in her novels are practical ones, and the reader of her diary may well begin to wonder whether she, like those whom she has criticized, has forgotten about Mrs. Brown in the corner. She worries whether Rodney's love for Cassandra in Night and Day is convincing;[48] she worries that Clarissa may glitter too much on the surface;[49] she worries about Elvira's presentation in The Years, that it may be too dominant;[50] and she worries that the "she" she wants to create in The Waves will appear as a character type:

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[47] V. Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 287.

[48] Mrs. Woolf writes to Lytton Strachey: "There are myriads of things I want to ask you; about the male characters for instance. Do they convince? Then was Rodney's change of heart sufficiently prepared for to be credible? It came into my head on the spur of the moment that he was in love with Cassandra, and afterwards it seemed a little violent." Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey: Letters, pp. 83-84.

[49] "The doubtful point is, I think, the character of Mrs. Dalloway. It may be too stiff, too glittering and tinsely." V. Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 61.

[50] "The figure of Elvira is the difficulty. She may become too dominant. She is to be seen only in relation to other things. This should give I think a great edge to both of the realities--this contrast." V. Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 197.

> I don't want a Lavinia or a Penelope: I want 'she'. But that becomes arty, Liberty, greenery yallery somehow: symbolic in loose robes. Of course I can make her think backwards and forwards; I can tell stories. But that's not it. Also I shall do away with exact place and time. Anything may be out the window--a ship--a desert--London.[51]

This is actually a superficial worrying for Mrs. Woolf, for her problems with characterization are essentially involved with the creation of characters who will conform to her central vision, the vision that controls the design of the novel. The sight of a single character, an individual, can lead her to create a scene: "I can make up situations, but I cannot make up plots. That is: if I pass a lame girl I can, without knowing I do it, instantly make up a scene . . . . This is the germ of such fictitious gift as I have."[52] But Mrs. Woolf frequently strikes a poor balance between the surface reality of Mrs. Brown and "the spirit we live by, life itself," the abstracted Mrs. Brown who is one with all of human nature. Mrs. Woolf thought of her writing as "a species of mediumship," in which she has the ability to "become the person."[53] In her more spiritual, bodiless characterizations this is especially true, for what matters most to her is the spirit, the thought, the emotion, more than the physical embodiment, particularly as her experimentation progresses. This movement toward spiritual characterization is illustrated, for instance, in the heroines of Mrs. Dalloway and To the Lighthouse. While it is relatively probable that readers of Mrs. Dalloway will recreate somewhat

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[51] V. Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 143.

[52] Ibid., p. 116. [53] Ibid., p. 285.

similar mental pictures of Clarissa, pink-cheeked, slender, gray-haired and bird-like, Mrs. Ramsay's beauty is likely to vary with each reader's conception of middle-aged beauty. Mrs. Woolf attempts to do away with the physical in The Waves where she consciously tries to "give in a very few strokes the essentials of a person's character. It should be done boldly, almost as caricature."[54] Her characters are known by spiritual and intellectual difference in The Waves, not by physical differences, except as spiritual states are related to sexuality.

Mrs. Woolf does not begin practically as a novelist so much with the Mrs. Brown sitting in the corner as with a vision of Mrs. Brown in emotional relationship with life, with the emotions of those around her. Mrs. Woolf renders concrete what is expressed figuratively in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," that Mrs. Brown is "the spirit we live by, life itself." Mrs. Woolf boasts that she has discovered in Mrs. Dalloway how to "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 and each comes to daylight at the present moment."[55] Her dealings with character can indeed be viewed as successions of experiments in which she attempts to convey an inner reality which is nameless, faceless, bodiless, but universal in a humanly emotional, spiritual way. Her

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[54] V. Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 157.

[55] Ibid., p. 60. It is perhaps notable that Mrs. Woolf should use this particular diction. Fry notes that Seurat defined painting as "l'art de creuser une toile." See above, p. 80, or Characteristics of French Art, p. 148.

experiments lead her to various uses of the objective, surface reality as a correlative which provides images and symbols, and she is forced by her peculiar sensibility to draw for ideas upon her various types of vision, not only those mystical visions which she experiences, but also those sensuous visions of everyday life, scenes, action, and characters, which demand expression and recreation in her novels.

A Writer's Diary, of course, expresses only Mrs. Woolf's avowed intentions and her attitudes toward her problems and achievements practically as a writer. One can learn a great deal from her diary about what she meant to do and what she thought she accomplished, yet this must finally be measured against her work. As a document of practical intent, Mrs. Woolf's diary is exceedingly valuable. It is also of sufficient import in that it reveals to what a great extent her practical aims concur with her theoretical beliefs and critical standards, to what a great extent she was concerned as a writer with the expression of her vision of an inner reality, with discovering the proper design for conveying that vision.

CHAPTER VII

VIRGINIA WOOLF, ROGER FRY, AND POST-IMPRESSIONISM

This review of Mrs. Woolf's critical principles, attitudes, and practical aims, when compared with those of Roger Fry, reveals a fairly extensive list of attitudes shared by the two friends. Both consider the creation of an aesthetic whole the ultimate goal of the artist, whether plastic or literary; and both abhor anything which detracts from the whole--didacticism, expressionism, sentimentality, sensationalism. Both also abhor a cheap, superficial substitute for authentic creative work--the surface finish, the skillful dash, the dramatic appeal, the emotionalism, the wish-fulfillment--which may initially distract an audience from seeking real value in an art work. Both have little faith in that audience whom Fry tries to educate away from Snobbism[1] and who Mrs. Woolf believes can be convinced that men have humps.[2] Both Mrs. Woolf and Roger Fry are certain

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[1]See above, p. 44, or Reflections on British Painting, p. 19.

[2]"In England it is a very suggestible and docile creature [the public], which, once you get it to attend, will believe implicitly what it is told for a certain number of years. If you say to the public with sufficient conviction: 'All women have tails, and all men humps,' it will actually learn to see women with tails and men with humps, and will think it very revolutionary and probably improper if you say:

that a truly great work of art demands two things: 1. The authentic vision of the artist which has so great an emotional impact upon him and which he feels with such conviction that he is forced to express it; and 2. The proper form for expressing that vision, a form which is discovered by the artist as a result of the emotion that he feels. Both believe that a vision of objective reality enables them to see below the surface of that reality to an inner reality, a true reality which is expressed in an art work. Both believe that the artist, by placing the components of his art work in proper relations--for the artist lines and shapes, for the writer emotions--conveys his vision. Both believe that the recording of impressions alone is not sufficient, but that those impressions must be arranged in a meaningful design, and both believe that the human eye and mind are capable of many kinds of vision.

It is perhaps not an arbitrary decision that led Mrs. Woolf to set December, 1910 as the date for the change in human character and as the time when writers are to begin looking beneath the externals of Mrs. Brown's daily activity and surface appearance to "the spirit we live by, life itself." The first Post-Impressionist exhibition was taking place at that time, and the Post-Impressionist painters, according to Fry's interpretation of their work, looked beneath the objective

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'Nonsense. Monkeys have tails and camels humps. But men and women have brains, and they have hearts; they think and they feel,'--that will seem to it a bad joke, and an improper one into the bargain." V. Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," The Captain's Death Bed, p. 106.

data of surface reality to discover a vision to which they gave a design. It is perhaps not accidental that when Mrs. Woolf decides to exemplify the reader's reaction to forms in a story, she should select one by Flaubert as an example in which the response is to the relations of emotions. It is Flaubert, among writers, with whom Fry compares his idol among painters, Cézanne.[3] Nor is it perhaps mere coincidence that when all the extraneous matter is extracted from Mrs. Woolf's critical judgments on the novel, one finds that she persistently demands novels which are aesthetic wholes, novels which reflect the keen sensibility of the writer, which convey with conviction the writer's vision of the true reality of life, which place characters and their emotions in a carefully arranged pattern of relationships. One cannot claim that these specific preferences reflect Roger Fry's direct influence upon Mrs. Woolf, but one can safely assert that Mrs. Woolf was an intelligent woman, sensitive to the world around her and the currents of intellectual thought. One can also assert that Fry's introduction and popularization of the Post-Impressionist painters and an aesthetic derived from and applicable to their work had an impact upon the climate of opinion to which Mrs. Woolf was exposed, and indeed, to which she contributed. That she and Fry were close friends in Bloomsbury makes their relationship more binding; and although Fry's book Vision in

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[3]Virginia Woolf writes: "As a critic of literature, . . . he was not what is called a safe guide. He looked at the carpet from the wrong side; but he made it for that very reason display unexpected patterns. And many of his theories held good for both arts. Design, rhythm, texture--there they were again--in Flaubert as in Cézanne." V. Woolf, Roger Fry, p. 140.

Literature, which he was always planning to write, never was written, certainly his ideas for its content were shared with his friends.[4] Even though Fry must be regarded more as a popularizer of theories he developed essentially as explanation and defense of Post-Impressionism, than reliable aesthetician and successful artist, and even though intellectually he probably was shadowed by Mrs. Woolf's genius, Mrs. Woolf both expressed and applied ideas popularized by Fry and elaborated in the works of the Post-Impressionists.

They do have their differences of opinion. She believes that life is the subject of the writer, and unlike Fry, she comes to believe that there is some kind of cooperation between representation and the formal qualities in an art work which is more elemental than the mere mixture of the arts Fry postulates in "Some Questions in Esthetics."[5] Her concern with relations between the emotions of characters is spatial in a sense, but Mrs. Woolf would decline to make such a close comparison between the work of the novelist and the visual arts. She

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[4]See V. Woolf, Roger Fry, p. 174.

[5]See above, p. 94, or Transformations, p. 27. In these respects Mrs. Woolf may well be influenced by her fellow novelists. In "The Art of Fiction" Henry James asserts that the "only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to represent life." Henry James, The Future of the Novel, ed. Leon Edel (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), p. 5. Also, Mrs. Woolf's admiration of Ibsen, in whom she found a satisfactory blending of realism and mysticism, was shared by James Joyce. In Joyce's works we find, as Harry Levin has pointed out, a unique blending of the characteristics of the naturalists and the symbolists: "No naturalist has ventured a more exhaustive and unsparing depiction of the immediacies of daily life. No symbolist has spun more subtle and complicated cobwebs out of his own tortured entrails." Harry Levin, James Joyce: A Critical Introduction (Norfol New Directions Books, 1941), pp. 18-19.

felt the arts had much to teach each other, but she also felt they were distinct. She speaks often of "moments of the spirit," a phrase perhaps borrowed from Fry's translation of Mauron's The Nature of Beauty in Art and Literature. Her "moments of the spirit," isolated within her novels, are sometimes even still-lifes of sorts, but they are more importantly moments of the spirit translated into words, not visual transcriptions. The relationship between the two, writer-critic and artist-critic, can thus be discussed, but it is a matter of great subtlety and incapable of being reduced to simple formulae. Mrs. Woolf's works, especially, cannot be reduced to a single formula or theory, for she is not bound by anything except her desire to find the best method for expressing her vision, her unique sensibility and individuality, her perspective as a writer.[6]

Mrs. Woolf tries everything that adapts itself to her vision; whatever works she keeps and reworks; whatever fails, she discards. One can say that her search for the best method to express her vision is a search for "significant form," but surely the search was not instigated by the words. Further, those words could have been as easily supplied by Mrs. Woolf in her conversations with her brother-in-law, Clive Bell, as they could have been by Bell himself. Her vision is not of the

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[6]On the subject of individuality, Mrs. Woolf records in her diary: "My only interest as a writer lies, I begin to see, in some queer individuality; not in strength, or passion, or anything startling, but then I say to myself, is not 'some queer individuality' precisely the quality I respect?" V. Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 45.

Post-Impressionist sort all of the time. Her visions do not always begin with a material object, scene, or character, sensuous visions; indeed, the controlling visions for her novels usually are not Post-Impressionist. As commited as she claims to be to Mrs. Brown, her Mrs. Browns come to her as abstracted visions more often than they result from something or someone she is observing directly. She is more of a visionary in the manner of Blake and the early Cézanne as they are described by Fry. There are many Mrs. Browns in Mrs. Woolf's novels, but most often they are the focal point of a scene or they are just one character whom Mrs. Woolf explores. That ultimate vision which so frequently comes to her mystically and after a long illness, which forces her by the pressure on her brain to express it, is the product of the mind and emotions, coming to her when her senses are stilled. The Old Man, the fin in the water, the lady, the vision of a shape, all of these come to her as images apprehended when her mind is free from the demands of everyday life and surface reality. Even though the vision of the Old Man may be a recollection of her father from childhood, it is not aroused by the actual sight of Leslie Stephen in a boat which she witnesses just previous to her writing of To the Lighthouse.

No writer has probably ever concerned himself more conscientiously with design than Mrs. Woolf, but the design cannot really be considered Post-Impressionist unless the vision is aroused by direct observation, unless she observes an actual object, an actual person, an actual scene disintegrate into

lines and shapes, or more properly for the novelist, into patterns of emotions and thoughts rubbing against one another, until they adopt a certain design, certain relations which, as conveyed in the work, capture the writer's emotions and convey them to the reader. Many of Mrs. Woolf's short pieces are Post-Impressionist; many of her scenes are Post-Impressionist in presentation, and Post-Impressionism is used structurally in To the Lighthouse. Always the scenes of surface reality are presented with a shape, with some design, and with an emotion seeking to be conveyed which controls the scene.

Mrs. Woolf believed painting was important for the writer:

> Painting and writing have much to tell each other: they have much in common. The novelist after all wants to make us see. . . . The novelist is always saying to himself how can I bring the sun on to my page? How can I show the night and the moon rising? And he must often think that to describe a scene is the worst way to show it. It must be done with one word, or with one word in skilful contrast with another. . . . It is a very complex business, the mixing and marrying of words that goes on, probably unconsciously, in the poet's mind to feed the reader's eye. All great writers are great colourists, just as they are musicians into the bargain; they always contrive to make their scenes glow and darken and change to the eye.[7]

Mrs. Woolf also discovers close relationships between the arts, and she believes that "the best critics, Dryden, Lamb, Hazlitt, were acutely aware of the mixture of elements, and wrote of literature with music and painting in their minds."[8] Yet critics cannot tell the writer what a picture is.[9] The writer

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[7] V. Woolf, "Walter Sickert," The Captain's Death Bed, pp. 181-82.

[8] Ibid., p. 183. [9] See ibid., p. 184.

looks at a picture in his own way, and although he may not penetrate the "silences" of the painter, he may experience strong sensations. Even though, Mrs. Woolf believes, "there is a zone of silence in the middle of every art," with pictures it is "a region of very strong sensations. First, on entering a picture gallery, the violent rapture of colour; then when we have soused our eyes sufficiently in that, there is the complexity and intrigue of character."[10] Also the painter can, Mrs. Woolf believes, compose a scene as carefully as a writer, and even more important, can perhaps teach a writer how to do it. She finds that Sickert especially excels in this, for "whatever Sickert paints has to submit; it has to lose its separateness; it has to compose part of his scene."[11] Sickert, Mrs. Woolf observes, "composes his picture down to the very castors on the chairs and the fire-irons in the grate, just as carefully as Turgenev, of whom he sometimes reminds me, composes his scene."[12] But the writer needs a third eye, the one which enables him to express:

> The whole scene, however solidly and pictorially built up, is always dominated by an emotion which has nothing to do with the eye. But it is the eye that has fertilised their thought; it is the eye, in Proust above all, that has come to the help of the other senses, combined with them, and produced effects of extreme beauty, and of a subtlety hitherto unknown. . . .
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> A writer thus has need of a third eye whose function is to help out the other senses when they flag. But it is extremely doubtful whether he

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[10] V. Woolf, "Walter Sickert," The Captain's Death Bed, pp. 175-76.

[11] Ibid., p. 179. [12] Ibid.

learns anything directly from painting.[13]

Although a writer may learn little that is tangible from painters, he can seek nourisment from them, from paintings, and even from art critics who help writers to see better. The eye that fertilizes the thought can be trained to see more effectively. Mrs. Woolf sees beautifully, strikingly; and frequently, she sees as a Post-Impressionist painter sees, training her sight on an object, a character, a scene until the surface appearance dissolves and she has a moment of illumination in which the reality beneath appearance is revealed to her. Then, through her description, she attempts to transmit the emotion she has felt.

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[13] V. Woolf, "Pictures," The Moment, p. 141.

PART III

VIRGINIA WOOLF'S PRACTICE AS A WRITER

CHAPTER VIII

LESSONS FROM THE VISUAL ARTS

Jean Guiguet asserts in Virginia Woolf and Her Works that today one can regard Impressionism and Post-Impressionism as "only modalities of style, all directed toward a single goal: the integral expression of the artist's vision, of his impression."[1] Those who heard Roger Fry's lectures, who read his works, and who talked with him were aware of the distinctions he made between the two, of his preference for Post-Impressionism over Impressionism, of his reasons for his preference, and of the theories with which he supported that preference. For Virginia Woolf, Fry's theoretical distinctions were real, and Guiguet acknowledges the "profound influence of these [Fry's] theories on Virginia Woolf's development."[2] That she could be so profoundly influenced was partially determined by the balance between intellect and sensibility in Mrs. Woolf, between her analytical powers which enabled her to plan and to ponder, to shape and to reshape the design of her novels once she had had her vision, and the sensibility that gave rise to those visions. Her visions are essentially of two kinds: 1. Those which result from a sensuous response to

[1]Jean Guiguet, Virginia Woolf and Her Works, p. 31.

[2]Ibid.

events, people or objects, what I have called sensuous visions, and 2. Those which come to her as abstractions during illness, what I have called mystical visions.[3] When, as we have already observed, her vision is mystical, when it is not inspired by something in objective reality, Mrs. Woolf and Roger Fry part company, for he has little patience with the "visionary." It is the rendering of Mrs. Woolf's sensuous visions that betrays Post-Impressionist influence. For when she is moved by an event, a person, or a scene, it is by arranging a scene or the thoughts and feelings of her characters within her work in significantly expressive relations that she can convey her emotion and share it with her readers. Guiguet observes that her adaptation in her technique of "certain elements and values derived from that of painting is due no doubt to the nature of her sensibility,"[4] but he also acknowledges that this was certainly reinforced by her friendship with Fry, through his clarification of "what might have remained at the stage of mere impressions, providing her with a vocabulary."[5] Most important, Guiguet asserts, Fry helped her, since his method was so analytical, "to bring about the transposition from the pictorial to the literary which was to prove so fruitful for

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[3]The term "mystical" is used here because Mrs. Woolf uses it in talking about these visions. I do not, by using it, mean to suggest that Mrs. Woolf is a mystic, but to emphasize the difference between those visions which seemed almost "mystical" to Mrs. Woolf and the other visions which result from her encounters with objective reality.

[4]Guiguet, Virginia Woolf and Her Works, p. 154.

[5]Ibid.

her. The relations between art and reality, the resources of composition with all its elements and their connections: structures, balances, motifs."[6]

The similarities in thought between Virginia Woolf and Roger Fry have been discussed earlier in this study. Many of those similarities are subtle, but the most comprehensive and the most important are their shared belief in the importance of the artist's or writer's vision of an inner reality and the transformation of that vision through design. The painter's vision for Fry occurs when some aspect of objective reality sets up in the painter the aesthetic emotion, when for a moment the painter can see through natural appearance to the inner reality. It is the emotion he has felt during his moment of vision that he tries to convey through his design. Virginia Woolf's source for her vision is less carefully circumscribed, but the importance of that particular moment of the spirit when the writer apprehends the inner reality is fundamental to all she attempts to do as a writer, for it is conveying that inner reality and its relation to and significance for human life that is most important for her. Guiguet believes that "Moments of Being" provides a suitable subtitle for all of her fragments which attempt "to convey the unique quality of an instant when the world of our senses and the inner world, the present and the past, the here and the elsewhere, . . . combine to form that solid body, reality--which a moment later, . . . is again dissolved into its elements."[7] "Moments of

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[6]Guiguet, Virginia Woolf and Her Works, p. 154.

[7]Ibid., p. 342.

Being" also is an apt description of many of the scenes which compose Mrs. Woolf's novels, particularly Jacob's Room, which is actually a series of such moments linked chronologically. It is in presenting these moments, apprehended by Mrs. Woolf through her sensuous imagination, that Post-Impressionist techniques are most useful. The painter's technique enables Mrs. Woolf to focus on a particular moment in time, to stop time, so to speak, and to explore the significance of what is happening. Merely in helping her to learn to see, Fry was a powerful contributor to Mrs. Woolf's growth as a writer, for Fry had the ability to look at a painting, to analyze the relations between the elements, between color, mass, space, and line, and to dissolve the painting to a system of formal relations, to its significant form. Mrs. Woolf uses this technique in her writing, not in analyzing a scene for her readers, but in composing a scene in order that the design may express the significance of the moment. The Post-Impressionists, with their emphasis upon design, prove worthy of imitation by Mrs. Woolf when she attempts to be writer-painter. In this respect Fry's influence is evident.

There are also more theoretical evidences of the influence of Fry's ideas upon Mrs. Woolf. Fry, who did not limit his theorizing to painting, also had his theories about literature, although he only committed himself in writing in his lecture The Artist and Psychoanalysis, in his opening chapter in Transformations, and in his translation of Mauron's The Nature of Beauty in Art and Literature which he believed

offered a workable analogy between the literary and plastic arts. It is certain that Roger Fry and Virginia Woolf discussed Fry's literary aesthetic, especially his ideas that as one experiences the aesthetic emotion in art in response to formal relations, so in literature one experiences the aesthetic emotion in response to "rhythmic changes of states of mind";[8] that as the plastic artist creates volumes, the literary artist creates psychological volumes; that the truly great novel, like the truly great painting, makes no attempt to depend upon associated ideas, emotions, and wish-fulfillment, but rather places emotions in relation to one another in their "inevitable sequence." These views are given practical application in Mrs. Woolf's works, as are the techniques of the Post-Impressionists. To search all of her works for evidence of Post-Impressionist technique, of suggestions of Fry's thought, either directly or through Mauron, would become tedious. But it may be fruitful to explore samples of Mrs. Woolf's works which do reflect her acquaintance and close relationship with Fry. To do this I have selected for study the essay "The Sun and the Fish," the short story "The Lady in the Looking-Glass," and certain episodes from the novels Jacob's Room, Mrs. Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, The Waves, and The Years.

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[8] Fry states, "In literature there is no immediate sensual pleasure whatever, though it may be a favourable predisposing condition for poetry to be spoken by a beautiful voice. There is, of course, the pleasure of rhythmic utterance, but this is already concerned with relations, and even this is, I believe, accessory to the emotion aroused by rhythmic changes of states of mind due to the meanings of the words." "Some Questions in Esthetics," Transformations, pp. 4-5.

CHAPTER IX

TWO EXERCISES IN TECHNIQUE: "THE SUN AND THE FISH" AND "THE LADY IN THE LOOKING GLASS"

1. "The Sun and the Fish"

"The Sun and the Fish" illustrates Mrs. Woolf's attempt to convey a moment of illumination by carefully designing a scene from actual experience. Her diary contains a detailed record of a trip north to view at dawn the eclipse of the sun. A comparison of the diary account with the final essay provides us with an excellent example of an experience to which Mrs. Woolf responded with her sensibility, and which she used her intellect to reshape in order to express the significance which the eclipse had for her. Suppose we look briefly at the account of the eclipse set forth in Mrs. Woolf's diary.[1] She begins by noting her departure from King's Cross on Tuesday, June 18, 1927 at 10 P.M. in a carriage compartment with her husband, Leonard, her nephew, Quentin Bell, and Vita and Harold Nicolson. She transcribes fragments of conversation about the scenery, the falling asleep and awakening of her companions, a brief quarrel between the Nicolsons over luggage, and the transferring of the party at Richmond from the train to an omnibus around

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[1]See V. Woolf, A Writer's Diary, pp. 109-13. All references to this excerpt cited in the text will appear hereafter as "WD" followed by the page number.

2:10 A.M. They pass a castle with a light burning and Yorkshire farms. At one farm they see a farmer, his wife, and a sister come out, all dressed in black; and at another they observe two women looking out of an upstairs window. Their bus is part of a train of three. There are also many motor cars on the road, and as they near their destination, Bardon Fell, the cars increase in number. At Bardon Fell people are camping, and Mrs. Woolf's party finds a position of its own on what seems to be the highest point. As she looks out she sees a "soft grey cloud" with "a gold spot where the sun was." She describes her friends, positioned there on the hill, notes that four "great red setters came leaping over the moor (WD, 111)," and that there were sheep behind them and that Vita observed the animals. She recalls their anxiety about the sun and the clouds, and she describes the sun's ascent, how they saw it "crescent, burning red" only to have it sail into a cloud again, leaving "red streamers" behind and exuding a "golden haze (WD, 111)." They feel cheated, and she observes the sheep who seem unafraid, the setters running and everyone "standing in long lines, rather dignified, looking out. I thought how we were like very old people, in the birth of the world--druids on Stonehenge; (this idea came more vividly in the first pale light though) (WD, 111)." She describes the changes of color and position of the clouds and of the valley and the increasing darkness until the light goes out:

> We had fallen. It was extinct. There was no colour. The earth was dead. That was the astonishing moment; and the next when as if a ball had rebounded the cloud took colour on itself again, only a sparky ethereal

> colour and so the light came back. I had very strongly the feeling as the light went out of some vast obeisance; something kneeling down and suddenly raised up when the colours came. (WD, 112)

She describes then the colors as they come back with the light and the spectators' sense of relief. What stays with her, though, more than anything else, is that they "had seen the world dead. This was within the power of nature. Our greatness had been apparent too (WD, 112)." But then, in the light they become merely themselves, growing more comfortable surrounded by the color to which they are accustomed. When the light and color are everywhere once more, they lose the feeling of relief they experienced as they watched the light overcome the darkness. Then Mrs. Woolf the writer asks herself, "How can I express the darkness? It was a sudden plunge, when one did not expect it; being at the mercy of the sky; our own nobility; the druids; Stonehenge; and the racing red dogs; all that was in one's mind (WD, 112)."

When Mrs. Woolf comes to write about the eclipse in "The Sun and the Fish,"[2] her narrative depicting the event is carefully designed for the purpose of conveying the moment, the apprehension of an inner reality which she experienced when the sun disappeared completely, when for a moment the world, in complete darkness, was dead, and when the watchers, united as one without individual distinction, ranged out along the hill, experienced a sense of outliving the world. The first

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[2]V. Woolf, The Captain's Death Bed, pp. 193-99. All references to this essay cited in the text will appear hereafter as "SF" followed by the page number.

paragraph of her description expresses the feeling of unity among those who are going forth to view the eclipse. Gone are her diary's notations of conversation, of individuals, of details concerning transportation, of hours passing. This unanimity of purpose is emphasized by the repetition of the words "all" and "north."

> We were come to see the dawn. Trains like ours were starting all over England at that very moment to see the dawn. All noses were pointing north. When for a moment we halted in the depths of the country, there were the pale yellow lights of motor cars also pointing north. There was no sleep, no fixity in England that night. All were on the road; all were travelling north. All were thinking of the dawn. (SF, 194)

In this unanimity of purpose the spectators, she asserts, lost a sense of relationship with individuals and objects, they were "no longer in the same relation to people, houses and trees; we were related to the whole world. . . . We were come for a few hours of disembodied intercourse with the sky (SF, 194)."

To emphasize this loss of relation with houses, people, and trees, the description Mrs. Woolf gives of these things is pale and unassuming. The fields and farmhouses are "colourless." The people they pass are "neat, dark, and silent." She creates a background which needs to be filled with a vivifying presence, a background that gives them "an odd sense of keeping an appointment with an actor of such vast proportions that he would come silently and be everywhere (SF, 195)." When Mrs. Woolf describes their viewing site, she selects only certain details of the physical situation, stressing not that

situation, but the "certain dignity" they had put on:

> We had put off the little badges and signs of individuality. We were strung out against the sky in outline and had the look of statues standing prominent on the ridge of the world. We were very, very old; we were men and women of the primeval world come to salute the dawn. So the worshippers at Stonehenge must have looked among tussocks of grass and boulders of rock. (SF, 195)

There they stand, and the sun begins to rise, creating an air of expectancy. She stresses this by describing the setters she notes in her diary as "red dogs, hounds of the ancient world, . . . leaping with their noses close to the ground on the track of boar or deer (SF, 195)." Finally, the sun appears "in full splendour. Then there was a pause, a moment of suspense, like that which precedes a race. The starter held his watch in his hand, counting the seconds. Now they were off (SF, 196)."

Mrs. Woolf personifies the sun and the clouds, conveying not only the excitement of the race, but also the speed; for all of this occurs in just twenty-four seconds. When it appears that the clouds have won, Mrs. Woolf expresses their disappointment through her description of the loss of colour which takes place on the moor, blue turning to purple, pink faces turning green, until finally the moors "were livid, they were purple." Then gradually the spectators realize that the shadow over the moor is something greater, "unexpected, awful, unavoidable." Through simile she compares the movement of the shadow to that of a boat as it careens, capsizes, until the light "turned and heeled over and went out." This is the climax of the race, the race which was first all speed and excitement before it paled to disappointment and finally ended

in calamity. "This was the end. The flesh and blood of the world was dead; only the skeleton was left. It hung beneath us, a frail shell; brown; dead; withered (SF, 197)." For a moment man has experienced the end of the world, has realized that the color that enlivens the earth can be "blown out," can disappear with the light. Then gradually the light returns and the earth regains its substance as that light, like a "great paint-brush washed in woods dark on the valley, and massed hills blue above them (SF, 197)." It is not the return of light and color that remains in the minds of those individuals outlined against the sky, that united army who for a moment stood immortal on a dead earth. For them "still the memory endured that the earth we stand on is made of colour, colour can be blown out; and then we stand on a dead leaf; and we who tread the earth securely now have seen it dead (SF, 197)." The spectators know, having outlived the world, that beneath all the appearance of color endowed by light is a mere skeleton, a mere fragile shape. The description of the eclipse is carefully designed by Mrs. Woolf to express this moment when all of the spectators become one in their realization, when they together see this reality beneath appearance.

Mrs. Woolf purports to make "The Sun and the Fish" a study of the human memory, showing by examples that a sight is recalled only "if it has the good luck to ally itself with some other emotion by which it is preserved. Sights marry, incongruously, morganatically . . . and so keep each other alive (SF, 193)." In "The Sun and the Fish," the sight of the eclipse

is married with the sight of the fish in their tanks at the Zoological Gardens. On the surface this appears an incongruous marriage indeed, but Mrs. Woolf sets about linking them by showing how they are joined through relations of emotional responses to events. Seeing, she believes, involves a complex interaction of senses: "The mind's eye is only by courtesy an eye; it is a nerve which hears and smells, which transmits heat and cold, which is attached to the brain and rouses the mind to discriminate and speculate (SF, 194)."

This memory of the eclipse, when Mrs. Woolf asks her mind to recall it, is joined with a memory of the aquariums at the Zoological Gardens. We see how this experience, as she designs her narration of it, is joined emotionally, moving from chaos and the heat of existence to the cold, motionless, immutable immortality of the aquarium which has always existed, making "the most majestic of human evolutions seem feeble and fluctuating compared with theirs (SF, 198)." In her memory this world is linked with that dead skeleton of a world upon which all men have stood, and contemporary man is united with his primeval ancestors of Stonehenge. The memory begins with a hot, confused London summer day in the Zoological Gardens--and then suddenly two lizards appear on the mind's eye, one "mounted immobile on the back of another, with only the twinkle of a gold eyelid or the suction of a green flank to show that they are living flesh and not made of bronze (SF, 198)." What is the logic of the mind's eye, Mrs. Woolf wonders, and concludes that it is perhaps: "After destruction, calm; after ruin,

steadfastness (SF, 198)." The world of the fish she describes is a colorless, immortal world of "settled sunshine, where there is neither rain nor cloud." It is a world that is completely controlled, completely serene, completely ordered. "For forests, they have half a dozen bamboo canes; for mountains, sandhills; in the curves and crinkles of a sea-shell lie for them all adventure, all romance (SF, 198)." It is a perfect world. "Nothing exists needlessly. The fish themselves seem to have been shaped deliberately and slipped into the world only to be themselves. They neither work nor weep. In their shape is their reason (SF, 198)." This immortal world, with its diversity of shape and self-sufficient existence, is the opposite of the mortal world. What place, Mrs. Woolf asks, would we have "turned naked into an aquarium," we who have "under our tweed and silk . . . nothing but a monotony of pink nakedness (SF, 199)." Mrs. Woolf sets in contrast the mortal and the immortal, the world of man, dependent upon light and color for substance, for existence, for meaning, for life and the colorless, cold, controlled immortal world which man can view but cannot enter.

Whether the reader's emotional response to the narration of these events corresponds with the author's intention in this essay is of sufficient interest. Not only does Mrs. Woolf attempt to design her narrative descriptions so that she can best convey her moments of apprehension of an inner reality--that our mortal world without light and color is dead and meaningless, and that in the immortal world of the fish, all

reason and meaning for existence rest in the shape of the fish who are meant only to be themselves and nothing more--but also, she tries to convey how our sensuous experiences have an emotional significance apart from the senses at a deeper, inner level at which these emotions gain meaning and significance through their relations to one another. In both cases human nature has stood apart, after fighting the scurry of human, everyday life, and in dignity has for a moment glimpsed the immutable. In both cases Mrs. Woolf's apprehension of the inner reality beneath appearance is that of an immortal world which has proved sufficient unto itself without the observation of human consciousness, and that consciousness, allowed to observe, lacks all distinction, is an outline against a ridge without individuality or is a mere pink nakedness under its clothes.

"The Sun and the Fish" was written in 1928, two years after the publication of Transformations which contains Fry's essay "Plastic Colour." Mrs. Woolf stresses the relationship between color and volume in the first half of the essay, building her description around this relationship. Her assertion in the second half, that for the immortal fish, "in their shape is their reason," might also be, to offer one interpretation, an echo of Fry's insistence that formal relations determine immortality, for the associations with history, with appearance, with emotional life are fleeting.

2. "The Lady in the Looking-Glass"

Mrs. Woolf uses her descriptive powers in "The Sun and the Fish" to compose the series of events preceding the eclipse into scenes, static moments expressive of the atmosphere which served as a backing for "the moment" when the spectators, ranged in outline against the ridge became universal man, became united in consciousness and realized the frail, empty nature, the deadness of the world man stands on when it is not washed by the painter's brush with light and color, endowing it with substance. In "The Sun and the Fish," Mrs. Woolf is reshaping an actual experience pictorially. This same technique is used to convey the reality beneath appearance in her short stories. It is particularly obvious in "The Lady in the Looking-Glass."[3] Mrs. Woolf subtitles this "A Reflection," and in so doing she plays upon the meaning of "reflection," for the story focuses upon two kinds of reflection--the objectively reconstructed reflection in the mirror, and the thoughts and reflections of the consciousness of the speaker who is looking at the mirror's reflection. The speaker in the story is a spectator, and it is with him that the reader identifies. The writer of the story, Mrs. Woolf, becomes the painter who provides the pictures which the speaker and the reader contemplate.

The story opens, "People should not leave looking-glasses hanging in their rooms any more than they should leave

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[3]Virginia Woolf, A Haunted House and Other Short Stories (London: The Hogarth Press, 1962), pp. 86-92. All references to this story cited in the text will appear hereafter as "LL" followed by the page number.

open cheque books or letters confessing some hideous crime (LL, 86)." By this Mrs. Woolf suggests that it is through the looking-glass, through the picture of life arrested at a given moment, that one is exposed to an inner truth. She immediately establishes the contrast between the static nature of the reflection in the looking-glass and the movement of actual life as it is perceived by the naked eye, unframed, without the intermediary action of the mirror. The living room in the farm house is full of movement--shadows playing, curtains blowing, fluctuating light continually changing the color and composition. The picture reflected in the looking-glass is of a garden scene cut off amidst banks of flowers by the golden rim of the mirror. The composition changes twice in the story. The speaker, looking into the glass from his seat in the living room, surrounded by movement, observes the first picture, notices that "the looking-glass reflected the hall table, the sunflowers, the garden path so accurately and so fixedly that they seemed held there in their reality unescapably (LL, 87)." The composition then changes when, after a shadow passes over the mirror, a packet of letters is left strewn across the table. When Isabella, into whose inner being the speaker is penetrating, enters the picture, gradually moving up the path in the garden until she fills the frame with her presence, forcing the other elements to move aside gently and to make a space for her, the composition of the picture alters for the last time. Each of these alterations in the picture is accompanied by a fresh series of speculations by the speaker about Isabella. He begins

by comparing her with the convolvulus, a comparison which indicates to him how little he knows the "real" Isabella, a comparison of the sort that he considers "worse than idle and superficial--they are cruel even, for they come like the convolvulus itself trembling between one's eyes and the truth (LL, 87)." And he concludes, "There must be truth; there must be a wall (LL, 87)." The reflection in the glass, presenting both fact and appearance, becomes his source for attempting imaginatively, reflectively, speculatively to arrive at the truth. Both the first and second reflections in the glass, when the hall table is bare and when it is covered with letters, set up in the speaker a series of reflections. As he works from the facts and appearances reflected in the glass, Mrs. Woolf labels the speaker's thoughts as mental wanderings and imaginings by using such conditional words and phrases as "almost certainly," "would find," "judging from," "whether," "one could," "must be," "as if," "one must," "would be," "would bear," and "surely." This emphasizes the speaker's attempt to "prise her [Isabella] open with the first tool that came to hand--the imagination," his attempt to fix his "mind upon her at that very moment," to "fasten her down there," to discover what lay behind and beneath the trivial things she talked about at dinner: "It was her profounder state of being that one wanted to catch and turn to words, the state that is to the mind what breathing is to the body, what one calls happiness or unhappiness (LL, 90)."

The speaker continues to focus his attention on the

reflection in the mirror throughout the story. He notes how easily the letters become a part of the picture:

> And then it was strange to see how they were drawn in and arranged and composed and made part of the picture and granted that stillness and immortality which the looking-glass conferred. They lay there invested with a new reality and significance and with a greater heaviness, too, as if it would have needed a chisel to dislodge them from the table. (LL,89)

As he contemplates the "impious" and "absurd" nature of his attempt in "prising her open," he is startled by her appearance in the glass which she enters "so gradually that she did not seem to derange the pattern in the glass, but only to bring in some new element which gently moved and altered the other objects (LL, 91)." When she arrives at last before the mirror, standing by the table, the truth breaks through, "the looking-glass began to pour over her a light that seemed to fix her; that seemed like some acid to bite off the unessential and superficial and to leave only the truth (LL, 91-92)." What is this truth about Isabella, the reality beneath her shell of facts and appearances the speaker has been trying to penetrate:

> It was an enthralling spectacle. Everything dropped from her--clouds, dress, basket, diamond--all that one had called the creeper and convolvulus. Here was the hard wall beneath. Here was the woman herself. She stood naked in that pitiless light. And there was nothing--Isabella was perfectly empty. She had no thoughts. She had no friends. She cared for nobody. As for her letters, they were all bills. Look, as she stood there, old and angular, veined and lined, with her high nose and her wrinkled neck, she did not even trouble to open them. (LL, 92)

The composition of each of the three pictures in this story is detailed, is carefully executed, and each picture is

designed to create in the spectator a certain state of mind. The first two are partial compositions, but each sets up in the speaker a set of emotions shared by the painter. In the final picture, when Isabella becomes the focus of attention, the composition is complete, and the painter and spectator know the reality beneath appearance, share a moment of illumination when they come to realize that Isabella is only what she talks about at dinner, an empty shell. This story cannot correctly be considered an Impressionist work. The stages of composition are strictly circumscribed, the design is so carefully executed as an endeavor to reveal the reality beneath appearance, that there can be no doubt that Mrs. Woolf was availing herself of Post-Impressionist methods, as they are articulated by Roger Fry. The speaker in the story is the spectator; Mrs. Woolf is the artist. It is also notable that here she is elaborating, in a sense, Fry's idea of the emotion shared between the spectator and the painter. Since the artist is at work throughout the story, and since the spectator-speaker is responding to the picture at each major stage of the composition, Mrs. Woolf is able to have the painter and spectator arrive at perfect communication simultaneously with the completion of the painting. This technique also echoes the pattern of development in To the Lighthouse where Lily's painting, at its various stages of composition, similarly serves to unify the novel with its completion marking the moment when the inner reality is apprehended.

In the "Foreword" to A Haunted House, Leonard Woolf discusses his wife's practices in writing short stories and sketches:

> All through her life, Virginia Woolf used at intervals to write short stories. It was her custom, whenever an idea for one occurred to her, to sketch it out in a very rough form and then to put it away in a drawer. Later, if an editor asked her for a short story, and she felt in the mood to write one (which was not frequent), she would take a sketch . . . and rewrite it, sometimes a great many times. Or if she felt, as she often did, while writing a novel, that she required to rest her mind by working at something else for a time, she would either write a critical essay or work upon one of her sketches for short stories.[4]

Both "The Sun and the Fish" and "The Lady in the Looking-Glass" were probably conceived as ideas to which Mrs. Woolf rather abruptly gave form. Even as finished works, both bear the mark of a writer straining to perfect a technique, and both suffer as a result. In "The Sun and the Fish" Mrs. Woolf accomplishes her goal of conveying that moment when she glimpsed the reality beneath appearance and the emotion she felt at that moment, especially in her narration of the eclipse. Her description of the aquarium and her responses to the fish seem more forced and less satisfying artistically. By setting for herself a second goal in the essay, to show how the mind recalls, through related emotions, Mrs. Woolf was required to shape the second event in such a way that the close link she wished to establish between the two events would be plausible. The reader senses her manipulation of the visit to the aquarium

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[4]V. Woolf, A Haunted House, p. 7.

and therefore feels that the relations between emotions which Mrs. Woolf attempts to establish are perhaps genuine, but within the essay the link made by the author is artificial and contrived. The connection is certainly, to use Coleridge's terms, more the product of the fancy than of the imagination. Art does not conceal art in "The Sun and the Fish." "The Lady in the Looking-Glass" suffers similarly. The reader identifies with the speaker, both become spectators, but the manipulation of the painter-author becomes too obvious. Through the first picture and even the second the reader feels and believes as the author-painter feels and believes. But even though Mrs. Woolf arranges to make the reader-speaker-spectator see the inner reality in the last picture by introducing Isabella gradually into the center of the picture, the action of the acidic light is too abrupt. Even though visions are in part realized with such quickness, within the story the quickness fails to convince. These two short pieces do, though, illustrate Mrs. Woolf's experimentation along Post-Impressionist lines, with reality and appearance, with composition, with formal relations both between objective reality and emotions. They also illustrate at the most fundamental level the kind of experimentation Mrs. Woolf was conducting in her novels where such sketches of moments as she gives us with the eclipse, with the aquarium, within the looking-glass, only form a small part of a complex inter-relationship between such scenes, all the scenes with their own small moments contributing to the

larger moment of realization which it is the novel's function to convey.

CHAPTER X

EXPERIMENTS IN COMPOSITION: JACOB'S ROOM AND MRS. DALLOWAY

1. Jacob's Room

Jacob's Room, Mrs. Woolf's first experimental novel to receive substantial recognition for its innovations in method, consists, as mentioned above, of a series of such moments as we have in the sketches. Mrs. Woolf arranges these moments in chronological order, each one marking a significant point in Jacob's life. A close examination of just one of these moments illustrates the care with which Mrs. Woolf composes her scene, for instance the scene where Betty Flanders' letter has arrived at Jacob's rooms.[1] Here Mrs. Woolf is attempting to present Jacob, with Cambridge behind him, working in London, a young man with responsibilities, with friends, with mistresses, and with the freedom of a youth who has left the stage of boyhood attachment to his mother. Mrs. Woolf in this novel is not yet sure enough of her skill to allow the scene to speak for itself. Rather, she begins the chapter with a series of flash descriptions of Jacob's activities during his days and evenings, of snippets of

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[1]Virginia Woolf, Jacob's Room (London: The Hogarth Press, 1949), pp. 89-92. All references to this novel cited in the text will hereafter appear as "JR" followed by the page number.

conversations. Then Mrs. Woolf focuses her attention on Mrs. Flanders' letter, talking about it. She tells the reader that the letter is filled with trivia, with village news, and that it is significant in what it says and in what it leaves unsaid. She suggests that the letter, in dealing with the relationships between everyday events and people, the superficial veneer of existence, the outer reality, serves as a cover for what Mrs. Flanders wants to tell Jacob. She intimates that behind the writing of the letter to Jacob is the elemental drive of the mother urging her son not to stray too far, urging her son to find in his mother the only girl for him, urging that he "come back, come back to me (JR, 89)." All of this Mrs. Woolf tells the reader through artful, but undisguised omniscient narration. It is when the letter appears downstairs at Jacob's residence that Mrs. Woolf begins to compose her scene and to portray visually the knowledge that the letter is both the appearance of superficial communication and the reality of maternal desire and concern asserting itself in Jacob's life.

Carefully Mrs. Woolf places the letter on the table in the hall where Florinda, Jacob's mistress, finds it and carries it up to him. Preoccupied with other concerns, Jacob ignores the letter, knowing it is from his mother, and leaves it where Florinda has placed it, "under the lamp, between the biscuit-tin and the tobacco-box (JR, 90)." There the letter waits while Florinda and Jacob make love in the bedroom. There the letter sits, condemning Florinda, excusing Jacob, while Jacob and Florinda have forgotten the letter. Then the couple

emerges from the bedroom:

> It was Jacob who came first, in his dressing-gown, aimable, authoritative, beautifully healthy, like a baby after an airing, with an eye clear as running water. Florinda followed, lazily stretching; yawning a little; arranging her hair at the looking-glass--while Jacob read his mother's letter. (JR, 92)

With this scene Mrs. Woolf has conveyed Jacob's independence and command over the relationships which form his life. She has furnished her scene sparsely with details, including only those objects, those elements of the design (the arrangement of the table, biscuit-tin, letter and tobacco box on one side of a door, and on the other a bedroom) necessary for conveying the significance of the moment. With her pen, Mrs. Woolf has sketched a scene which conveys this vividly. In her later works, when she is more sure of her ability to convey emotion through the composition of a scene, she omits lengthy narration in which she spells out the significance of the moment and allows the scene to stand alone.

2. Mrs. Dalloway

Mrs. Woolf is probably more dependent upon scenes to carry the thread of development in Jacob's Room than in any of her novels, but it is also true that when one tries to recall her novels, one remembers them in scenes. Her great discovery in Mrs. Dalloway she believed to be her "tunneling process"[2] which enables her to reveal the past in brief installments, until the reader is able to put the characters together and to

[2]See V. Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 61.

discover them intimately for himself. Yet one remembers her Mrs. Dalloway, not character by character as much as by character involved in situations: Mrs. Dalloway at the curb, crossing the street, looking in the book-shop window, buying flowers when the limousine passes with its curtains drawn; Peter and Clarissa in the drawing room; Septimus and Rezia in Regent's Park; Septimus and Rezia's visit to Sir William Bradshaw. It is Mrs. Woolf's careful design in composing these scenes that makes them so memorable.

The scene between Peter and Clarissa in the drawing room provides a good example.[3] Clarissa is sitting on a blue sofa, holding in her hands a dress of green silk. Beside Clarissa are her scissors and thread, in her hand a needle. On the mantlepiece are giant candlesticks, one on either end, with a silver casket in the middle, all recently placed there by Lucy, the maid. In the room there is also a clock, a crystal dolphin, an inlaid table bearing a mounted paper knife, valuable English prints, and chairs with fine covers. Mrs. Woolf does not list these things item by item; instead, she introduces these objects one at a time, especially through Peter's musings which bring to life the opulence of the possessions with which Richard has surrounded Clarissa.

Peter bounds up the stairs and bursts into the drawing room, rattling the brass knob on the door. He sits down on

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[3]Virginia Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1925), pp. 59-72. All references to this novel in the text will hereafter appear as "D" followed by the page number.

the sofa next to Clarissa, and gradually we are allowed to see them, not through detailed description, but through the mental observations they make about each other. Clarissa, who has aged, sits next to fifty-three-year-old Peter, dressed in a checked suit, wearing a bow tie, slender, dry-looking, and grasping a horn-handled pen-knife in his hand. They are immediately on a level of complete intimacy with one another, for the relationship between them is an intense one. They have shared so many experiences that, as the scene in the drawing room unfolds, one picks up the other's unspoken thoughts and continues them in his own mind, in what Fry would call "rhythmic changes of states of mind." While Clarissa sews, while they maintain a geniality of old, close friends meeting each other once more, the steady rhythm of Clarissa's needle serves as a background for their intercourse, establishes the rhythm for Peter's thoughts: "Here she is mending her dress; mending her dress as usual, he thought; here she's been sitting all the time I've been in India; mending her dress; playing about; going to parties (D, 61)." The two most prominent objects provided by Mrs. Woolf are Peter's knife and Clarissa's scissors, and for both characters these become weapons. Peter can cut through the superficial web of her life, can force her to question her stable emotional satisfaction, can force her to flush with jealousy, can force her to respond to his tears, to wish she could share the intensity of his life. But Clarissa, with her scissors, can clip the thread of youthful, vivacious enjoyment which continually keeps him buoyed up, his "journeys;

rides; quarrels; adventures; bridge parties; love affairs; work, work, work (D, 65)!" Clarissa can puncture his fifty-three-year-old playboy existence, his pretensions of being a lover; can, through her arrogance, make him sense his folly; indeed, she can make him weep. Peter and Clarissa share memories and thoughts, exchange kisses, move closer together and relive a painful, moonlit night on the terrace of Bourton. They know a moment of complete intimacy when Clarissa puts aside the symbol of her life as Mrs. Dalloway, the green dress which shines only in artificial light, and goes to Peter. But they are interrupted by Elizabeth, Clarissa's "my Elizabeth," a product of the choice she made in marrying Richard instead of Peter. Mrs. Woolf allows only two interruptions of this scene; both remind Peter of Clarissa's choice of Richard and the fruit of their marriage together. Once Lucy enters to deposit more silver, sealing Peter's thoughts about the richness of the room, the frivolity of her party-giving, the "smugness of the whole affair" which he attributes to Richard: "Richard's doing, not Clarissa's; save that she married him (D, 65)." The second interruption, the entrance of Elizabeth which occurs just as Peter has seized Clarissa by the shoulders, questioning her happiness, sends Peter away, leaving Clarissa ensconced in her home and family, calling after him, "Remember my party tonight!" with a voice which "sounded thin and very far away as Peter Walsh shut the door (D, 72)."

As one analyzes the trappings of the drawing room and the figures of the central characters in this scene, one

realizes that Mrs. Woolf has furnished the room with only enough objects to give a sense of the room and to convey the relations between the emotions and thoughts of the characters and the setting in which they meet. The dress Clarissa is wearing, except that it rustles, is never described, nor is the color and cut of Peter's checked suit. The checks and the bow-tie serve to suggest a certain flamboyance, a flamboyance which does not seem to rest comfortably on a man described as "elderly." A fifty-three-year-old woman shares a half-hour of painful, revealing intimacy, surrounded by objects which explain and reflect, suggest and confirm, the painfulness of the separateness, the impossibility of closeness. Clarissa needs the cool surroundings of her blue sofa, her green dress; she cannot sustain herself in the intensity of Peter's emotions and life. Clarissa must repeat in her mind as a means of comfort, "Fear no more the heat o' the sun."

Mrs. Woolf praised Sickert's careful composition and compared it to that of Turgenev in his novels. She is here working toward a similar skilful arrangement. The relations between the emotions and the objects, the selection of colors, only blue, green and silver, the rhythm of the needle through the silk, the snap of Peter's pen knife, the rustle of Clarissa's dress, and the sense of hurried activity outside the quiet of the drawing room, all suggest a purposeful attempt on the part of Mrs. Woolf to arrange a scene which conveys an emotion, which by its very arrangement is significant for the reader. Surely this scene is an example of Mrs. Woolf's attempt to learn from

the visual arts, to employ the technique of the painter. In its emphasis upon formal relations between the objects and thoughts and emotions it is further suggestive of an attempt to use Post-Impressionist methods, in accordance with Fry's interpretation of Post-Impressionism. It seems also not excessive to assert that one experiences an emotional response, although perhaps not precisely an "aesthetic emotion," to the "rhythmic changes of states of mind" in this scene.

Mrs. Woolf avails herself directly of Post-Impressionist techniques in her presentation of Septimus. Septimus, throughout the novel, except for one passage in which he is temporarily sane, just before he commits suicide, sees only the inner reality, sees only the reality beneath appearance. Mrs. Woolf conveys this through manipulating his perceptions in such a way that whenever Septimus looks at something in outer reality, it dissolves into shapes and patterns, and the design that he sees is connected with a vision. This happens when Septimus sees the Prime Minister's car:

> And there the motor car stood, with drawn blinds, and upon them a curious pattern like a tree, Septimus thought, and this gradual drawing together of everything to one centre before his eyes, as if some horror had come almost to the surface and was about to burst into flames, terrified him. (D, 21)

Later, in the park, Septimus responds similarly to the scene around him. He sees the words being written in smoke by the plane overhead, but before he can read what they are writing he feels "this exquisite beauty, and tears filled his eyes as he looked at the smoke words languishing and melting in

the sky and bestowing upon him in their inexhaustible charity and laughing goodness one shape after another of unimaginable beauty (D, 31)." Septimus sits on the bench, Rezia's hand on his knee, and sees the "elm trees rising and falling, rising and falling with all their leaves alight and the colour thinning and thickening from blue to the green of a hollow wave (D, 32)."[4] The trees begin to seem alive to him:

> And 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. The sparrows fluttering, rising, and falling in jagged fountains were part of the pattern; the white and blue, barred with black branches. Sounds made harmonies with premeditation; the spaces between them were as significant as the sounds. (D, 32-33)

Septimus decides there are too many people around him, and looking out over the park, he sees it in color and outlines: "The long slope of the park dipped like a length of green stuff with a ceiling cloth of blue and pink smoke high above, and there was a rampart of far irregular houses hazed in smoke (D, 36)."

Mrs. Woolf seems to be suggesting that insanity consists in seeing only the reality beneath appearance, in losing the balance between the inner and outer. Septimus wonders, "Why could he see through bodies, see into the future, when dogs will become men? . . . His body was macerated until only nerve fibres were left. It was spread like a veil upon a

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[4]Mrs. Hilsinger notes the Post-Impressionist nature of Septimus' vision of the trees in Regent's Park. See "Insubstantial Pageant: A Reading of the Novels of Virginia Woolf," p. 86.

rock (D, 102-03)." The noise from the street, sounding into his room "cannonned from rock to rock, divided, met in shocks of sound which rose in smooth columns (that music should be visible was a discovery) (D, 103)." He lies on the sofa, after his visit to Sir William Bradshaw, and he watches the shadows "going and coming, beckoning, signalling, . . . the light and shadow which now made the wall grey, now the bananas bright yellow," and it seems to him that he is "watching the watery gold glow and fade with the astonishing sensibility of some live creature on the roses, on the wall-paper (D, 211)." Mrs. Woolf portrays Septimus in a moment of sanity--at least to his wife it is sanity--just before his suicide. At this moment, for this brief period, Mrs. Woolf endows Septimus with normal vision, enables him to look at objects of the real world without seeing beneath them, through them:

> He began, very cautiously, to open his eyes, to see whether a gramophone was really there, But real things--real things were too exciting. He must be cautious. He would not go mad. First he looked at the fashion papers on the lower shelf, then, gradually at the gramophone with the green trumpet. Nothing could be more exact. And so, gathering courage, he looked at the sideboard; the plate of bananas; the engraving of Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort; at the mantlepiece, with a jar of roses. None of these things moved. All were still; all were real. (D, 215).

Septimus finally chooses the reality beneath appearance to the Holmes-Bradshaw variety. Mrs. Woolf may have been drawing upon her personal knowledge of mental illness in her portrayal of Septimus, and it is worthy of notice that she endows Septimus, during those periods where he has lost contact with surface reality, with Post-Impressionist vision.

CHAPTER XI

POST-IMPRESSIONISM AND TO THE LIGHTHOUSE

Mrs. Woolf in none of her novels embraces Post-Impressionism so obviously or gives it such a structurally significant role as she does in To the Lighthouse. It takes Lily Briscoe, the artist-guest of the Ramsays, the complete period covered in the novel, ten years, in order to complete the picture she began on the lawn of the Ramsay's summer home one afternoon while Mrs. Ramsay, sitting before the window, read to her youngest son, James, in the drawing room. A close reading of the novel, with Lily and her picture as the focus of attention reveals how much Mrs. Woolf uses Lily and her picture as a unifying device, even though the character of Mrs. Ramsay, who so overwhelms the first chapter, "The Window," tends to obscure the significance of the artist and her work. It is, in fact, only with the final chapter, "The Lighthouse," where the scene constantly shifts between Lily on the lawn and Mr. Ramsay, Cam, and James in the boat, that one becomes completely aware of the critical importance of Lily to the novel.

We first know that Lily is painting a picture when Mrs. Ramsay, early in the novel, looks up, sees Lily on the lawn, and remembers that Lily is painting a picture and that she is supposed to be maintaining a static position. Mrs.

Ramsay, however willing she is to oblige her guest, admits that she really thinks, with regard to Lily, that "one could not take her painting very seriously."[1] Lily is surrounded by people who fail to take her art seriously, especially Charles Tansley who always says, "Women can't paint." This is why Lily, "even while she looked at the mass, at the line, at the colour, at Mrs. Ramsay sitting in the window with James, . . . kept a feeler on her surroundings lest someone should creep up, and suddenly she should find her picture looked at (TL, 30)." Only with Mr. Bankes is she at ease with her work; and gradually we realize, through her musings in his presence and her explanations to him, that Lily's practice as an artist is not that of a dabbler, but rather is informed by a Post-Impressionist aesthetic. She looks and discovers that "beneath the colour there was the shape (TL, 32)." She struggles, agonizes as she attempts to put down on the canvas what she sees, to be courageous enough "to clasp some miserable remnant of her vision to her breast (TL, 32)." She sees masses and lines.

As Lily watches Mr. Bankes observing Mrs. Ramsay with love, "love that never attempted to clutch its object; . . . like the love which mathematicians bear their symbols (TL, 73-74)," she exults in this "rapture" as she calls it, "this silent stare, for which she felt intense gratitude; for nothing so

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[1]Virginia Woolf, To the Lighthouse (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1927), p. 29. All references to this novel in the text will hereafter appear as "TL" followed by the page number.

solaced her, eased her of the perplexity of life, and miraculously raised its burden, as this sublime power (TL, 74)." That Lily should move from contemplating Mr. Bankes' "silent stare" to looking once again at her painting seems perfectly natural, for Mr. Bankes' gaze, as Lily analyzes it, is that of Fry's aesthetic vision. When Lily tries to apply her aesthetic vision to her picture, the product of her creative vision, she is disappointed by her failure to realize her vision: "She saw the colour burning on a framework of steel; the light of a butterfly's wing lying upon the arches of a cathedral. Of all that only a few random marks scrawled upon the canvas remained (TL, 75)." When Lily puts away her paints, her greens and blues, she muses about her desire to be unified with Mrs. Ramsay, wondering whether love could achieve the unity she desired. But Lily is unable to achieve this. "Nothing happened." Mrs. Ramsay appears to Lily's vision as "an august shape; the shape of a dome (TL, 80)."

Lily attempts to explain her picture to Mr. Bankes, to show him that the purple triangle represents Mrs. Ramsay and James, that "if there, in that corner, it was bright, here, in this, she felt the need of darkness (TL, 81)." She elaborates upon her disregard for human likeness, upon the idea that what is important is "relations of masses, . . . lights and shadows (TL, 82)." As Lily talks to Mr. Bankes, she attempts to rediscover her vision, "subduing all her impressions as a woman to something much more general; becoming once more under the power of that vision which she had seen

clearly once and must now grope for among hedges and houses and mothers and children--her picture (TL, 82)." She remembers the problem is connecting the "mass on the right hand with that on the left," perhaps by "bringing the line of the branch across so; or break the vacancy in the foreground by an object (TL, 83)." But Lily does not want to break the unity as a whole. Lily's demonstration, her explanation, her concern with color, with shapes, with lines, masses, space, light and shadow arranged in the right relation, mark her as a Post-Impressionist. To emphasize this, Mrs. Woolf invents Pauncefort whose ideas Lily rejects, Pauncefort who sees "everything pale, elegant, semi-transparent (TL, 32)," who sees things with the color "thinned and faded; the shapes etherealised (TL, 75)." But Lily sees things differently, and it is what she sees that she tries to place on her canvas. The agony occurs when she feels so strongly about what she sees, yet is unable to convey it.

Even when Mrs. Woolf shifts the attention away from Lily to Mrs. Ramsay, Lily's painting is not forgotten. As Mrs. Ramsay, alone for the first time, collects herself, she thinks, "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, 92)."[2] But this is not invisible to Lily. She has seen, has felt Mrs. Ramsay this way, but she

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[2]See also V. Woolf, To the Lighthouse, p. 96.

has not yet placed her in the right relationship; the formal relations of her painting have not yet settled. Although Mrs. Ramsay dominates the dinner, willing Lily to be nice to Charles Tansley, introducing and dropping tidbits of conversation, finally bringing them all together in serene relations with the lighting of the candles, Lily's mind and emotions are never completely integrated into the scene; somehow she periodically escapes, planning and explaining her picture, using a sprig on the tablecloth to remind her, moving the salt cellar, until her picture finally becomes her escape from Mrs. Ramsay's will asserting itself, attempting to force her to marry: "For at any rate, she said to herself, catching sight of the salt cellar on the pattern, she need not marry, thank Heaven: she need not undergo that degradation. She was saved from that dilution. She would move the tree rather more to the middle (TL, 154)."

Ten years later, at the end of "Time Passes," Mrs. Woolf tells us in parenthesis that "(Lily Briscoe had her bag carried up to the house late one evening in September.) (TL, 213)." The final section of the novel, "The Lighthouse," opens with Lily, seated once more in the same dining room, at the same table, amidst coffee cups, but without Mrs. Ramsay. The Ramsay children run in and out, preparing sullenly for the trip to the Lighthouse, and Lily, in the middle of it all, wonders what she should do with herself, then remembers:

> When she had sat there last ten years ago there had been a little sprig or leaf pattern on the tablecloth, which she had looked at in a moment of revelation. There had been a problem about a foreground

> of a picture. Move the tree to the middle, she had said. She had never finished that picture. It had been knocking about in her mind all these years. (TL, 220)

Lily sets up her easel, recalls the problem of relations of masses, feels "she knew now what she wanted to do (TL, 221)." As she stands on the lawn, worrying about Mr. Ramsay "bearing down on her," she remembers her arrival, recalls her feeling that "it was a house full of unrelated passions (TL, 221)." This is the day that those passions are to be related.

Lily finds she is unable to paint with Mr. Ramsay around, with him begging for sympathy she cannot give. She takes her work seriously. "She hated playing at painting. A brush, the one dependable thing in a world of strife, ruin, chaos--that one should not play with, knowingly even: she detested it (TL, 224)." When finally Lily has praised Mr. Ramsay's boots, when he has been appeased, and the Ramsays are ready to depart, Lily observes, "There was no helping Mr. Ramsay on the journey he was going (TL, 230)," and she confronts herself with her white canvas. She rethinks the problems of the "relations of those lines cutting across, slicing down, and in the mass of the hedge with its green cave of blues and browns, which had stayed in her mind (TL, 234)." These problems, indeed, have "tied a knot in her mind so that at odds and ends of time, involuntarily, as she walked along the Brompton Road, as she brushed her hair, she found herself painting that picture, passing her eye over it, and untying the knot in imagination (TL, 234)." With these reflections Mrs. Woolf has covered ten years, has unified the novel, linking

"The Window" chapter with "The Lighthouse." Lily worries over her first mark, knowing that "one line placed on the canvas committed her to innumerable risks, to frequent and irrevocable decisions (TL, 235)." She makes her first mark; it runs, she makes another; and she finds herself in the grasp of Fry's aesthetic emotion:

> Here she was again, she thought, stepping back to look at it, drawn out of gossip, out of living, out of community with people into the presence of this formidable ancient enemy of hers--this other thing, this truth, this reality, which suddenly laid hands on her, emerged stark at the back of appearances and commanded her attention. (TL, 236)

She begins dipping her brush, moving it, as the rhythm of the aesthetic emotion takes over:

> Then, as if some juice necessary for the lubrication of her faculties were spontaneously spirited, she began, . . . but it was now heavier and went slower, as if it had fallen in with some rhythm which was dictated to her (she kept looking at the hedge, at the canvas) by what she saw, so that while her hand quivered with life, this rhythm was strong enough to bear her along with it on its current. Certainly she was losing consciousness of outer things. And as she lost consciousness of outer things, and her name and her personality and her appearance and whether Mr. Carmichael was there or not, her mind kept throwing up from its depths, scenes, and names, and sayings, and memories and ideas, like a fountain spurting over that glaring, hideously difficult white space, while she modelled it with greens and blues. (TL, 237-38)

Lily pauses, muses about Mrs. Ramsay, thinks of the "great revelation" that never comes and of Mrs. Ramsay's ability to make "of the moment something permanent (as in another sphere Lily herself tried to make of the moment something permanent) (TL, 241)." This is a revelation for Lily: "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. 'Mrs. Ramsay! . . . She owed it all to her (TL, 241)." At this moment Lily realizes that she, too, can create as did Mrs. Ramsay; that she, too, can make "of the moment something permanent." At this point Lily becomes one with Mrs. Ramsay, is identified with Mrs. Ramsay as ten years before she had desired to be. Mrs. Ramsay is no longer the dominant figure in the relationship; they share a gift; only the results are different.

After Lily's great revelation, her work becomes easier for her. She looks out and sees the boat, and she remembers Mrs. Ramsay, with her near-sighted eyes, looking out at the water and asking "Is it a boat? Is it a cask (TL, 255)?" Lily turns back to her picture:

> Heaven be praised for it, the problem of space remained, she thought taking up her brush again. It glared at her. The whole mass of the picture was poised upon that weight. Beautiful and bright it should be on the surface, feathery and evanescent, one colour melting into another like the colours on a butterfly's wing; but beneath the fabric must be clamped together with bolts of iron. It was to be a thing you could ruffle with your breath; and a thing you could not dislodge with a team of horses. And she began to model her way into the hollow there. At the same time, she seemed to be sitting beside Mrs. Ramsay on the beach. (TL, 255)

As Lily paints, she recalls the last September with the Ramsays, Mr. Bankes, the Rayleys, the failure of the Rayley marriage so carefully pushed by Mrs. Ramsay. And then, Lily encounters "some obstacle in her design (TL, 260)," and as she pauses, remembers Mrs. Ramsay always urging her to marry, the Rayleys

to marry:

> For a moment Lily, standing there, with the sun hot on her back, summing up the Rayleys, triumphed over Mrs. Ramsay, who would never know how Paul went to coffee-houses and had a mistress, . . . how she stood here painting, had never married, not even William Bankes. (TL, 260)

Lily has now not only identified herself with Mrs. Ramsay, but also she has triumphed over her. She recalls how, by gazing at the table cloth, she had barely escaped Mrs. Ramsy's insistence that she marry William Bankes. She thinks of her friendship with William Bankes, then of how William responded to Mrs. Ramsay's beauty, and then of Mrs. Ramsay's beauty generally. Gradually she finds herself "half out of the picture, looking, a little dazedly, as if at unreal things, at Mr. Carmichael (TL, 265)." Wondering what it all means, these thoughts and emotions about Mrs. Ramsay, "the whole world seemed to have dissolved in this early morning hour into a pool of thought, a deep basin of reality (TL, 266)." Looking at her picture she thinks that if Mr. Carmichael would talk to her, would answer her unanswered questions, that he would say "how 'you' and 'I' and 'she' pass and vanish; nothing stays; all changes; but not words, not paint (TL, 267)." Lily's pain, her desire for Mrs. Ramsay, begins to subside; she recalls the visions of Mrs. Ramsay which kept recurring for days after Mrs. Ramsay's death, so that "wherever she happened to be, painting, here, in the country or in London, the vision would come to her, and her eyes, half closing, sought something to base her vision on (TL, 270)." Then "moved as she was by

some instinctive need of distance and blue (TL, 270)," Lily looks out and sees the boat. She looks again, and then again, and she thinks about how "so much depends, . . . upon distance: whether people are near us or far from us (TL, 284)." She surmises that the Ramsays will arrive at the Lighthouse at lunch time, and then looks again at her picture: "There was something perhaps wrong with the design? Was it, she wondered, that the line of the wall wanted breaking, was it that the mass of the trees was too heavy (TL, 287)?" Trying to understand what is wrong, she realizes that it "evaded her when she thought of Mrs. Ramsay. . . . 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)." Lily sits down; she rests; she looks at Mr. Carmichael and she thinks that one way to know people is "to know the outline, not the detail, to sit in one's garden and look at the slopes of a hill running purple down into the distant heather (TL, 289)." Then she remembers Mrs. Ramsay, that Mr. Carmichael never liked her, how "half one's notions of other people were, after all, grotesque. They served private purposes of one's own (TL, 293)." And then she thinks again of Mrs. Ramsay, of the repetition of the life of the Ramsays, how they would quarrel and then come back together, how Mrs. Ramsay would smooth things over. While Lily thinks, recalls, she continues to gaze at the window:

> One must keep on looking without for a second relaxing the intensity of emotion, the determination not to be put off, not to be bamboozled. One must hold the

> scene--so--in a vise and let nothing come in and spoil it. One wanted, she thought, dipping her brush deliberately, to be on a level with ordinary experience, to feel simply that's a chair, that's a table, and yet at the same time, it's a miracle, it's an ecstasy. (TL, 299-300)

Something happens at the window, something white waves while Lily looks: "'Mrs. Ramsay! Mrs. Ramsay!' she cried, feeling the old horror come back--to want and want and not to have. Could she inflict that still? And then, quietly, as if she refrained, that too became part of ordinary experience, was on a level with the chair, with the table (TL, 300)." Mrs. Ramsay has lost her dominance over Lily. Lily looks out over the water for the boat, for Mr. Ramsay. "She wanted him (TL, 300)."

Looking out toward the Lighthouse which is almost invisible, Lily feels "suddenly completely tired out (TL, 308)," and surmises that Mr. Ramsay has reached his destination: "Ah, but she was relieved. Whatever she had wanted to give him, when he left her that morning, she had given him at last (TL, 308-09)." Mr. Carmichael, who never liked Mrs. Ramsay, gets up, joins her in looking out over the water, and she realizes he has shared her thoughts the whole morning:

> He stood there as if he were spreading his hands over all the weakness and suffering of mankind; she thought he was surveying tolerantly and compassionately, their final destiny. Now he has crowned the occasion, she thought, when his hand slowly fell, as if she had seen him let fall from his great height a wreath of violets and asphodels which, fluttering slowly, lay at length upon the earth. (TL, 309)

Lily remembers her picture, its lines, its colors, and she looks again at the steps which are now empty. "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)."

At last, Mrs. Woolf is saying, the proper relations have been achieved. Lily has spent her morning on the lawn slaying the ghost of Mrs. Ramsay, dissecting it, analyzing it, realizing at one time that she too can create like Mrs. Ramsay, can make a moment permanent through her art; realizing at another time that Mrs. Ramsay's will was often misdirected, as with the Rayleys, that in her escape from that will, Lily has triumphed. Lily has struggled, Lily has wrestled, Lily has wept, and finally Mrs. Ramsay has lost her dominance; Mrs. Ramsay has become like all other objects and Lily can now grasp the formal relations in her picture. Mrs. Ramsay, who could not really take Lily's painting seriously, no longer controls Lily. This is what Lily has given Mr. Ramsay. Lily's gift is that Mr. Ramsay no longer needs the kind of sympathy Mrs. Ramsay gave him; Mr. Ramsay can reach the Lighthouse on his own, in spite of Mrs. Ramsay's last word on the subject before she died: "'Yes, you were right. It's going to be wet tomorrow. You won't be able to go.' And she looked at him smiling. For she had triumphed again (TL, 186)." Mr. Ramsay no longer needs to be coddled and cajoled, to be humored and made to think he is the master of the family, that his tyranny is real. The Mr. Ramsay who arrives at the Lighthouse truly is the master of the family; he knows it; his children know it.

The relations of the family have been properly adjusted, the emotions have been re-arranged and placed in their proper order; and Lily on the lawn, having at last placed herself in the proper relation with Mrs. Ramsay, and knowing that Mr. Ramsay, in reaching the Lighthouse, has attained a similar achievement, can finish her painting, has had her vision, for at last the relations are right; at last they are all free.

Serena Sue Hilsinger, in her unpublished doctoral dissertation "Insubstantial Pageant: A Reading of Virginia Woolf's Novels," recognizes that Lily's painting is Post-Impressionist and that its completion, along with the arrival at the Lighthouse, serves to unify the novel. She interprets both achievements, however, as the fulfillment of Mrs. Ramsay's desire:

> Before she [Lily] can succeed, she, like the family in the boat, must solve the complication of the theme introduced by the death of Mrs. Ramsay. All must recapture the spirit of Mrs. Ramsay. The lighthouse, which beckons and guides, is Mrs. Ramsay, and at the moment the Ramsay family lands, Lily, looking out towards the lighthouse solves her problems, connects the two masses in her painting, and achieves the aesthetic unity she has sought. 'I have had my vision,' she exclaims. Both themes are reconciled simultaneously and in the same key, the key of Mrs. Ramsay. Through Mr. Ramsay's act and Lily Briscoe's art, Mrs. Ramsay is given life again--the past recaptured and time redeemed.[3]

This interpretation fails to acknowledge the disappearance of Mrs. Ramsay, the white flash in the window, from the steps before Lily is finally able to complete her painting; it ignores Mrs. Ramsay's final statement on the trip to the Lighthouse; it

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[3]Hilsinger, "Insubstantial Pageant: A Reading of Virginia Woolf's Novels," p. 113.

fails to consider the probability that if it were really Mrs. Ramsay's will that the picture Lily is painting be finished, she would surely have finished it when she began it, during the first chapter; for it is only through concentrating on her picture that Lily is able to escape Mrs. Ramsay's will. At the other extreme is Glenn Pedersen's approach to the novel in his article "Vision in To the Lighthouse"[4] in which he views Mrs. Ramsay as the suffocation of Victorian domestic life, cold, hard, oppressive and unloving. The truth is somewhere between the two interpretations. Mrs. Ramsay is exceedingly beautiful and admirable as a character. Yet she does manipulate the children, the guests, and her husband--all except Mr. Carmichael who himself suffered under a domineering wife and who rises at the end of the novel to give his benediction. Mr. Pedersen does not note the Post-Impressionist nature of Lily's painting; and Mrs. Hilsinger, interpreting the novel as she does, fails to recognize the full significance of the fact that it is, indeed, a Post-Impressionist painting. Fry believed that the artist is sensitive to the formal relations in what he sees. To such an artist "these relations have meaning and arouse keen emotions of pleasure." Such artists, asserts Fry, create systems of formal relations without sacrificing "anything of those formal relations to the arousing of emotions connected with the outer world. Their whole attention is directed toward establishing the completest relationship of

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[4]Glenn Pedersen, "Vision in To the Lighthouse," PMLA, LXXIII (December, 1958), 585-600.

all the parts within the systems of the work of art."[5] Works of this sort, Fry believes, survive generation after generation, just as Lily realizes that paint and words survive after all else is gone. Lily is unable to complete her picture so long as one of the masses, the dark triangle, the wedge of darkness with which Mrs. Ramsay identifies herself, continues to be bound up with emotions outside the formal relations of the picture. It is only when Lily has overcome this emotion that she can finish her picture. It is only when Mr. Ramsay can assert himself as a complete man, in control of the situation, that he will be able to get beyond Q; it is only when Mr. Ramsay is truly in control that James can overcome his Oedipal hatred and begin to identify himself with his father. It is only when Mr. Ramsay is completely in control that Cam can look at her father as a whole being, with the perspective of a young girl in whom her mother's sympathy is balanced by her father's reason. It is only when right relationships are established that the vision is achieved, and only when the "unrelated passions" Lily observed the previous night have subsided, that they are all free.

Mrs. Hilsinger believes that in To the Lighthouse Mrs. Woolf succeeds in answering Fry's complaint that "few novelists have ever conceived of the novel as a single perfectly organic aesthetic whole."[6] In its conformity to sonata form, the novel

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[5]Fry, The Artist and Psychoanalysis, p. 9.

[6]Fry, "Some Questions in Esthetics," Transformations, p. 9. See Hilsinger, p. 107.

can perhaps be considered as such a perfect aesthetic whole.[7] Yet Fry himself did not like the "Time Passes" section of the novel,[8] and he told Mrs. Woolf of his objection. One can certainly understand Fry's point of view here; for except for the beam of the Lighthouse falling upon the objects in the house as it goes to ruin and decay, the two major unifying elements of the novel are dropped in this middle chapter: the Lighthouse and Lily's picture. Further, Lily's thoughts during the final chapter, as she recalls things that have happened, recurring visions, suggest a means Mrs. Woolf could have used for conveying the passage of time without the abrupt break in the unity. Lily's picture, more effectively than any object that appears in any of Mrs. Woolf's novels, provides a technique around which she could effectively have designed a novel conceived as a "perfectly organic aesthetic whole." Yet it seems that part of the charm of To the Lighthouse, in my opinion her best novel, is that although the form is carefully planned and executed, one does not have the sense, as one does in The Waves and The Years, of Mrs. Woolf straining and manipulating to force the content to mold itself to a theory or to an experimental technique.

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[7] E. M. Forster recognizes the sonata form in his Rede Lecture on Mrs. Woolf, reprinted in Two Cheers for Democracy (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Inc., 1951), p. 227. Mrs. Hilsinger analyzes this sonata form in her dissertation in the chapter on To the Lighthouse.

[8] Mrs. Woolf records: "Roger it is clear did not like 'Time Passes.'" A Writer's Diary, p. 104.

CHAPTER XII

THE INNER AND OUTER REALITY: THE WAVES AND THE YEARS

1. The Waves

After the publication of The Waves Mrs. Woolf recorded in her diary: "I sedulously avoid meeting Roger and Lytton whom I suspect do not like The Waves."[1] Although this is typical of the fears which beset Mrs. Woolf as soon as one of her books was published,[2] there are several grounds upon which Fry might have based his dislike. Mrs. Woolf's initial conception of the novel was visionary, a vision of a fin in the water. This vision did not result from any actual experience, any scene she had observed, but rather occurred to her in a moment of mystical illumination. More than any of her novels it can be considered visionary. Fry considered visionary painting inferior because, rather than studying the appearances of nature and discovering therein formal relations, the artist builds dream structures which correspond to his subconscious reality. The Waves is if anything Mrs. Woolf's attempt to give design to the inner reality as she discerns it in her subconscious. Fry also disliked

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[1] V. Woolf, A Writer's Diary, pp. 176-77.

[2] See Leonard Woolf, Downhill All the Way: An Autobiography of the Years 1919 to 1939 (London: The Hogarth Press, 1967), pp. 56-58 for his account of Mrs. Woolf's sensitivity to criticism.

mysticism in novels, and, as was mentioned above, was particularly critical of Forster on this point.[3] The combination of the visionary and the mystical in The Waves may very well have been distasteful to him, especially since that combination is coupled with Mrs. Woolf's almost fanatical refusal to allow anything of objective reality into the work, not only "this appalling narrative business of the realist: getting on from lunch to dinner," but also "exact place and time. Anything may be out of the window--a ship-a desert-London."[4] Except for the passage of the sun from East to West in the interludes, marking symbolically the course of a lifetime, Mrs. Woolf attempts to do away with all indications of time. The reader knows that England is the generalized setting for the novel and that the six speakers gather for dinner somewhere in Hampton Court, but no specific references to places are made, nor do the six speakers ever become physically tangible. Mrs. Woolf presents six consciousnesses; those consciousnesses respond to situations which occur as temporal landmarks, so to speak, within lifetimes. This also probably proved objectionable to Fry. In The Waves Mrs. Woolf is acting as a "free man," is recording the "myriad impressions" as they fall upon the mind, allowing them to "shape themselves into the life of Monday and Tuesday," not on the level of physical need and objective reality but at a subconscious level, the level of inner reality. In so doing, she succeeds in presenting life as "a luminous halo, a semi-

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[3]See V. Woolf, Roger Fry, pp. 240-41.

[4]V. Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 143.

transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end."[5] That she is attempting to capture the inner life which flows steadily beneath the change in time from Monday to Tuesday becomes especially apparent in the final chapter of The Waves as Bernard repeats variations of this over and over.[6] In showing how the atoms fall upon the mind, Mrs. Woolf uses a kind of Impressionist technique, presenting the impressions of each of the six consciousnesses to a particular event. That Mrs. Woolf carefully designs the impressions of each of the consciousnesses in order to make them consistent is evident both from a reading of the novel and a reading of Mrs. Woolf's remarks in her diary during the writing of The Waves. The purpose of the design, however, is to give a naturalistic representation of the processes of the subconscious mind, rather than to create a structured design which reveals the reality beneath appearance by working with appearance. In other words, there is no outer reality in The Waves through which the inner reality can be revealed. Mrs. Woolf's attempt to reveal the inner reality directly becomes an attempt to express her subconscious vision of that inner reality through an extremely intricate and artificial design by which she attempts to create formal relations where none discernible exist. The Waves is all vision and no fact, all reality and no appearance.

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[5] V. Woolf, "Modern Fiction," The Common Reader, p. 154.

[6] See Virginia Woolf, The Waves (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1931), pp. 255, 257, 267, 271. All references to this novel in the text will hereafter appear as "W" followed by the page number.

One could maintain, though, that Fry's concerns in art are Mrs. Woolf's concerns in The Waves. She is attempting in her way to convey the reality beneath appearance which Fry believes must be conveyed, and she does so through an extremely intricate system of formal relations. That she has found a method which enables her to do away with appearance ought to be in itself commendable. Also, the moments in the lives of the six characters, or if one prefers, in the life of the six-sided androgynous central character around which The Waves shapes itself, are, in the literary realm, moments of vision. Nowhere in The Waves is the importance of a moment of the spirit so clearly expressed as in the meeting at a restaurant in which the six characters assemble to bid farewell to Percival. The meal has ended, the waiter has brought the bill, and the characters turn over in their minds this moment they have shared. Louis says, "Do not move, do not go. Hold it for ever," and Jinny replies, "Let us hold it for one moment, . . . love, hatred, by whatever name we call it, this globe whose walls are made of Percival, of youth and beauty, and something so deep sunk within us that we shall perhaps never make this moment out of one man again (W, 145)." Rhoda, Neville, and Susan speak; then Bernard sums it all up for them:

> What is come is in it . . . . That is the last drop and the brightest that we let fall like some supernal quicksilver into the swelling and splendid moment created by us from Percival. . . . We have proved, sitting eating, sitting talking, that we can add to the treasury of moments. . . . We are creators. We too have made something that will join the innumerable congregations of past time. We too . . . stride not into chaos, but into a world that our own force can

> subjugate and make part of the illumined and everlasting road. (W, 146)

Later, in the final chapter, Bernard describes to his silent dinner companion another important moment when they all walked down the avenue after the last dinner at Hampton Court, telling him how "against the brick, against the branches, we six out of how many million millions, for one moment out of what measureless abundance of past time and time to come, burnt there triumphant. The moment was all; the moment was enough (W, 278)."

In this concern for the moment, Mrs. Woolf not only echoes her own criticism, but also Charles Mauron's The Nature of Beauty in Art and Literature which Roger Fry translated and The Hogarth Press published in 1927. Mauron states:

> The simplest entities that literary art admits are states of mind, or perhaps one ought to say moments of the spirit. They are what we are at a given moment: the landscape that we contemplate, the sentiment which agitates us, the wonderful rhythm of a respiration, the movement of a palm tree. The external reality blends with the interior, or rather there is only one reality. Those division, useful enough for the life of action, into external objects, sensation, and sentiment, are abolished.[7]

In The Waves, Mrs. Woolf shows the moments of the spirit of her characters when they are engaged in such activities as contemplating a landscape or the beauty and perfection of Percival. Mauron is also asserting, however, that the "external reality blends with the interior, or rather there is only one reality." Although in The Waves Mrs. Woolf gives only one reality, it is not by blending. The reader has only the character's interior

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[7]Charles Mauron, The Nature of Beauty in Art and Literature, p. 74.

response to the exterior; the reader has everything at second-hand. Rather than a sense of one reality, the reader is finally left with a sense of unreality. Fry would say that the response to this visionary novel is the same as the response to a visionary painting.

The Waves also corresponds to other aspects of Mauron's theory, to his emphasis upon the writer's creation of a "psychological being," and his insistence that "the psychological reality, the psychological complex--there is the material which the writer should work upon."[8] Mrs. Woolf concerns herself with the psychological being to the exclusion of everything else in The Waves. It is a triumph of technique, but it is certainly not a novel influenced to any great extent by Fry's theories, even though Rhoda is pre-occupied with squares and oblongs and Bernard goes to an art gallery, following the news of Percival's death, and there responds to the lines and colors.

If we look once more at the theories of Mauron, we discover that one can perhaps best understand what he means when he says the writer conveys "a moment of the spirit" by his example from Proust. When Proust, Mauron believes, describes "some asparagus lying on a table, the subject is doubtless insignificant and without interest."[9] The "sentiment of beauty" which is felt results from "the pleasing and delicate imaginations which this spectacle has suggested to the author. . . . The work of art in question is a moment of the spirit of Proust--and,

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[8]Mauron, The Nature of Beauty, p. 66.

[9]Ibid., p. 71.

by the medium of words, a moment of our own spirit."[10] The state of mind Proust experiences in this example is aroused in response to something he contemplates. Such a state of mind is conveyed in Mauron's "pure literary work" and is the first of three psychological entities which he believes are found in such a work. The second is character. The characters whom Mauron holds up as the ideal standard are those who are not representative, who do not stand for anything:

> Hermione represents jealousy; Phedra, the passion of love; L'Avare, avarice, and the Mentor, lying. . . . Voltaire complained that the grand rôles had all been played. He had nothing left but the scraps. It is easy, however, to perceive that those figures have more vitality in proportion as they are less representative. What does the Misanthrope represent? What does Hamlet?[11]

The third entity for Mauron is situation:

> The relations between the facts are psychological realities by the same right as the facts themselves. Our fathers called them simply situations. They have a life independent of the characters, although there is a reciprocal modifying influence between them. There are even some so powerful that they crush the personages and reduce them to one level. The history of Oedipus is such. The individuals in that situation are, as on a chess board, pieces which count by reason of their relative situations.[12]

Mauron's concept of situation here is similar to Fry's belief that "the essential of great tragedy was not the emotional intensity of the events portrayed, but the vivid sense of the inevitability of their unfolding."[13] To disregard the "esthetically inevitable" would be to distort formal relations; it

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[10]Mauron, The Nature of Beauty, p. 72.

[11]Ibid., p. 77. [12]Ibid., p. 78.

[13]Fry, "Some Questions in Esthetics," Transformations, p. 10.

would also thus be to distract from the novel conceived as a "single perfectly organic esthetic whole." Fry denounces those writers who dream in print, allowing their readers to use their works as a means of wish-fulfillment. First-rate novels, he asserts, "note the inexorable sequence in life of cause and effect, they mark the total indifference of fate to all human desires, and they endeavor to derive precisely from the inexorability of fate an altogether different kind of pleasure."[14] This pleasure "consists in the recognition of inevitable sequences; a pleasure derived from the contemplation of the relations and correspondences of form."[15]

If we approach The Waves with the ideas of Fry and Mauron in mind, we discover that Mrs. Woolf, in this novel, is preoccupied almost exclusively with the inexorability of fate, with the movement from childhood to old age, from life to death. In her opening chapter she presents six consciousnesses which already in their tastes, their thoughts and their propensities have determined the shape their lives will take. The situation in which they are involved, broadly conceived, is life, and life holds them firmly in its grasp; the outstanding, guiding aspect of the character of each renders him a pawn, so to speak, upon the chess-board of life. The characters are purposefully generalized, universalized. In speaking of the women, Mrs. Woolf states her insistence in her diary that she wants "she," not a "Lavinia or a Penelope."[16] That The Waves should thus

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[14]Fry, The Artist and Psychoanalysis, p. 12.

[15]Ibid.

[16]V. Woolf, A Writer's Diary, p. 143.

prove unsatisfactory to Fry, then, if he did indeed dislike the novel, must rest mainly in its visionary, mystical nature, and in Mrs. Woolf's disregard for the outer reality which Mauron says must become one with the inner reality. Mrs. Woolf's next novel, The Years, deals with the outer reality in relation to the inner, reaches the reality beneath appearance through reality itself, and follows, to a surprising extent, the theories of Mauron to which Fry subscribed.

2. The Years

In The Years Mrs. Woolf combines the external and internal into one. She shows her characters again bound up in "the inexorable sequence in life"; she presents her characters in situations which are "esthetically inevitable"; and she creates characters who are not, in Mauron's sense, representative, but yet who have a tangible reality. Mrs. Woolf considered the novel as The Waves in combination with Night and Day. It is, of course, much more complex. Yet The Years, if one ignores her feminist didacticism which Fry would have abhorred, fulfills more completely than any of Mrs. Woolf's novels, Fry's aesthetic literary standards, derived by combining his own stated views with those he translated from Mauron.

Guiguet asserts that The Years is saying differently the same thing that The Waves is saying, that our lives overlap, entwining, that daily existence goes by and "half knowing others, half known by them--and half known by readers--the characters are pivots around which is coiled the thread of days,

events, things and other people."[17] From this crossing of threads "each individual comes to wonder, like Maggie: 'Am I that, or am I this? Are we one, or are we separate?'"[18] The characters overlap, blend one into another in The Waves so that at the end of his life Bernard is wondering, "'Who am I?' I have been talking of Bernard, Neville, Jinny, Susan, Rhoda and Louis. Am I all of them? Am I one and distinct? I do not know. We sat here together. But now . . . Percival is dead, and Rhoda is dead; we are divided; we are not here. Yet I cannot find any obstacle separating us (W, 288)." The lives in The Waves and in The Years both come together and go apart, intermingle and separate, like the waves on the shore, as the processes of life move over them, over this inner reality, as external events move one into another, each year building upon the next. Unlike The Waves, in The Years the reader knows the inner reality, not through direct access to the consciousnesses of the characters, but through their response to outer reality, to their response to events, to the march of fate. I believe this can be more effectively illustrated by focusing upon one of the scenes which mark a moment in the lifetime of the characters than by an analysis of the novel as a whole.

Mrs. Woolf selects the day of King Edward's death as her "moment" in 1910.[19] In the course of this day, she moves

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[17]Guiguet, Virginia Woolf and Her Works, p. 310.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Virginia Woolf, "1910," The Years (London: The Hogarth

from a shabby, old part of London with its street hawkers and drunks to the opera, thus bringing together people from all classes and occupations, making them rub up against one another and then separate again, yet in every case through the meetings exhibiting the lack of communication, the discrepancy between what we know about others and what they know about themselves, between the outer and inner reality, between truth and appearance. The design she selects for this chapter is exceedingly complex; and if one were to analyze each minute detail that she introduces, drops, then picks up again to weave her tight web of inter-relationships, the result would take on unmanageable proportions. But just looking at a few of these, one can see how intricate the design for establishing formal relations is. The little descriptive passage at the beginning contains a reference to the queen, as the reader is told that Hyde Park appeared "as if waiting for something to happen; for a curtain to rise; for Queen Alexandra to come, bowing through the gates. She had a face like a flower petal, and always wore her pink carnation (Y, 172)." Mrs. Woolf again interposes royalty at the opera when the young man from the Foreign Office enters and they "all looked instinctively at the royal box. Programmes lay along the edge; but there was no bouquet of pink carnations. The box was empty (Y, 196)." The young man tells them that the "doctors have given him up (Y, 196)." At the very end of the chapter a crier in the street, pushing a wheelbarrow, calls out to Maggie and Sara, "The King's dead (Y, 205)!"

Press, 1937), pp. 172-205. All references to this novel in the text will hereafter appear as "Y" followed by the page number.

Maggie and Sara lean out of the window of their rooms in Hyams Place to hear this news. These are the same rooms to which Rose is traveling when the chapter opens. As Rose pauses to look at the river, she has a kind of Post-Impressionist vision: "The water swirled round the arches. As she stood there, looking down at the water, some buried feeling began to arrange the stream into a pattern. The pattern was painful (Y, 173)." The bridge of the river is introduced later when Rose asks Maggie and Sara if they aren't afraid, walking over Waterloo Bridge at night. This reminds Sara of a story about a beautiful woman who went to Regent's Park for an ice and "'the eyes,' she said, 'came through every leaf like the darts of the sun; and her ice was melted (Y, 186).'" This is reminiscent of Rose's childhood encounter with the pervert, an encounter she recalls twice in this chapter, fleetingly, in a different context (Y, 179, 181). The flowers Maggie is arranging weave in and out during the chapter. Maggie completes the arrangement after Rose's arrival; Rose stares at the pot of flowers periodically during the conversation, and the flowers appear once more on the table during the final scene at Hyams Place. Similarly, Maggie is sewing her silk dress during the whole chapter, the sound of the needle providing a rhythmic background. Mrs. Woolf uses the hammering of the dwarf in Siegfried, "Hammer, hammer, hammer, he went with little short, sharp strokes (Y, 197)," to join the opera with Sara and Maggie who hear the drunk next door hammering to get into his house, "hammer, hammer, hammer (Y, 204)." At the close of the opera, Siegfried "brandished the

sword over his head and shouted and sang (Y, 199)"; just as, when Maggie that evening asks Sara to sing, Sara begins, "Brandishing, flourishing my sword in my hand. . . (Y, 200)." The meeting Sara attends with Rose is relived, not in detail, but through Sara's fragmented impressions which she refuses to place in relation to one another, leaving Maggie with "a general impression of a room full of people; sticks rattling on the railings; clothing hanging out to dry, and someone coming in with beetle's wings in her hair (Y, 202)." These are just a few of the details used by Mrs. Woolf to bring the seemingly disjointed and separate aspects of outer reality, of one class to another, into relationship, to knit together this London day in 1910.

More subtly Mrs. Woolf presents the "inexorable sequence in life." Rose is growing older, is now over forty, and is no longer bothered by others being upset because she has no regard for her appearance; Sara and Maggie, who grew up in a fine house and lived abroad, are now reduced to poverty and to living in a slum across from a public house; Kitty Lasswade is separated by her profitable marriage from Eleanor with whom she was once close; and even the king, with his royal box at the opera, cannot escape the finality of death. All of this moves forward, touching each character, from the ironmonger in the street, to the grand Lady Lasswade with her private car, to the king for whom the doctors can do nothing. All are subject to fate. All of these characters assume a generalized function beyond the immediate circumstances and emotions; all

of them are, in a sense, while deeply involved in the life in London on this day, timeless, are examples of the kinds of people who are always involved in the life of a metropolis with its filth and its beauty, its smells and its sounds, its luxurious entertainment and its disagreeable labors and meetings. It is through the outer reality that surrounds and embroils these characters and the unavoidable situations in which they are enveloped that Mrs. Woolf reveals their inner realities, their inner beings. Mrs. Woolf does this by making a moment stand still and by playing off appearance against inner reality. For instance, the cousins discuss Abercorn Terrace and Rose begins to feel strangely disjointed:

> They talked, she thought, as if Abercorn Terrace were a scene in a play. They talked as if they were speaking of people who were real, but not real in the way in which she felt herself to be real. It puzzled her; it made her feel that she was two different people at the same time; that she was living at two different times at the same moment. (Y, 179-80)

Sara mimics Edward and Rose responds, "The voice was Edward's; . . . But it was not the whole of Edward (Y, 181)." Rose and Sara stop at the violet man's call. Rose gives him money, and Sara takes the violets, and the man, baffled, mutters about Sara, "She's an odd customer, . . . she took the violets though she hadn't paid for them (Y, 187-88)." Mrs. Woolf has abruptly brought the reader up against complete appearance. Eleanor sits at the meeting, thinking she knows everyone, and then she is surprised to find that Mr. Pickford has lived at Westminister for forty years while she had always assumed that he lived at Ealing: "He was a clean-shaven, dapper little man,

whom she had always seen in her mind's eye running to catch a train with a newspaper under his arm (Y, 190)." But Eleanor has imagined it all wrong. The speakers at the meeting, asserting their own views, lose sight of the real issue. Kitty, who wants to be close to Eleanor, cannot be, for Eleanor feels "shabby and dowdy compared with Kitty, who stood there in full evening dress with something shining in her hair (Y, 192)." Eleanor and Kitty have "gone such different ways (Y, 194)." Kitty listens to the opera, but her thoughts are about herself. The hammer, hammer, hammer makes her remember the two young men she once knew who had worked with their hands. Yet even while she is telling herself that "that's the sort of life I like. . . . That's the sort of person I am (Y, 198)," she is confusing the two men. A part of Kitty is like them, but there is also the part of Kitty that is comfortable at the opera that is not comfortable in the street. Mrs. Woolf shows, by means of the introspection of her major characters, how they half know themselves, how they half know each other, and how they are all trying to know completely, deceiving themselves at times into thinking they know. They are all searching. Through their inner thoughts they overlap, they blend one into another, they are all revealed as seeking to know themselves, to know each other.

Mrs. Woolf's subject is actually the psychological reality which she is attempting to reveal by bringing the outer and inner realities together or, as Mauron would say, "the external reality blends with the interior," forming one

reality. Even the relations between facts and details, as the characters respond to them, assume psychological significance. This, indeed, is what Mrs. Woolf is attempting--to reveal the psychological, inner reality of her characters as they respond to the "inexorable sequence in life of cause and effect," the indifferent march of time to human will and desire described by Fry. Whether Mrs. Woolf succeeds in fulfilling Mauron's criteria for creating psychological volumes in The Years is questionable. If one reads The Years in the light of Mrs. Woolf's aesthetic philosophy, with a knowledge of what she is attempting to achieve and with a knowledge of her world view, the novel is very moving, and one feels that she does succeed, that the outer reality leads one to an inner reality, that appearance is penetrated to reveal the true reality which rests beneath. But the success of a novel ought not, one also feels, to demand such illuminating knowledge about the author. Mrs. Woolf's "common reader" should be able to enjoy The Years without first knowing so much about Mrs. Woolf and her theory of reality. There is really too much of the Arnold Bennett variety of reality, which Mrs. Woolf so detested, in this novel; and The Years, following The Waves as it does, is to the "common reader" surely a disappointment. Also, one is likely to feel that if he is going to have all of this Bennett reality, he ought also then to have some plot, something to sustain his interest. Perhaps the characters are not representative in Mauron's sense, but they also lack the compelling interest of Hamlet or of the Misanthrope. And although this

novel may deal with the "inexorable sequence in life" as Fry thought the novel should, it is difficult to consider it "a single perfectly organic esthetic whole," even though Mrs. Woolf does follow the Pargiter family through the course of her own lifetime. The Years, which corresponds most closely to the literary theories Fry propounded and supported, is aesthetically Mrs. Woolf's least satisfying novel. It is almost as if the harder she worked in accordance with theory, the less pleasurable are her works, although they certainly offer sustained intellectual interest. To the Lighthouse, which, were it not for "Time Passes," would be "a single perfectly organic esthetic whole," would be much less beautiful and fine without the middle chapter that Fry disliked.

I think one can say that in his helping Mrs. Woolf to learn to see better, to improve the composition of her scenes, and in acquainting her with his aesthetic based on Post-Impressionism, especially as she uses it in To the Lighthouse, her intellectual relationship with Fry contributed to the perfection of her work. I think, though, that it is just as well that Fry never completed his book Vision in Literature. His literary theory is much less satisfying. The application of a formalistic approach, like Fry's, to literary composition can demand that the writer's vision be reshaped so many times that it loses its forcefulness. Fry was a good critic and a bad painter. Mrs. Woolf was a good critic and a good novelist; but when she works too hard to adapt her vision to a form, her work loses much of its warmth and spontaneity.

Mrs. Woolf's whole theory of the novel revolved around the insistence that the novelist seize a moment of human consciousness and come to understand and to explore that moment in relation to all others and in relation to the everyday flow of life with its burdensome facts and details. In his concern with design and with a vision in which the artist sees the reality beneath appearance, Fry shares Mrs. Woolf's preoccupation. His aesthetic, based upon Post-Impressionism, also provided her with one method for conveying that moment. Sometimes she used it; other times she did not. Yet we must conclude that her relationship with Fry enriched her work, even though at times the influence it asserted may be regarded as excessive.

CONCLUSION

From the study of Virginia Woolf's theory of fiction and her critical stand with regard to her fellow-writers, and from the study of Virginia Woolf's personal statements about her own practice as a writer, one discovers that certain beliefs underlie Mrs. Woolf's work both as critic and as novelist. Mrs. Woolf believes the novelist ought to concern himself with creating works which are aesthetic wholes, which have neither didactic aims nor the intent of presenting a copy of the real world to be valued only for verisimilitude to life. She believes that the novelist who is truly engaged in perfecting his art and in creating novels which are aesthetic wholes will direct his attention toward design, toward shaping his impressions so that they will effectively convey his vision. The novelist's vision is the product of his sensibility and intelligence operating simultaneously upon his subject matter--life. Mrs. Woolf maintains that the good novelist goes beyond the surface face of life, the outer shell of reality, and penetrates beneath the surface to the inner reality, attempting to understand, to feel, and to convey the intricate web of relations between emotions, people, and objects. For Mrs. Woolf in her own work, no task is as important as shaping, designing her novels in order to reveal the reality beneath appearance and the subtle emotional relationships of her

characters. She works as a conscious artist, composing her scenes, designing her novels, arranging the consciousnesses of her characters in order to render the significant moments in their lives most effectively.

Mrs. Woolf's beliefs about writing and the role of the novelist are informed by an aesthetic philosophy similar to that held by many of her contemporaries. This philosophy is, indeed, so firmly established among the artists and the writers of the Georgian period that one is likely to assert that Mrs. Woolf could have arrived at her ideas and beliefs without having ever known Fry. Yet the degree to which the convictions which shape the aesthetic theories and practice of the two friends correspond suggests more than mere coincidence or common assimilation of ideas current in their intellectual milieu. Their theories, broadly conceived, are similar particularly in 1. the emphasis upon the shaping by the artist of his material in order to convey through the form the significance of a moment of aesthetic-spiritual apprehension when the artist sees the reality beneath appearance; 2. the emphasis upon the importance of vision, of the sensibility and intellect operating upon the artist's material; and 3. the emphasis upon the autonomy of the art work. I have attempted to demonstrate above some of the more intricate correspondences in thought and articulation. That Fry is the exponent of an aesthetic based upon Post-Impressionist painting and that Mrs. Woolf avails herself of Post-Impressionist techniques in the writing of her novels further suggests a significant relationship between them. Also of sufficient interest is

a similarity between the ideas of Charles Mauron which Fry accepted and proselytized and which, it seems plausible, influenced some of Mrs. Woolf's experimentation in The Waves.

It is difficult with a period so rich in important ideas, literary figures, discoveries, and experimentation as the Georgian, to take two people who were assertive within their intellectual milieu and to say of them that theirs was a relationship that mattered more than others. The list of ideas and attitudes which Roger Fry and Virginia Woolf share with their contemporaries is extensive. Fry, like most of the young men of his generation interested in art, was affected by the attitudes expressed in Pater's Studies in the History of the Renaissance. The spirit of Pater is incorporated, perhaps unconsciously, in Fry's aims as a critic, especially Pater's assertions that "in aesthetic criticism the first step toward seeing one's object as it really is, is to know one's own impression as it really is, to discriminate it, to realize it distinctly,"[1] and that the function of the aesthetic critic is to determine "the virtue by which a picture, a landscape, a fair personality in life or in a book, produces this special impression of beauty or pleasure."[2] Pater also contributed toward creating a climate of opinion which would eventually regard with favor the kind of analysis of paintings and sculpture which Fry gave in his lectures. This is particularly true of

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[1]Walter Pater, The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry (New York: Mentor Books, 1959), p. xii.

[2]Ibid., p. xiii.

Pater's insistence upon the autonomy of the art work; his belief that art "aspires toward the condition of music"[3] in its constant effort to obliterate the distinction between matter and form; and his conviction that the aesthetic experience is of great importance in one's life, that "to burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life."[4]

The youthful Roger Fry was not, though, a part of the group commonly labeled fin-de-siecle. When he studied at Julian's in 1892, as Virginia Woolf has pointed out in her biography, Fry was unaffected by the activities of the Symbolist poets and the art-for-art's sake circles he encountered in Paris; and when he left Julian's and Paris, his sensibilities had been scarcely modified by the experience, and he seems "to have had no premonition what France was to mean to him."[5] France came to have the greatest significance for Fry after the turn of the century when, as Virginia Woolf notes, "Mallarmé stood with Cézanne among his patron saints."[6] Fry translated Mallarmé's poetry as a hobby, and no one seems to know exactly when he began doing it. Mauron records in his "Introduction" to Fry's translations that when he first met Fry in 1920, Fry already had completed two-thirds of a manuscript which he kept improving until finally in 1930, burdened with work, Fry asked Mauron to help him prepare his translations for publication."[7]

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[3]Pater, The Renaissance, p. 95. [4]Ibid., p. 158.

[5]V. Woolf, Roger Fry, p. 81. [6]Ibid., p. 239.

[7]Charles Mauron, "Introduction" to Stephane Mallarmé, Poems, trans. Roger Fry (New York: New Directions Books, 1951), p. 3.

Mauron observes similarities between the evolution of Mallarmé's thought and Fry's conclusion that what ultimately matters in a work of art is a system of relations;[8] and it is notable that Fry and Mauron viewed Mallarmé as a poet who played upon a keyboard, a "system of transitions" ranging from the two extremes of "crude reality and 'grudging silence,'"[9] and that Fry discovered in Mallarmé a poet whose works appealed to him as did the paintings of Cézanne, as a system of relations created by a great soul to express moments of spiritual apprehension.

Fry interprets Mallarmé according to his personal aesthetic in a perfectly predictable fashion. What suggests itself regarding his interest in Symbolist poetry is that he, like the other Georgians who turned to the Symbolist poets for nourishment and instruction, may have found in those poets a desire for inner expression corresponding to his own desire and an insistence upon precision of expression as demanding as his own. Mrs. Woolf's dissatisfaction with the writers whom she calls "materialists," her desire for expressing the inner reality, and her remarkable efforts to perfect her expression reveal her also to be in accord with the aims of the Symbolist poets as well as with those of Fry.[10] It is impossible to estimate what affect

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[8]Mauron, "Introduction" to Stephane Mallarmé, Poems, p. 32.

[9]Ibid., p. 39.

[10]Edmund Wilson's Axel's Castle (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931), René Taupin's L'Influence du symbolisme français sur la poesie américaine (de 1910 à 1920) (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1929), and Frank Kermode's The Romantic Image all deal with the impact of the French Symbolist poets upon

Fry's constant labor over his translations of Mallarmé had upon Mrs. Woolf's work and thought, but she was, through those translations, brought into frequent contact with Symbolist poetry.[11]

It is not unreasonable to suspect that Fry's attitude toward his translations of Mallarmé and his approach to Mallarmé's poetry was modified by the Imagist poets and their credo. Although Fry essentially is committed to a belief that the relation between the "aura of associations" surrounding the image carried by a word is of greatest importance in poetry, he also places great emphasis upon the image. When Fry asserts that the "word image-complex . . . is the fundamental quality of poetry, and melody is ancillary to that, being, as it were, a physiological aid to poetic apprehension,"[12] he is not too far from Pound's statements in his "A Few Don'ts."[13] Fry most assuredly must have known about the Imagists and their poetry, although he seems never to have developed intimate

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modern English literature, particularly upon Yeats, Eliot, Joyce, and the Imagists. No similar study has been undertaken with the members of the Bloomsbury group, yet such a study could prove fruitful.

[11]Virginia Woolf tells of Fry's translation of Mallarmé's poems in Roger Fry, pp. 239 and 288.

[12]Roger Fry, "An Early Introduction by Roger Fry," Mallarmé, Poems, pp. 294-95.

[13]I am thinking here particularly of Ezra Pound's statements that an "'Image' is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time" (Make It New: Essays by Ezra Pound [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935], p. 336) and that "it is not necessary that a poem should rely on its music." (Ibid., p. 338.)

acquaintances among the group which formed around Pound and Hulme.[14] The Georgian writers were reading the works of each other, some were meeting socially, others were intimate friends, and in the process many ideas were exchanged. Certainly some of those exchanged ideas were accepted so completely and so generally that they began to appear incorporated in the works of several writers simultaneously. Yet the endeavor to determine whose idea was original and when a certain idea was borrowed can become exceedingly frustrating. Eventually, one finds oneself in agreement with Leonard Woolf who states that "the idea that no one in the arts has ever invented anything or indeed has even had an original thought, since everything is always 'derived' from something else in an unending artistic House that Jack Built, is extremely common and has always seemed to me untrue--and if not untrue, unimportant."[15]

A preoccupation with the reality beneath appearance is not at all original with Roger Fry. Bergson, who believes that through intuition one can come into connection with the

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[14]If there were personal relationships of consequence between the members of the Bloomsbury Group and the Pound circle, they have never been explored. Patricia Hutchins in Ezra Pound's Kensington: An Exploration 1885-1913 (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), records no social intercourse of consequence between Bloomsbury and Kensington, and although Mrs. Woolf mentions reading Pound and Wyndham Lewis in her diary (A Writer's Diary, p. 8), she does not record any social encounters. Mrs. Woolf does give her account of the quarrel between Fry and Wyndham Lewis in Roger Fry, pp. 192-94. Wyndham Lewis was strongly anti-Bloomsbury and delighted in attacking those associated with the Group. He devotes a whole chapter to Virginia Woolf in Men without Art (London: Cassell & Company Limited, 1934), pp. 158-71.

[15]L. Woolf, Downhill All the Way, p. 59.

inner flow of life, with an inner reality, asserts in Laughter:

> So art, whether it be painting or sculpture, poetry or music, has no other object than to brush aside the utilitarian symbols, the conventional and socially accepted generalities, in short, everything that veils reality from us, in order to bring us face to face with reality itself. It is from a misunderstanding on this point that the dispute between realism and idealism in art has arisen. Art is certainly only a more direct vision of reality. . . . We might say, without in any way playing upon the meaning of words, that realism is in the work when idealism is in the soul, that it is only through ideality that we can resume contact with reality.[16]

Proust meditates upon his method in the final volume of A la recherche du temps perdu, Le temps retrouvé, and he speaks of a kind of intuitive knowledge of an inner meaning:

> For the truths that the intelligence grasps directly and openly in the full lighted world are somehow less profound, less indispensable than those which life has communicated to us without our knowledge through the form of impressions, material because they have come through our senses, but the inner meaning of which we can discern . . . . I must try to interpret the sensations as indications of corresponding laws and ideas; I must try to think, that is to say, bring out of the obscurity what I had felt, and convert it into a spiritual equivalent. Now this method which seemed to me the only one, what was it other than to create a work of art.[17]

Gide describes the art of the poet in Le traité du Narcisse as stripping away appearance:

> Les apparences sont imparfaites: elles balbutient les vérités qu'elles recèlent; le Poète, à demi-mot, doit comprendre--puis redire ces vérités. ...
> . . . . . .
> Le Poète, lui, qui sait qu'il crée, devine à travers

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[16]Henri Bergson, Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic, trans. Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917), p. 157.

[17]Marcel Proust, Remembrance of Things Past, Vol. II The Past Recaptured, trans. Frederick A. Blossom (New York: Random House, 1927).

> chaque chose--et une seule lui suffit, symbole, pour révéler son archétype; il sait que l'apparence n'en est que le prétexte, un vêtement qui la dérobe et où s'arrête l'oeil profane, mais qui nous montre qu'Elle est là.[18]

Gide's statement expresses the essential aims of the Symbolist poets. Thus Fry's idea that the artist can reveal the reality beneath appearance is hardly original with him. It appears, rather, that he is just one of many artists who have determined that this is what art is all about.

The extent to which Fry is indebted to Proust, to Gide, or to Bergson for the formulation of his aesthetic is, however, debatable. Fry's aesthetic was well formulated by the time he was reading Proust, during the twenties,[19] and Virginia Woolf records that Fry's immediate enthusiasm was followed with reservations, that Fry eventually found Proust "too pernickety and silly. . . . I get impatient with him."[20] In 1918, Fry met Gide and found him "almost too ridiculously my counterpart in taste and feeling. It is like finding a twin. I exaggerate of course. We should differ on a hundred things and he's much more gifted than I am but still it's a strange likeness in the point of view."[21] Thus it is little wonder that there should be a similarity in ideas between Gide and Fry, although in this case also, the meeting of the two men followed the

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[18] André Gide, Le traité du Narcisse suivi de La tentative amoureuse (Lausanne: Mermod, 1946), pp. 33-34.

[19] V. Woolf, Roger Fry, p. 241.

[20] Ibid. Virginia Woolf does not mention reading Proust until 1922, after Jacob's Room had already been written. A Writer's Diary, p. 52.

[21] V. Woolf, Roger Fry, p. 211.

formulation of Fry's basic aesthetic. The name of Bergson is notably missing from Mrs. Woolf's biography of Fry. It seems strange that Fry would not have known Bergson who was such a popular lecturer at the College de France from 1900 to 1913, whose works were so widely read, and whose ideas, particularly with regard to intuition, parallel those of Fry.[22] In Morality and Religion, Bergson, speaking of intuition, could just as well be defining the "aesthetic emotion":

> A work of genius is in most cases the outcome of an emotion, unique of its kind, which seemed to baffle expression, and yet had to express itself. But is not this so of all work, however imperfect, into which there enters some degree of creativeness? Anyone engaged in writing has been in a position to feel the difference between an intelligence left to itself and that which burns with the fire of an original and unique emotion, born of the identification of the author with his subject, that is to say of intuition.[23]

We know that Fry was introduced to Bergson in 1914, if he had not known of him and his work earlier, by Desmond MacCarthy when MacCarthy dedicated his translation of Jules Romains's La Mort de quelqu'un (The Death of a Nobody) to Fry and wrote in the dedicatory letter:

> At the end of the book there is an attempt to portray in the emotions of a young man walking down a rain-swept boulevard one late afternoon, a conception of the world not unlike that which M. Bergson's philosophy suggests. How far such experiences are engendered by reading M. Bergson, and how far they are independent, M. Romains can tell better.[24]

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[22]See Berel Lang, "Intuition in Bloomsbury," Journal of the History of Ideas, XXV (1964), 295-302.

[23]Henri Bergson, The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, trans. R. Ashley Audra and Cloudesley Brereton (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1935), p. 38.

[24]Jules Romains, The Death of a Nobody, trans. Desmond

MacCarthy chose to dedicate the work to Fry because he thought it a literary work somewhat analogous to Post-Impressionism.

Whether Mrs. Woolf ever read Bergson is doubtful.[25] Leonard Woolf even doubts whether Mrs. Woolf read her sister-in-law's, Karin Stephen's book, The Misuse of Mind: A Study of Bergson's Attack on Intellectualism, which was published in 1922.[26] But neither Fry nor Mrs. Woolf would have needed to read Bergson to be exposed to his ideas, for it is certain that they were discussed among the Bloomsbury people. They were very much interested in philosophy, and particularly in coming to understand better the human mind. Freud was discussed extensively in the Bloomsbury circle, according to Leonard Woolf, especially between 1914 and 1924. Virginia Woolf's brother, Adrian Stephen, abandoned his law career and became, along with his wife Karin, a psychoanalyst. James Strachey and his wife also became psychoanalysts; and at the urging of James Strachey, in 1924 the Hogarth Press began publishing the International Psycho-Analytical Library for the London Institute.[27] Roger Fry, in 1924, wrote an essay entitled The Artist and Psychoanalysis, which was delivered as a lecture and then published by the Hogarth Press.

The concentration on the inner consciousness, on the

MacCarthy and Sydney Waterlow (London: Howard Latimer, 1914), p. vi.

[25]This question is treated adequately by Shiv K. Kumar in Bergson and the Stream of Consciousness Novel (London and Glasgow: Blackie & Son Limited, 1962), pp. 64-67.

[26]See Kumar, Bergson and the Stream of Consciousness Novel, note #15, p. 154.

[27]L. Woolf, Downhill All the Way, p. 164.

workings of the human mind, on man in relation with outer reality and the flux of an inner reality was shared among groups whose interests were literary, philosophical, and psychological. Virginia Woolf and Roger Fry were not unique in their preoccupation with such matters, but the manner in which they express their concerns bears the mark of their personal sensibilities, perspectives,and interests. Fry's displeasure with the Impressionist painters, we may recall, had begun as early as 1902, although it was not until 1905 and 1906 that he saw Cézanne and found, he believed, the answer to the mere recording of naturalistic data and atmospheric changes he observed in the Impressionists. In Cézanne's works Fry discovered a more classical style, with form, with design, and also with a spark of a mysterious essence called "idea" by Flaubert which is capable of arousing the "aesthetic emotion." For all of his formalistic approach to art, as soon as Fry begins to discuss the unique aesthetic experience ("An Essay in Aesthetics," 1909), to claim that the Post-Impressionist painters are revealing a reality beneath appearance ("Preface to the Catalogue of the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition," 1912), and to speak with Clive Bell of form as "significant" ("Retrospect," 1920), he is beginning to place a value on the expression of the artist's inner state that cannot be considered among the formal values of an art work. Similarly, when Mrs. Woolf begins to contemplate the relationship between the inner and outer realities and to reject the works of Bennett, Wells, and Galsworthy because they have neglected "the spirit we live by,

life itself," she is placing greater importance upon the artist's ability to perceive and to convey an inner state than upon his ability to construct plots or to describe scenes. Fry's demand for "significance" in form has its literary counterpart, so to speak, in Mrs. Woolf's demand in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" for "the spirit we live by, life itself" in the novel.

It does not seem unreasonable to suggest that Fry's turning away from Impressionism[28] in the visual arts has its parallel in the literary arts in the turning away from what Mrs. Woolf calls "materialism" in the Edwardians, a term which also is certainly intended to encompass any kind of realism that purports to derive its value only from a strict verisimilitude to life. The Georgians liked Flaubert, and they liked Ibsen, both realists, but both realists with a difference. Fry compares Flaubert with Cézanne for his devotion to the aesthetic "Idea"; Mrs. Woolf compares Ibsen with Forster, using Ibsen as an example of a writer who, unlike Forster, has the ability to make objective reality "the veil through which we see infinity."[29] Naturalism, strict realism, verisimilitude to life as an end in itself are not sufficient after 1910 for the creation of art works, no matter how skillfully the data of actual life may be designed by the artist. The year 1910 becomes the arbitrary

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[28]Fry's stand on Impressionism, as mentioned above, modified during the course of his lifetime. My statement is based upon his original contention that the Impressionists only recorded naturalistic data and atmospheric changes.

[29]V. Woolf, The Death of the Moth, p. 168.

date for this in part because it marks the end of the Edwardian period and the beginning of the Georgian, but this date is also significant because of the efforts of Roger Fry and Virginia Woolf. In 1910 Fry brought the Post-Impressionist painters to England, exhibiting the manifestation of a change; and Mrs. Woolf, in her most famous critical essay, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," sets 1910 as the date when "human character changed." Both became articulators of movements to which they contributed, Fry by writing and lecturing in defense of an aesthetic based upon Post-Impressionism, and Mrs. Woolf through attempting in her novels to convey the "spirit we live by, life itself," and through the sheer impact upon shaping attitudes which "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" had upon the reading and thinking public.

When Roger Fry and Virginia Woolf speak of a reality beneath appearance or of an "inner" and an "outer," they are speaking of matters that were considered exceedingly important by most thinking people of their time, and in pondering the relationship between art and the inner and outer reality, they were not at all carrying out a unique activity. Thus, if one attempts to establish a relationship of influence between Roger Fry and Virginia Woolf, one cannot expect to do so only by proving that they were thinking about similar things. What is essential in asserting a relationship of influence is proof that there is a similarity in emphasis, that a pattern of emphasis emerges in the works of both that must be more than mere coincidence. This does occur with Roger Fry and Virginia

Woolf. Not only do they emphasize similar things, but also they frequently emphasize them in a like manner. Just as Roger Fry, in his aesthetic inquiries, always returns to the insistence that the artist expresses through a system of relations the aesthetic emotion he has experienced before a natural object, so also does Mrs. Woolf return always to an emphasis upon the architecture of the novel as a form which will express not only the relationship between the inner and the outer, but also, and most essentially, the emotions felt by the writer arranged in "their right relations to each other."[30] Both demand that the artist remain true to something known intuitively, what Fry calls "idea," borrowing from Flaubert, and what Mrs. Woolf calls "vision" at some times, "conviction" at others. Most importantly, both Roger Fry and Virginia Woolf are insisting that the artist need not give a transcript of outer reality, but rather that he must capture through formal relations, the inner spirit of reality.

Fry's ideas are not original. He is echoing and articulating ideas current in his intellectual milieu, and he is using techniques in analyzing paintings adapted from German aestheticians. Roger Fry did not influence Virginia Woolf by inventing ideas which she accepted, but rather, it seems certain, in ordering her ideas, in establishing patterns of thought. The echoes from Charles Mauron that one hears in Mrs. Woolf's essays only further emphasize this subtle kind of influence.

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[30]See V. Woolf, "On Re-reading Novels," The Moment, p. 130.

The significance of Mrs. Woolf's friendship with Roger Fry is not easily determined. It was an enduring friendship and one of great importance to both Leonard and Virginia Woolf, particularly, as Leonard Woolf records, between 1920 and 1934:

> From 1920 until his death 14 years later he was indeed, . . . part of our lives. Living in Bernard Street, just round the corner from Gordon Square where the Bells lived and Tavistock Square where we lived, he was in and out of Bloomsbury. With his death something was torn out of our lives.[31]

Mrs. Woolf's most important experimental work was completed during those years of intimate relationship, and she placed great value upon Roger Fry's judgments of her work. Without knowing Roger Fry, it is doubtful whether Mrs. Woolf would have experimented quite so conscientiously with Post-Impressionist techniques in the writing of her novels. It is perhaps even doubtful whether The Waves would have been so exacting an exercise in the relations between emotions. As theorists, both Mrs. Woolf and Roger Fry were articulating parallel movements in the arts they represented. Mrs. Woolf undoubtedly would have expressed many of the same ideas about the nature of fiction and the direction it had to take had she not known Roger Fry, but it is doubtful that she would have expressed those ideas in precisely the same way.

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[31] L. Woolf, Downhill All the Way, p. 252.

APPENDIX

The purpose of this appendix is to provide information about the publication history of those works of Virginia Woolf mentioned in the text. Most of the bibliographical matter has been drawn from B. J. Kirkpatrick's A Bibliography of Virginia Woolf (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1957). The original date and place of publication and the subsequent reprintings are given for the essays and reviews; and the publication date and the name of the publisher are provided for the first editions, British and American, of Mrs. Woolf's books and pamphlets.

1. Essays and Reviews

"The Art of Biography," Atlantic Monthly, April, 1939. Reprinted in The Death of the Moth, 1942.

"The Art of Fiction." This was first published as "Is Fiction an Art?" in the New York Herald Tribune, October 16, 1927, as a review of Aspects of the Novel by E. M. Forster. It was reprinted in a revised version as "The Art of Fiction" in Nation & Athenaeum, November 12, 1927, and in The Moment, 1947.

"The Cinema." This was first published as "Cinema" in Arts, June, 1926. It was reprinted as "Cinema" in Nation & Athenaeum, July 3, 1926, as "The Movies and Reality" in the New Republic, August 4, 1926, and as "The Cinema" in The Captain's Death Bed, 1950.

"David Copperfield," Nation & Athenaeum, August 22, 1925, as a review of The Uncommercial Traveller; Reprinted Pieces and Christmas Stories, by Charles Dickens. Reprinted in The Moment, 1947.

"Fishing." This was published in The Moment, 1947. B. J. Kirkpatrick believes this essay was probably first published in a journal, but it has not yet been traced.

"Gas." This was written in 1929 and first published in The Captain's Death Bed, 1950.

"George Gissing," Nation & Athenaeum, February 26, 1927, as a review of The Letters of George Gissing to Members of His Family, collected and arranged by Algernon and Ellen Gissing. This was reprinted as "George Gissing" in the New Republic, March 2, 1927; as an "Introduction" to Selections Autobiographical and Imaginative, by George Gissing (London: Cape, 1929); and as "George Gissing," slightly revised, in The Common Reader, Second Series, 1932.

"George Moore," This was published in The Death of the Moth, 1942. B. J. Kirkpatrick believes this essay was first published in a journal, but it has not yet been traced.

"How It Strikes a Contemporary," Times Literary Supplement, April 5, 1923. Reprinted, revised, in The Common Reader, 1925.

"How Should One Read A Book?" Yale Review, October, 1926. Reprinted, considerably revised, in The Common Reader: Second Series, 1932.

"Impassioned Prose," Times Literary Supplement, September 16, 1926. Reprinted in Granite and Rainbow, 1958.

"Jane Austen." This was first published as "Jane Austen at Sixty" in Nation & Athenaeum, December 15, 1923, as a review of The Works of Jane Austen. The review "Jane Austen at Sixty" was reprinted in the New Republic, January 30, 1924, and was then incorporated in "Jane Austen" which was published in The Common Reader, 1925.

"The Lady in the Looking Glass: A Reflection," Harpers Magazine, December, 1929. Reprinted as "In the Looking Glass" by Harper's Bazaar, January, 1930, and then again as "The Lady in the Looking Glass: A Reflection" in A Haunted House, 1944.

"The Leaning Tower," Folios of New Writing, Autumn, 1940. This was a paper read to the Workers' Educational Association, Brighton, May, 1940. It is reprinted in The Moment, 1947.

"Leslie Stephen." This was first published as "Leslie Stephen, the Philosopher at Home: A Daughter's Memories" in the Times, November 20, 1932. It was reprinted as "My Father: Leslie Stephen" in the Atlantic Monthly, March, 1950, and as "Leslie Stephen" in The Captain's Death Bed, 1950.

"Life and the Novelist," New York Herald Tribune, November 7, 1926, as a review of A Deputy Was King by G. B. Stern. Reprinted in Granite and Rainbow, 1958.

"The Modern Essay." This was first published as "Modern Essays" in the Times Literary Supplement, November 30, 1922, as a review of Modern English Essays, edited by Ernest Rhys. It was reprinted, slightly revised, as "The Modern Essay" in The Common Reader, 1925.

"Modern Fiction." This was first published as "Modern Novels" in the Times Literary Supplement, April 10, 1919. It was reprinted, slightly revised, as "Modern Fiction" in The Common Reader, 1925.

"Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," Literary Review of the New York Evening Post, November 17, 1923. This essay was published as a separate edition in London by the Hogarth Press in 1924, and has been reprinted in Nation & Athenaeum, December 1, 1923; Living Age, February 2, 1924; and The Captain's Death Bed, 1950.

"The Narrow Bridge of Art," New York Herald Tribune, August 14, 1927. Reprinted in Granite and Rainbow, 1958.

"Notes on an Elizabethan Play," Times Literary Supplement, March 5, 1925. Reprinted, revised, in The Common Reader, 1925.

"Notes on D. H. Lawrence." First published in The Moment, 1947.

"The Novels of E. M. Forster," Atlantic Monthly, November, 1927. Reprinted in The Death of the Moth, 1942.

"The Novels of George Meredith," Times Literary Supplement, February 9, 1928. This was reprinted as "George Meredith" in the New York Herald Tribune, February 12, 1928, and in part as "The Novels of George Meredith" in The Common Reader: Second Series, 1932.

"The Novels of Thomas Hardy." This was first published as "Thomas Hardy's Novels," Times Literary Supplement, January 19, 1928. It was reprinted, revised, as "The Novels of Thomas Hardy," The Common Reader: Second Series, 1932.

"The Novels of Turgenev," Times Literary Supplement, December 14, 1933. Reprinted in Yale Review, December, 1933, and in The Captain's Death Bed, 1950.

"On Re-reading Novels," Times Literary Supplement, July 20, 1922, as a review of The Novels of Jane Austen, with illustrations by G. E. Brock; The Novels of Charlotte, Emily and Ann Brontë; The Works of George Meredith. Reprinted, considerably revised, in The Moment, 1947.

"Phases of Fiction." Bookman, April-June, 1929. Reprinted in Granite and Rainbow, 1958.

"Pictures," Nation & Athenaeum, April 25, 1925. Reprinted in New Republic, May 13, 1925, and The Moment, 1947.

"Roger Fry." This was first published as a pamphlet which was not for sale: The Roger Fry Memorial Exhibition: An Address, September 18, 1935. It was reprinted as "Roger Fry" in The Moment, 1947.

"The Russian Point of View." First published in The Common Reader, 1925.

"A Sentimental Journey," New York Herald Tribune, September 23, 1928. This was reprinted as an "Introduction" to A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy, by Laurence Sterne, World's Classics Edition, 1928. It was again reprinted, slightly revised, as "The Sentimental Journey" in The Common Reader: Second Series, 1932.

"Sterne," Times Literary Supplement, August 12, 1909, as a review of The Life and Times of Laurence Sterne, by Wilbur L. Cross. Reprinted in Granite and Rainbow, 1958.

"The Sun and the Fish," Time and Tide, February 3, 1928. Reprinted in New Republic, February 8, 1928, and The Captain's Death Bed, 1950.

"Walter Sickert." This was first published as "A Conversation about Art" in the Yale Review, September, 1934. It was reprinted, slightly revised, as Walter Sickert (London: Hogarth Press, 1934), and as "Walter Sickert" in The Captain's Death Bed, 1950.

"Women and Fiction," Forum, March, 1929. Reprinted in Granite and Rainbow, 1958.

2. Books and Pamphlets

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The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays. London: The Hogarth Press, 1950, and New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1950.

The Common Reader. London: Leonard & Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press, 1925, and New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1925.

The Common Reader: Second Series. London: Leonard & Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press, 1932, and New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1932.

The Death of the Moth and Other Essays. London: The Hogarth Press, 1942, and New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1942.

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A Haunted House and Other Short Stories. London: The Hogarth Press, 1943, and New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1944.

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