

"THE NAMELESS SPIRIT".  
THE SKETCHES OF VIRGINIA WOOLF.

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ABSTRACT"THE NAMELESS SPIRIT". THE SKETCHES OF VIRGINIA WOOLF.LEENA-KREET KORE

The thesis establishes that the sketch is an independent aesthetic form requiring its own methods of critical and historical analysis; and, that the sketches of Virginia Woolf can be read best in the context of this tradition. Almost exclusively, the sketches that are considered are the "plotless" works such as "A Haunted House", "Monday or Tuesday", and "Blue and Green"--more enigmatic and rather more obscure than those of a conventional sense of action and plot like "The Duchess and the Jeweller" or "The Legacy". It is explained how in Virginia Woolf criticism to date, the sketches have been regarded as literary exercises in preparation for her more substantial novels; an interpretation that the thesis displaces by showing that the sketches are equal to the novels in terms of their imaginative stature.

The tradition with which Virginia Woolf's sketches are identified is specifically Symbolist, and Aesthetic in the complete sense. In terms of the derivation of "aesthetic" from the Greek for "to perceive", the thesis proposes that the sketch is the supreme expression of the Aesthetic vision: it is a form of Pater's "pure perception", a state of aesthetic consciousness in itself, within the framework of whose suspended moment, an idea, image or impression is retained even as the object or experience

has already passed away. The thesis especially emphasizes that the sketch is allusive and brief not because it stylistically imitates an effect, but rather, because it reflects a necessarily fragmented way of seeing. It is in the sense of this distinction that the sketch is not a subsidiary of the short story.

Therefore, writing that is fragmented because it is the expression of a specific vision, is placed in a proper sketch tradition which develops variously from De Quincey, Lamb and Landor, through to Rossetti and, with much emphasis, Pater, and the French Symbolism of Mallarmé. Symons and the sketches of such 'Nineties writers as Crackanorpe and Dowson are discussed, as are relevant twentieth century movements such as Cubism and the Imagism of Amy Lowell's "polyphonic prose". These movements and writers are analyzed in comparison with Virginia Woolf's sketches; and, with reference to issues of structure, characterization, content, perspective and use of syntax, the thesis defines both the nature of the aesthetic consciousness, and the "nameless spirit" in the sketches of Virginia Woolf.



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Perhaps it is the nature of this thesis that its subject lives on the periphery of my vision, and that the tracking down of nameless spirits and disembodied voices has frequently made my own house seem haunted--as if I were talking to someone in just the next room. How grateful I am, therefore, that the person in the next room has been Martin Schröder; his patience and steady support have been invaluable to me in the completion of this thesis.

TO MY PARENTS

NOTE ON REFERENCES

Quotations from, and references to Virginia Woolf's published work will be to titles only. The editions used in the text are as follows, all published in London, and by The Hogarth Press, unless indicated otherwise.

PROSE:

- The Voyage Out. Duckworth, 1915.  
Night and Day. Duckworth, 1919.  
Monday or Tuesday. 1921.  
Jacob's Room. 1922.  
Mrs. Dalloway. 1925.  
To the Lighthouse. 1927.  
Orlando: A Biography. 1928.  
The Waves. 1931.  
The Years. 1937.  
Roger Fry: A Biography. 1940.  
Between the Acts. 1941.  
A Haunted House and Other Stories. 1944.

COLLECTIONS OF ESSAYS:

- The Common Reader. 1925.  
The Common Reader: Second Series. 1932.  
The Death of the Moth and Other Essays. 1942.  
The Moment and Other Essays. 1947.  
The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays. 1950.  
Granite and Rainbow. 1958.  
Contemporary Writers. 1965.  
Books and Portraits. Ed. Mary Lyon. New York: Harcourt  
 Brace Jovanovich, 1977.

THE DIARIES:

These are likewise published in London by The Hogarth Press, and all are edited by Anne Olivier Bell.

In the text they will be referred to as Diary I, II, etc.

The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Volume One 1915-1919. 1977.

-----, Volume Two 1920-1924. 1978.

-----, Volume Three 1925-1930. 1980.

-----, Volume Four 1931-1935. 1982.

-----, Volume Five 1936-1941. 1984.

THE LETTERS:

Editor Nigel Nicolson, and Assistant Editor Joanne Trautmann; published, again, by The Hogarth Press in London. These will be referred to simply as Letters I, II, etc.

The Flight of the Mind, 1888-1912. Vol. 1. 1975.

The Question of Things Happening, 1912-1922. Vol. 2. 1976.

A Change of Perspective, 1923-1928. Vol. 3. 1977.

A Reflection of the Other Person, 1929-1931. Vol. 4. 1978.

The Sickle Side of the Moon, 1932-1935. Vol. 5. 1979.

Leave the Letters Till We're Dead, 1936-1941. Vol. 6. 1980.

This nameless spirit then, who  
is not "we" nor "I," nor the  
novelist either, For the novelist  
all agree must tell a story; and  
there are no stories for this  
spirit; this spirit is not  
concerned to follow lovers to  
the altar, nor to cut chapter from  
chapter; and then write as  
novelists do The end with a flourish;  
since there is no end.

Virginia Woolf, Pointz  
Hall Typescript, pp.  
57-58 (July 3, 1938),  
in the Berg Collection  
of the New York Public  
Library.



CHAPTER ONEBY WAY OF INTRODUCTION:A DEFENCE OF VIRGINIA WOOLF'S SKETCHES

There exists a body of work by Virginia Woolf that has not received, to date, as much attention from critics as have her novels. The recently completed collections of her letters and diaries enjoy a current, general popularity, and although her essays have a somewhat narrower, more scholarly audience, nevertheless, the famous novelist, letter-writer and diarist is remembered as a first-rate critic as well. Even such books as Three Guineas and A Room of One's Own, which have not always been mentioned in the same breath together with works like To the Lighthouse and Mrs. Dalloway, lately have been much proclaimed by the so-called "feminist" critics. Amongst such varied work, therefore, which includes not only many examples of this century's most original imaginative literature, but also some of its most important experiments in modern fiction, Virginia Woolf's short pieces merit appreciation for being no less original, imaginative or experimental than her more widely read prose.

Perhaps it is because of this aura of "experimentation" that criticism tends to subordinate the short stories to the novels, as extreme examples of a technique later tempered and refined upon. In 1927, only half-way through Virginia Woolf's writing career, Clive Bell already

was giving his opinion on the stories she collected in  
Monday or Tuesday (published 1921):

This is Virginia Woolf practising.  
 Apparently, she herself was dissatisfied  
 with Night and Day and felt the need of  
 discovering an appropriate form. Hence,  
 I presume, these experiments. 1

Bell speaks with the authority of a close friend who  
 is allowed into Virginia Woolf's confidence; half a  
 century later the public is granted the same privilege  
 through the publication of her diaries, whose revelations  
 seem to support Bell's judgement:

. . . this afternoon arrived at some idea  
 of a new form for a new novel. Suppose one  
 thing should open out of another--as in  
 An Unwritten Novel--only not for 10 pages  
 but 200 or so-- . . . conceive mark on the  
 wall, K[ew]. G[ardens]. & unwritten novel  
 taking hands & dancing in unity. What the  
 unity shall be I have yet to discover: the  
 theme is a blank to me; but I see immense  
 possibilities in the form I hit upon more  
 or less by chance 2 weeks ago. 2

On certain aspects of Virginia Woolf's creative life  
 such private reflections must remain as the final authority--  
 perhaps a fact tacitly acknowledged by Leonard Woolf in  
 allowing the publication of selections from his wife's  
 personal papers as A Writer's Diary in 1956. If, for  
 example, she announces to herself on January 26, 1920 this  
 idea of a combination of her stories into some new form  
 of novel, one may assume that the book in question is  
Jacob's Room (published in October, 1922). Similarly this

entry from October, 1937:

It came over me suddenly last night, as I was reading *The Shooting Party*,--the story that I'm to send to America, H[arper's]. B[azaar]., that I saw the form of a new novel. It's to be first the statement of the theme: then the restatement: & so on: repeating the same story: singling out this & then that: until the central idea is stated. 3

Such is the testimony of the diaries throughout Virginia Woolf's writing career, therefore, that even her last novel is prefigured by the inspiration of a short story--here, Between the Acts. It cannot be denied, then, that in the process of writing there was, for Virginia Woolf, a collaboration between certain short stories and her novels; an appreciation of the stories may seek to elevate them to a position of greater formal independence within the body of her work, but nonetheless, this simple connection cannot be overlooked.

Throughout the nineteen-forties, critics whose books have remained valuable contributions to Woolf studies continued in the direction of Clive Bell, and regarded the stories as minor works, illuminated by the light reflected from her novels. David Daiches' early Virginia Woolf (1942) points to the stories as the first attempts towards a simultaneity of seeing and interpretation, which was to become that "personal sense of reality" expressed in the novels after 1921: "Monday or Tuesday is a series of literary exercises rather than of finished works; apart from the arbitrarily chosen mood of the author,

there is no larger pattern in terms of which the details are chosen or integrated".<sup>4</sup> Daiches grants the stories an importance only insofar as they are of interest "to anyone concerned with the development of Virginia Woolf's technique as a writer of fiction"; being in such a dependent state upon the longer works, it follows that the stories themselves are relegated to a position incomplete in terms of both technique and intention. Daiches' painterly comparison seems apt in context (with reference to "A Haunted House"): "The sketch is simply a study in impressionism, and is no more a finished work than a painter's preliminary study of a hand or an arm is a finished portrait".

Daiches wrote his analysis before the stories were re-issued in 1944, with a few changes, under the new title A Haunted House.\* This new edition was reviewed by Joan Bennett in similar spirit, assigning the stories their experimental status and, like Daiches, drawing the parallel with art: "in these tales, as in the sketches of a great painter, we can observe the characteristic method and the characteristic quality of perception".<sup>5</sup> Both Bennett and Blackstone (whose study appeared in 1949) agree that Virginia Woolf needs space in order to build up her unique effects of atmosphere and character, which the short story is unable to afford. Blackstone's is yet another typical conclusion: "Monday or Tuesday is an altogether experimental collection. She is trying to find a form and a style

\* From the original 1921 collection two stories are omitted: "A Society" and "Blue and Green". Six stories are added which were published in various magazines between 1922 and 1941. See Appendix A for complete lists.

adequate to convey her individual vision of life".<sup>6</sup>

The attitude taken by these early critics of the short stories--never really disputed--is adopted more recently (1965) by Jean Guiget in Virginia Woolf and her Works, still one of the best books on the subject. Guiget hurriedly allows that the stories may have some significance apart from the novels, but this is never followed up; his analysis maintains that the stories are experiments in anticipation of the novels, and fail because they can deal with only one isolated moment where the novels can deal with many. In support of his argument, Guiget divides the stories into three groups according to their time of writing and the relevant novels: the first period (1917-1921) covers those stories that appear in Monday or Tuesday and is preparation for the novels Jacob's Room, Mrs. Dalloway and To the Lighthouse; the second period (1927-1929) precedes Orlando and The Waves; and the third (1938-1940), The Years and Between the Acts.<sup>7</sup>

Inasmuch as there is a kind of development in a writer's technique that must be related to the progression from one work to the next, it is entirely natural to assume that Virginia Woolf had something to learn from, for example, "Kew Gardens" when she came to write Jacob's Room. There are few novelists who, to some extent, do not make use of a certain aspect of their previous work to build upon, play against, or only to keep in mind, in the new. However, such an interpretation as practised by Daiches, Blackstone and Guiget encourages a reading

that lays undue stress upon the stories as precursory, experimental pieces. It is probable that they do not intend by their critical positions to detract from the enjoyment of reading the short stories simply for their own sake, but nevertheless, the analysis that relegates the stories to an inferior rank, consequently increases the likelihood that they will be passed over in favour of the more weighty novels. In this sense, it is not surprising that an opinion which has become widely accepted has tended to keep attention to the stories on the periphery of even the rising tide of Woolf scholarship.

To help settle this question of where the stories stand in relation to the rest of Virginia Woolf's work there are, again, her own thoughts set out in the diaries. In addition to the inspiration for a new novel that a story could provide, there is her life-long habit of writing stories as a way of letting her mind run, of which the following is a representative sample:

One thing in considering my state of mind now, seems to me beyond dispute, that I have at last, bored down into my oil well, & can't scribble fast enough to bring it all to the surface. I have now at least 6 stories welling up in me, & feel, at last, that I can coin all my thoughts into words. 8

The freedom that the writing of stories could give Virginia Woolf is confirmed by her husband in his Foreword to the posthumous A Haunted House:

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 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 out of her drawer 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 change, she would either write a critical essay or work upon one of her sketches for short stories. 9

There are in Leonard Woolf's account three supposed conditions under which his wife was induced to write a short story: to capture a fleeting idea quickly onto paper, perhaps for future reference; on specific request for a story to publish; and, as a way of relieving her mind from the prolonged stress of novel-writing. Perhaps her fleeting ideas came fastest and thickest at those times when she was composing novels, but nowhere does Leonard Woolf imply this, or that the sketches were a way, unconscious or deliberate, of working up to a novel. Neither is there anything in the diaries to support the claim that Virginia Woolf wrote her stories as forms of literary exercise and experiment; indeed, the mass of her private reflections that has become available through the publication of the diaries and letters allows for a shift in the direction followed heretofore in Woolf studies. Being so slight in proportion of size and number to the novels, the sketches and short stories are precisely that aspect of Virginia Woolf's work that would benefit from such an intimate knowledge of her literary

struggles as is afforded by the volumes of letters and diaries. That so many of the studies written before the publication of the private papers and manuscripts, like those of Daiches, Blackstone and Guiget, do find new insights and justification through a greater familiarity with the life of Virginia Woolf's mind, is witness to their care for truth; nevertheless, this is not to say that the diaries and letters cannot work a subtle influence upon existing critical readings, by which one can come to the stories with enhanced knowledge and renewed vision.

The primary reservation over the proposal that Virginia Woolf wrote the stories as experiments, is that it misrepresents the sketch as a premeditated attempt to catch a larger novel in its insubstantial net. Guiget, especially, implies this interpretation with his grouping of the stories into specific periods preliminary to the dates of the novels. In fact, the letters and diaries do not provide an access by which to portion out Virginia Woolf's writings according to time-scale; rather, for the first time it becomes apparent just how much and with what intensity the same problems occupied Virginia Woolf throughout her life, whether she was writing a social letter or a prolonged novel. Her great dedication and singularity of purpose applied itself to all her art, and what both the



personal writings and the manuscripts of her published work reveal, is the importance to her of exact expression and the agony she went through to find it. To dismiss the sketches and short stories as unsuccessful experiments, is to underestimate the pains Virginia Woolf took over every aspect of her literary work.

There is truth, therefore, in saying that there is more a sense of steadiness and homogeneity about Virginia Woolf's work than of progression: each book is not so much a refinement upon as it is a different perspective upon the same preoccupying concerns. Even without the presence of the letters and diaries, the claim already could be made that there is a certain concentrated purpose that unifies Virginia Woolf's career. The fact that this claim should be supported by her personal writings at all, is confirmed not only because, in them she discusses her work in progress and her satisfactions and dissatisfactions with her work in general, but also because they show how constantly and indefatigably she engages in relating the facts of her own "Monday or Tuesday" existence to the inspired vision of her art. Often this connection can be more implied than direct, an echo in the subconscious. Consider, for example, this entry from her diary written in February 1926, and compare it with the passage following from To the Lighthouse, published one year later:

Yet I have some restless searcher in me.  
 Why is there not a discovery in life?  
 Something one can lay hands on & 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 Sqre last night) I see the  
 mountains in the sky: the great clouds; &  
 the moon over Persia; I have a great &  
 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  
 Sqre with the moon up there, & those  
 mountain clouds. Who am I, what am I, & so  
 on: these questions are always floating  
 about in me; & then I bump against some  
 fact--a letter, a person, & come to them  
 again with a great sense of freshness. 10

What is the meaning of life? That was all--  
 a simple question; one that tended to close  
 in on one with years. The great revelation  
 had never come. The great revelation perhaps  
 never did come. Instead there were little  
 daily miracles, illuminations, matches  
 struck unexpectedly in the dark; here was  
 one. This, that, and the other; herself and  
 Charles Tansley and the breaking wave; Mrs.  
 Ramsay bringing them together; Mrs. Ramsay  
 saying "Life stand still here"; Mrs. Ramsay  
 making of the moment something permanent  
 (as in another sphere Lily herself tried to  
 make of the moment something permanent)--  
 this was of the nature of a revelation.  
 In the midst of chaos there was shape;  
 this external 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! Mrs.  
 Ramsay! she repeated. She owed this revelation  
 to her. 11

These two paragraphs, one dashed off as a moment's  
 revelation of the self, the other a finished work of  
 art, are nevertheless products of the same search for an  
 answer, a discovery, the authority to say "This is it"  
 and "Life stand still here"; a search that can be kept

going only by such driving of the self as is revealed in this plea, again from the diary: "Cant I expand & embalm & become a sentient living creature! Lord how I suffer! What a terrific capacity I possess for feeling with intensity".<sup>12</sup> Admissions of such sensitivity and awareness cannot be sustained by literary pursuits alone--they must arise from, and in turn, be nourished by Virginia Woolf's personal life, her emotions and her senses. Thus, the idea of continuity or "homogeneity" is bound up inextricably with both the writer of the work made public and of the thoughts kept to her private self. Reflecting in her diary that she had lived for half a century, she writes, "I dont believe in ageing. I believe in forever altering one's aspect to the sun",<sup>13</sup> and this self-analysis carries over, for example, into her literary criticism of even such minor writers as W. H. Hudson: "The little boy whom he remembers was already set with even fresher passion upon the same objects that Mr. Hudson has sought all his life. Therefore he has not to reconstruct himself, but only to intensify".<sup>14</sup> It is in this sense that Virginia Woolf's individual works should not be judged one against the other on matters of chronology, proficiency or size. Rather, each piece is an "intensification" of a different facet of the same concern, an "altered aspect" of a single centre.

Of course, as each book is finished Virginia Woolf confides to her diary that this time she has contrived to write a novel whose technique matches her vision

in both its intensity and subtlety--only to have her triumph desert her in the continual fluctuation that sets the pattern of her creative life. On November 23, 1926, the completion of To the Lighthouse encourages her to admit:

My present opinion is that it is easily the best of my books. . . . It is freer & subtler I think. Yet I have no idea yet of any other to follow it: which may mean that I have made my method perfect, & it will now stay like this, & serve whatever use I wish to put it to. Before, some development of the method brought fresh subjects in view, because I saw the chance of being able to say them. Yet I am now & then haunted by some semi mystic very profound life of a woman, which shall all be told on one occasion; & time shall be utterly obliterated; future shall somehow blossom out of the past. One incident--say the fall of a flower--might contain it. 15

For all her confidence that possibly she may have perfected her method, Virginia Woolf contradicts almost immediately her own reasons for that confidence: in the past her dissatisfactions with technique have pointed towards new stories and novels, whereas her present absence of inspiration leads her to suspect that her method (as she writes in a previous entry) has "fetched its circle pretty completely this time".<sup>16</sup> Yet in the next breath she is already "haunted" by ideas in which, though the substance remains shadowy and the mechanics, vague, there is without doubt a recognizable sense of effect. For that matter, two months before this entry she noticed that, "as usual, side stories are sprouting in great variety as I wind this up: a book of characters; the whole string being pulled out from some simple sentence, like Clara

Pater's 'Don't you find that Barker's pins have no points to them?'.<sup>17</sup> According to this observation, therefore, it would be as true to say that Virginia Woolf's novels inspired her short stories (here, To the Lighthouse and "Moments of Being"), as certain critics claim is true in reverse.

Thus, the ebb and flow of creativity repeats itself to the end of Virginia Woolf's life, with her announcement of the finish of "The Pageant" (also entitled "Poyntz Hall" and later, Between the Acts), and confession that,

I am a little triumphant about the book.  
I think its an interesting attempt in a new  
method. I think its more quintessential  
than the others.

And, at the same time: "my thoughts turn, well up, to write the first chapter of the next book (nameless). Anon, it will be called".<sup>18</sup>

These reports of her work that Virginia Woolf records in her diaries bear witness to the fact that her search for new forms ranged over the breadth of both fiction and non-fiction prose. Her more obvious forays into genres like biography come readily to mind, but even such a convention as literary criticism offered, to Virginia Woolf, the possibility of a finer meaning. Thus, in 1931:

I feel too, at the back of my brain, that I can devise a new critical method; something far less stiff & formal than these Times articles. . . . There must be some simpler, subtler, closer means of writing about books, as about people, could I hit upon it. 19

And, again, in 1937:

But then there's in my drawer several I think rather good sketches; & a chapter on biography. Clearly I have here in the egg a new method of writing criticism. I rather think so. I feel that I want some private way of producing these studies; these adumbrations. 20

Finally this, from 1940:

I wish I cd invent a new critical method-- something swifter & lighter & more colloquial & yet intense: more to the point & less composed; more fluid & following the flight, than my C[ommon]. R[eader]. essays. The old problem: how to keep the flight of the mind, yet be exact. 21

If Virginia Woolf's ever-renewed reconsideration of literary practice never reaches its resolution in any prose form, there are other concerns that similarly remain for her in a constant present. As early as 1906, written at the age of twenty-four, Virginia Woolf ascribes to a character a speech that anticipates her own method with amazing accuracy:

My researches into the system of land tenure in the 13th 14th & 15th Centuries have been made doubly valuable, I am assured, by the remarkable gift I have for presenting them in relation to the life of the time. 22

The speaker here is a Miss Rosamond Merridew in "The Journal of Mistress Joan Martyn", a manuscript that Virginia Woolf never published, but which in spirit is very close to her much later work. The story is that of a forty-five year old spinster who does research into the system of land tenure in medieval Europe, and to whom

nothing comes amiss--especially things that "are so fitful & so minute in their illumination please [her] even better";

A sudden light upon the legs of Dame Elizabeth Partridge sends its beams over the whole state of England, to the King upon his throne; she wanted stockings! & no other need impresses you in quite the same way with the reality of medieval legs; & therefore with the reality of medieval bodies, & so, proceeding upward step by step, with the reality of medieval brains; & there you stand at the centre of all ages: middle beginning or end. 23

In the retrospective knowledge of the whole of Virginia Woolf's work, this early paragraph seems as well thought out in its position as if it had the benefit of her work in the 1920's and 1930's behind it. If anything, Virginia Woolf's sensitivity to the individual life and personality in history is heightened by the establishment of its unwavering presence in her literary sensibility from her very first writings onwards: certainly, there is no sense of hesitant experimentation whatsoever about the attitude taken in "The Journal of Mistress Joan Martyn". It is evident here, that before the essays and short stories were worked out, and long before the conception of novels such as Orlando or Between the Acts, Virginia Woolf had already developed her literary sensibility to attend equally to both personality and temporal context, as well as to text itself: in hindsight, this emphasis reveals itself even in statistics, for of her four hundred odd essays and reviews, one quarter are concerned with diaries, journals, letters, memoirs, biographies and autobiographies. From these personal writings she is able

to project inward into the personality of the author, and outward towards a sense of the period in which he lived. Her own explanation for the value of such documents is found in "How Should One Read a Book?":

. . . we can make them light up the many windows of the past; we can watch the famous dead in their familiar habits and fancy sometimes that we are very close and can surprise their secrets, and sometimes we may pull out a play or a poem that they have written and see whether it reads differently in the presence of the author. 24

The stockings of Dame Elizabeth Partridge, therefore, as a cynosure for the medieval ages, become for Virginia Woolf the type for her special kind of literary awareness. At the very least, it encourages a human reading which gives a sense of commonality to literature of all periods and genres: "The changes in the house correspond to a change which slowly transforms the race which lives in it. Nothing is more curious than to watch the gradual thawing of the human race from the monolithic isolation of Elizabethan days to the humanity and garrulity of the eighteenth century. The bare and comfortless rooms of the sixteenth century become furnished; the beds have cushions; the chairs are easy chairs; there are forks to eat with, and some regard for intimacy and privacy".<sup>25</sup> And, at the very most, such awareness raises the appreciation of the individual artist in relation to the dailiness of his life, to the level by which his art becomes representative of his age; "life" being both biography, and the general ramifications of a culture with its social and artistic



institutions: "as men are the arbiters of literary convention, as they have established an order of values in life, so too, since fiction is largely based on life, these values prevail there also to a very great extent".<sup>26</sup>

Thus, that "remarkable gift" of Miss Merridew to present her facts "in relation to the life of her time" is a happy forerunner of the fantastic gallop in "How Should One Read a Book?": from Donne in his thin-walled "cramped, diamond-paned, and malodorous" house; to Twickenham and the circle of Lady Bedford; Sidney at Wilton: "Gabriel Harvey in his black velvet suit arguing about poetry with Spenser"; thence to the beckoning Swifts, Harleys, Johnsons and Goldsmiths; back again to Twickenham with Pope; on Miss Berry's doorstep, when "behold, up comes Thackeray"-- "so that merely going from friend to friend, from garden to garden, from house to house, we have passed from one end of English literature to another"--a pageant of the famous that is as much a summary of the course of Virginia Woolf's own literary criticism and sense of literary history, as it is a foreshortened account of succeeding authors and styles.<sup>27</sup>

While Virginia Woolf does possess this highly developed historical sense, at the same time she wields that sense with such acceptance and ease, that it is obvious she makes no discrimination between her curiosity in private affairs, either past or present. Selina Trimmer's life as governess to the Cavendishes at Devonshire House, or the friendship between Edward Gibbon and Maria Holroyd of Sheffield Place (great-grandmother of Bertrand Russell, she adds), is as fascinating to her as Sybil Colefax's

London parties, or Ottoline Morrell's weekend gatherings at Garsington.<sup>28</sup> Neither is it out of place to mention that, unlike her sister Vanessa Bell, Virginia Woolf could never resist entirely the intrigue of the society they forsook in their both practical and symbolic move from South Kensington to Bloomsbury.

In addition to this interest in personality and individual circumstance that was to become a thematic concern throughout Virginia Woolf's life, the "Journal of Mistress Joan Martyn" also introduces a lesser recurrent device with the faded handwriting and time-damaged leaves of the manuscript, which is the substance of the entire second half of the story. Thus are similar documents consulted by the narrator of Orlando, who finds that "often the paper was scorched a deep brown in the middle of the most important sentence. Just when we thought to elucidate a secret that has puzzled most historians for a hundred years, there was a hole in the manuscript big enough to put your finger through".<sup>29</sup> Variations on this idea of accidentally destroyed sources carry through into the last decade of Virginia Woolf's life, with the rough draft versions of "The Searchlight" deposited in the Monk's House Papers in the Library of the University of Sussex.<sup>30</sup> Never revised for publication by Virginia Woolf, the story as it appears in A Haunted House displays certain differences, such as the passing reference to the threat of enemy aircraft that becomes a more dramatic conclusion in manuscript, where the proof of the narration is literally exploded in German air-raids. Stratagems like these are

familiar conclusions in many of the short stories, where the reader suddenly is reminded that the substance of which Virginia Woolf has been spinning her story is something entirely different from a more solid (or non-existent) reality. Of these, the most famous is "The Mark on the Wall"; other versions are "An Unwritten Novel", "The Shooting Party", "The Lady in the Looking-Glass", and other such short pieces as "In the Orchard", "Sterne's Ghost", and "The Moment: Summer's Night".

There may seem an apparent contradiction in Virginia Woolf's faith in facts seen in the context of their time, and the inherent untrustworthiness of those facts as gleaned from fragmentary manuscripts and charred documents. It is truer to add, therefore, that Miss Rosamond Merridew's "remarkable gift" for humanizing her research probably owes more to imagination than hard fact. But, if such evidences as remain of fact are fragile and prone to temporal destruction, then perhaps the life of the creative imagination is the only thing that endures from one age to the next, after all? And in this sense, can it not be said also that in imaginative terms the short stories and the novels are equal? At any rate, although Hitler's bombs may have destroyed the evidence, the story survives unaffected as a piece of imaginative literature. In the story written as art instead of proof, therefore, the bomb at the end comes simply as another agent of the fluctuation by which one version recedes as the implications of others open up; much as the completion of a novel left

Virginia Woolf ultimately dissatisfied, and the shortcomings of which inspired her to try her vision in an "altered aspect" and in another form.

The sense of a writer's work as a succession of books "forever altering one's aspect to the sun" is captured exactly by Virginia Woolf's friend and contemporary, T. S. Eliot in "East Coker":

Trying to learn to use words, and every attempt  
 Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure  
 Because one has only learnt to get the better of words  
 For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way  
     in which  
 One is no longer disposed to say it. And so each  
     venture  
 Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate  
 With shabby equipment always deteriorating  
 In the general mess of imprecision of feeling,  
 Undisciplined squads of emotion. And what there is  
     to conquer  
 By strength and submission, has already been  
     discovered  
 Once or twice, or several times, by men whom one  
     cannot hope  
 To emulate--but there is no competition--  
 There is only the fight to recover what has been lost  
 And found and lost again and again: and now under  
     conditions  
 That seem unpropitious. But perhaps neither gain nor  
     loss.  
 For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not  
     our business.    31

Eliot's struggle for exact expression is very much Virginia Woolf's as well with her "shabby equipment always deteriorating"--one is reminded of bombs and crumbling manuscripts--in this fragmented sentence from "Monday or Tuesday": "Desiring truth, awaiting it, laboriously

distilling a few words, for ever desiring--".<sup>32</sup>

"Monday or Tuesday" may be one of those sketches that critics consider too insubstantial to bear the weight of any sort of significance at all, but surely this is to miss the point. David Daiches comments on the piece, that it is "perhaps the least successful of any in the book. It is simply an exercise in the communication of a shifting mood through associated images, but the images shift so rapidly that no mood communicates itself.

And intellect keeps interfering with the images".<sup>33</sup>

If the sketch is read in this way as a simple accumulation of images, then certainly it remains an uneven and obscure collection; if, however, those images are confronted precisely because of their transitoriness, then one begins to realize that successful image-making is a side-issue. Daiches is right in his complaint that intellect keeps on interfering with his reading; he would have considerably less difficulty if he accepted the how of the sketch rather than the what. Intellectual description of images renders very unsatisfactory results indeed, but if what one actually means is the description of intellect, then that is another matter: in other words, it is the approximation of how consciousness perceives reality and transforms it into a work of art. Therefore, if consciousness is fated "to get the better of words for the thing one no longer has to say", then perhaps there is a reason for those unstable images to shift so rapidly in "Monday or Tuesday" in face of the far more constant condition of creation itself--"desiring truth, awaiting it,

laboriously distilling a few words".

That, at least, goes some way in answering Daiches' difficulty with the sketches in Monday or Tuesday.

Virginia Woolf's dissatisfaction with a fixed form and her tendency to break down temporal distances, combine into the ever-present cycle of loss and recovery that is Eliot's sense of fight without competition, in the impartial vision of which each work can be brought out from under the shadow of individual comparison, into the common light of a single conscious and aesthetic activity. It is this sustained consciousness of creation itself that is the meaning of the sun image as the imagined focus of a circumference of limitless alteration; the repetition, in different forms, of essential concerns, themes, ideas and images which span Virginia Woolf's work, favours her novels no less than it does her short stories. Even if it is argued that never did Virginia Woolf take up again the method of such early sketches as "Monday or Tuesday", neither did she repeat in quite the same way the methods of Flush or Orlando--or even, for that matter, Three Guineas. The point is, if there is any significance to her writing process, it is one of alteration and not the kind of adoption and abandonment that imposes a necessary sense of linearity. The short stories carry on beyond merely the work that follows immediately afterwards, and that this may not be instantly obvious is of no great consequence. That slightest of sketches, "Blue and Green", for example, which by Virginia Woolf's own preference is neither familiar nor available (Leonard Woolf is "practically certain"

that she did not intend it for re-issue, and so he does not include it in A Haunted House),<sup>34</sup> can be discerned obliquely in her later novels. The influence of this sketch defies Guiget's calculations, for it is Orlando and The Waves, not the following Jacob's Room, in which its language and images have their echo. The impressionistic description of light on a mantelpiece in the "Green" half of the sketch provides the foundation for Bernard's brief image in The Waves:

The light slides down the glass, and drops a pool of green. All day long the ten fingers of the lustre drop green upon the marble. . . . Evening comes, and the shadow sweeps the green over the mantelpiece. . . . It's night; the needles drip blots of blue. \*

Bernard makes these observations about his childhood nursery:

Then more bread and butter and more flies droning round the nursery ceiling on which quivered islands of light, ruffled, opalescent, while the pointed fingers of the lustre dripped blue pools on the corner of the mantelpiece. 35

The correspondence here is indubitable; that to Orlando is perhaps more abstract, where the enigmatic description of a cathedral, "different, cold, incense laden, faint blue with the veils of madonnas" reminds one of Orlando looking up at the sky:<sup>36</sup>

"The sky is blue," he said, "the grass is green." Looking up, he saw that, on the contrary, the sky is like the veils which a thousand Madonnas have let fall from their hair. 37

\* Virginia Woolf, "Blue and Green," Monday or Tuesday, p. 66. A photocopy of the sketch is included in Appendix B.

Such parallels of images, whether overt or of a more circuitous route through symbolic associations, confirm the endurance of a kind of aesthetic ideology throughout Virginia Woolf's career. Even without the knowledge of manuscript dates and the benefit of diary accounts, therefore, with careful reading such cross-references between works can in themselves lead to expectations of certain themes and matters that bind the diversity of her work. It is not surprising, then, to find a story like "The Searchlight" occupying Virginia Woolf, in one form or another, for the greater part of her writing career. Leonard Woolf identifies the story as one of the few having undergone final revision before his wife's death, the published version of which is only one of a number of variants in manuscript. In the story as printed in A Haunted House, the female narrator identifies herself as the great-granddaughter of the boy whose life in a tower has formed the subject of her story. In the manuscripts, the role of this narrator is eclipsed by the emphasis on the boy himself as Sir Henry Taylor, by which token the situation in some drafts becomes indistinguishably connected with that in Freshwater. First mention of ideas for Freshwater was made in her diary for January 1919, and the play was completed finally in 1935; the Freshwater situation involving Taylor and an Ellen Terry-like girl, using the same setting as the play, was still uppermost in her thoughts in 1940 and 1941 when she used the verso sides of manuscripts for Between the Acts, "Anon" and "Ellen Terry" to work on the story; and, still other versions



of the same story are dated 1930 in Virginia Woolf's own hand.<sup>38</sup> To limit the influence of the stories, therefore, especially by use of dates, is to go against very clear evidence to the contrary. The complex and tortuous evolution of a short story such as "The Searchlight" cannot ever be plotted, but at least these dates and identifications give an idea, through rough drafts and diary entries, of the kind of conditions under which Virginia Woolf must have done most of her creative work.

Another poet, Wallace Stevens, gives a different sense to Eliot's "fight to recover what has been lost and found and lost again and again"; he calls it a "Blessed rage for order", this fight to give meaning to the act of seeing through the act of creating, but in which the "rage" is more important than the "order" after all.<sup>39</sup> Virginia Woolf fought the same battle throughout her life, and that feeling of something evermore about to happen in the painstaking, unresolved process of "laboriously distilling a few words, for ever desiring--" is as much an unstated presence in the stories and novels as it is self-confessed in the diaries:

Oh yes, between 50 & 60 I think I shall write out some very singular books, if I live. I think I am about to embody, at last, the exact shapes my brain holds. What a long toil to reach this beginning--if The Waves is my first work in my own style! 40

This sense of writing on the verge of discovery is not only a feature of Virginia Woolf's work, but more importantly it is the very force that brings about the recurrence of certain devices of technique, subject matter,

NOTES AND REFERENCES:CHAPTER ONE

- <sup>1</sup> Clive Bell, "Virginia Woolf," Dial, 76, No. 6 (December 1924), 457.
- <sup>2</sup> Virginia Woolf, Diary II, pp. 13-14. Written on her birthday, January 26, 1920.
- <sup>3</sup> -----, Diary V, p. 114. (19 October, 1937.)
- <sup>4</sup> See the analysis of stories in Monday or Tuesday in: David Daiches, Virginia Woolf (London: Editions Poetry London, 1945), pp. 45-54. The quotations in the text are, respectively, on pages 53, 54 and 47. The book was published first in America as : Virginia Woolf (Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1942).
- <sup>5</sup> Joan Bennett, "Virginia Woolf," rev. of A Haunted House and Other Stories, The New Statesman and Nation, February 26, 1944, p. 144.
- <sup>6</sup> Bernard Blackstone, Virginia Woolf: A Commentary (London: The Hogarth Press, 1972), p. 47. The book was first published in 1949.
- <sup>7</sup> Jean Guiget, Virginia Woolf and her Works, trans. Jean Stewart (London: The Hogarth Press, 1965), pp. 330-342.
- <sup>8</sup> Virginia Woolf, Diary III, p. 12. (April 20, 1925.)
- <sup>9</sup> Leonard Woolf, Foreword, A Haunted House, p. 7.
- <sup>10</sup> Virginia Woolf, Diary III, pp. 62-63.
- <sup>11</sup> -----, To the Lighthouse, pp. 249-250.
- <sup>12</sup> -----, Diary IV, p. 102. (May 25, 1932.)
- <sup>13</sup> -----, Diary IV, p. 125. (October 2, 1932.)

<sup>14</sup> Virginia Woolf, "Mr. Hudson's Childhood," rev. of Far Away and Long Ago, by W. H. Hudson, Times Literary Supplement, September 26, 1918; rpt. in Contemporary Writers, p. 195.

<sup>15</sup> -----, Diary III, pp. 117-118.

<sup>16</sup> -----, Diary III, p. 107. (September 5, 1926.)

<sup>17</sup> -----, Diary III, p. 106. (September 5, 1926.)

<sup>18</sup> -----, Diary V, p. 340. The quotation immediately before is from the same entry, dated 23 November, 1940, almost four months before her death.

<sup>19</sup> -----, Diary IV, pp. 53-54. (November 16, 1931.)

<sup>20</sup> -----, Diary V, p. 57. (February 19, 1937.)

<sup>21</sup> -----, Diary V, p. 298. (June 22, 1940.)

<sup>22</sup> -----, "The Journal of Mistress Joan Martyn," ed. and Intro. Susan Squier and Louise De Salvo in Twentieth Century Literature, 25, No. 3/4 (1979), 241. Written at Blo' Norton Hall in Norfolk during a holiday with Vanessa in August, 1906. See allusions to the story in letters to Violet Dickinson, Letters I, Nos. 282, 283, pp. 234, 235. (August 4 and 24, 1906.)

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 241.

<sup>24</sup> -----, "How Should One Read a Book?," Yale Review, October, 1926; rpt. (considerably revised) in The Common Reader: Second Series, p. 262.

<sup>25</sup> -----, "The House of Lyme," rev. of The House of Lyme from its Foundation to the End of the Eighteenth Century, by the Lady Newton, Times Literary Supplement, 29 March, 1917, p. 150.

<sup>26</sup> Virginia Woolf, "Women and Fiction," Forum, New York, March 1929; rpt. in Granite and Rainbow, p. 81.

<sup>27</sup> -----, "How Should One Read a Book?," The Common Reader: Second Series, pp. 261-262.

<sup>28</sup> See: Virginia Woolf, "Selina Trimmer," rev. of Hary-0: The Letters of Lady Harriet Cavendish, ed. Sir George Leveson-Gower, New Statesman and Nation, 6 July, 1940; rpt. in The Captain's Death Bed, p. 34.

Also: "Reflections at Sheffield Place," New Statesman and Nation, 19 June, 1937; rpt. in The Death of the Moth.

<sup>29</sup> -----, Orlando, p. 110.

<sup>30</sup> See MSS. B 10 e Nos. 1, 3, 4, 5, and B 10 f, pp. 11, 14, in Monk's House Papers, University of Sussex. Also, J. W. Graham, "The Drafts of Virginia Woolf's 'The Searchlight'," Twentieth Century Literature, 22, No. 4 (1976), 379-393.

<sup>31</sup> T. S. Eliot, "East Coker," Collected Poems 1909-1962 (London: Faber and Faber, 1970), pp. 202-203.

<sup>32</sup> Virginia Woolf, "Monday or Tuesday," A Haunted House, p. 12.

<sup>33</sup> David Daiches, Virginia Woolf, p. 50.

<sup>34</sup> See Leonard Woolf's Foreword to A Haunted House, p. 7.

<sup>35</sup> Virginia Woolf, The Waves, p. 171.

<sup>36</sup> -----, "Blue and Green," Monday or Tuesday, p. 67.

<sup>37</sup> -----, Orlando, p. 94.

<sup>38</sup> See Virginia Woolf, Diary I, p. 237. (January 30, 1919.) This account of the approximate dates of writing "The Searchlight" is based on my own examination of the MSS. in the Monk's House Papers, and is confirmed by J. W. Graham in "The Drafts of Virginia Woolf's 'The Searchlight'"; see reference in No. 30.

<sup>39</sup> Wallace Stevens, "The Idea of Order at Key West," The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), pp. 129-130.

<sup>40</sup> Virginia Woolf, Diary IV, pp. 52-53. (November 16, 1931.)

CHAPTER TWOASPECTS OF THE SKETCH IN A LARGER CONTEXT:  
VIRGINIA WOOLF AND THE AESTHETIC TRADITION

Virginia Woolf wrote two distinct kinds of short stories: there are those of a conventional plot of action like "The Legacy" or "The Duchess and the Jeweller", and there are those with no plot at all, of which the four short pieces in Monday or Tuesday ("A Haunted House", "Monday or Tuesday", "The String Quartet" and "Blue and Green") mark the point of her furthest departure from a recognizable short story method. These latter are obscure and difficult to read and, as such, would seem very early and experimental indeed if their difficulty were confined to Monday or Tuesday alone.

Words and meanings in these sketches are used in juxtaposition; image is set against image, sentence against sentence, so that an understanding that in a linear reading from beginning to end is compounded of the accumulations of word and image complexes, here only runs up against its own expectations of revealed meaning. To what purpose, for example, is blue countered with green in the sketch of that title; how to reconcile and make sense of something that ranges from a whale to the faint blue veils of madonnas? A typical sentence from "Monday or Tuesday" reads: "Red is the dome; coins hang on the trees; smoke trails from the chimneys; bark, shout, cry,

'Iron for sale'--and truth?".<sup>1</sup> To read this as an arrangement of ideas in a sequence towards completion, is to be confounded by its apparent incoherence. Clearly, "Monday or Tuesday" is not arbitrarily written nor arbitrary in its effect, but in order to combine its disparity into an integrated reading, one must approach it from another direction and with different expectations. In contrast, the conclusion of "The Legacy" is achieved also through a succession of separate abbreviated utterances:

She had told him the truth. She had stepped  
off the kerb to rejoin her lover. She had  
stepped off the kerb to escape from him. 2

Here, however, the repetition of structure brings the sentences together into a significance in which their bald statements make the truth more dramatic rather than opaque: as the reader follows the story, its stylistic development elicits an emotional reaction to complete its meaning, whereas in a sketch like "Monday or Tuesday" the reader is brought to a conclusion in which nothing is resolved, and thus he can get no further than the sketch itself in its suspended state of "for ever desiring".

The Monday or Tuesday sketches are difficult precisely because they demand that the reader must make sense of them: no one can read "'Iron for sale--and truth?'" and simply leave it at that. This same demand is made elsewhere by Virginia Woolf in, for example, the "paper flowers" digression in Jacob's Room, where the narrative is interrupted suddenly by a parable of no obvious connection to its surrounding text. "About this time a

firm of merchants having dealings with the East put on the market little paper flowers which opened on touching water" is announced with the confident assumption of relevance, and whose matter-of-fact conclusion ("Such were the very serious consequences of the invention of paper flowers to swim in bowls") only serves to increase the reader's perplexity.<sup>3</sup> The Waves presents difficulties of the same order, where the very action of reading becomes a puzzling out of what can inspire six independent characters to a single consciousness, and give their different narratives a thematic unity.

Virginia Woolf requires such mental exercise even in her essays, which she continues to write throughout the nineteen-twenties and thirties, and which, yet again, discount the theory that would have her radical experiments finished with the publication of Monday or Tuesday: a few examples of these are "The Sun and the Fish" and "Flying Over London", or "Fishing" and "The Moment: Summer's Night".<sup>4</sup> Like the contraposition of whale and cathedral in "Blue and Green", in an essay such as "The Sun and the Fish" the entire movement of the piece is structured dually upon an eclipse of the sun and tropical fish in the London Zoo. Whatever connection the two images share is for the reader to discover, while the images themselves remain evocative but silent.

When two things are stood together, their juxtaposition is an automatic invitation for comparison and the making of relations. The mind immediately adjusts itself to the



perimeters set up in a work of art by its commonly accepted conventions of subject and form, and its place in a tradition made up of both creative activity and its appreciation by a certain public. Within these limitations the audience finds a context in which to "read" the work: thus, even in a piece of atonal music the ear struggles to retain some sense of pattern in the pattern-less uncertainty of an absent home key, and must grasp hold of each note, each musical phrase as touch-stones by which to mark its place in the general chromatic ambiguity. Music lends itself most easily to abstraction, being already the most abstract of art forms, but with the abandonment of representation in visual art, the eye is left similarly dependent upon the work which neither takes its reference from an external reality, nor proceeds towards that reality in its handling of forms and materials. Literature proves the least abstract of all, with its very existence determined by the condition of language, and the limits of its creative power set by words with very clear definitions. Nevertheless, it is precisely the inability to shed the meanings and connotations of words that provides the mind with the impetus to trace patterns in literature: in the way that all matter abhors a void, so does the mind not want to lose itself in a work of art. If a whale and a cathedral are all that are understood as subject matter in a sketch, then in recognition of the sketch as created art the mind must be able to realize both images simultaneously in order to keep a single perspective upon the work. In

this sense the intellect that keeps interfering with David Daiches' reading of "Monday or Tuesday" becomes the necessary faculty in order to read the sketches at all. Anything less becomes a failure of consciousness, for it is consciousness that ultimately provides the necessary single perspective.

With the subject of consciousness is immediately introduced a century's worth of complex shifts and profound changes in aesthetic theory and practice, from which evolved those aspects of an art that is acknowledged in retrospect as "modern", and to which no study of Virginia Woolf or any other modern artist can fail to make reference. These changes are manifold and can be traced according to many different interpretations. It is as common to say that throughout the nineteenth century the old agrarian, aristocratic order was superseded by one urban, industrial and middle-class, as it is to speak of the corollary ever-rising bourgeoisie. This symptom is referred to by T.S. Eliot in his familiar "dissociation of sensibility", as well as by Malcolm Bradbury in The Social Context of Modern English Literature, where his explanation takes in influences from across the social and economic field: Romanticism was "an international movement of revolutionary sensibility; and it certainly marks the beginning of the aesthetic transition into the modern age".<sup>5</sup> Bradbury's view promotes the idea

of the Romantic artist who found himself autonomous: freed from his past dependence upon patrons and social responsibilities, and free to exercise his own emotional response to experience as the first principle of his art, instead of approaching it through received literary conventions and restrictions. Such autonomy naturally becomes concerned with the artist's own perceptions and emotions; a supreme consciousness which is already a self-consciousness. Whereas the Romantic poet celebrates his communion with the perceptual world, regenerated and animated through the artist's creating spirit, this same celebration becomes fertile ground for the seeds of despair sown towards the end of the century, for if the artist roots himself in his own subjectivity, it is as easy for him to move towards an affirmation of his own synthetic vision, as it is toward self-scepticism. Realizing that, by its very nature, his emotional experience (let alone that of an "external reality") can never be recreated or contained by his art, the artist is caught in the paradox of finding perfect expression through imperfect language; he reaches the dilemma of, once again, "East Coker", in his "raid on the inarticulate with shabby equipment always deteriorating in the general mess of imprecision of feeling".

Eliot's lines imply a subtle shift from the artist's concern with his own psychological state, to how that psychology affects, and is structured by his art. Therefore, in so much as the artist is autonomous, likewise his art is an independent function: it is a

creation of "reality", rather than an imitation of received notions; it functions as an act of perception rather than of analysis, and in this way the work of art is itself important as the experience, and not the experience as it happens to be described in a work of art.

Thus, one way of coming to understand the self-conscious nature of modern literature, is to follow its changes through social and economic history, back to the Romantic artist who, though elevated to a heroic position, becomes increasingly divorced from the other concerns of his society as the acceleration of scientific and technological advances spread throughout the Victorian years. He moved into the ivory tower which is as much a place of isolation as it is of privilege and, certainly, such a retreat into exclusive seclusion, in part, does account for the coterie milieu of the artistic scene at the end of the century.

Equally, however, interpretive emphasis can be laid on the changes in, and use of language itself; if there are those who point to the great Romantic revolution, there are others, like Edmund Wilson in Axel's Castle, who consider Symbolism the root of acute self-consciousness in modern art.<sup>6</sup> T.S. Eliot, for example, fully acknowledges his debt to Symbolist poets, and what he has to say in "East Coker", is (rather aptly) already explained by Paul Valéry:

In what an unfavourable, disordered state the poet finds things! Before him is this everyday language, this assembly of means so coarse that all knowledge which aims at precision rejects them so as to create its own instruments of thought; he must borrow

this collection of terms and traditional irrational rules, modified by everyone, introduced, interpreted and codified with little logic. There is nothing less in keeping with the goals of the artist than this essential disorder from which he must continually extract the elements of the order he wishes to produce. 7

Inevitably, the next step beyond the separation of an artist from his language, is the break that comes between the perceiving mind and the perceptual world; when trust in language as man's aesthetic consciousness becomes subject to his self-consciousness, then that trust founders, and any strength language may gain in artistic autonomy is countered by the fact that it no longer serves as exact correspondence between vision and conception. If the only alternative to this conclusion is retreat into unbroken silence, then Symbolism chooses to liberate the art from its function as an extension of the imagination, and allows it to exist independently in the possibility of a supreme language. In the meantime, the language that is available, is necessarily an imperfect one which can convey its meaning, at best, through careful suggestion. In the specialized vision of the Symbolists, therefore, the human voice loses its significance for the printed poem on the page, to be replaced instead by a self-consciousness suspended in the instant between recognition and expression, an instant whose duration in time is incalculable in the time-less state of "laboriously distilling a few words, for ever desiring".

The extremely complex development of language towards its own restriction through self-consciousness occupied

Virginia Woolf at the very end of her life in an unfinished essay entitled "Anon".<sup>8</sup> The existence she singles out for the printed poem as a self-conscious work of art, is significant as well to Paul Valéry:

For a long, long time, the human voice was the foundation and condition of all literature. . . .

A day came when the reader could read with his eyes alone without having to spell things out or hear them, and literature was completely transformed by this. 9

Here Valéry emphasizes the essential difference between the speaking voice and the voice of a work of art: in one the discovery of meaning is governed by time and grammar, whereas the other is activated in time only according to how it is being perceived on the page. Virginia Woolf, however, fixes a much earlier date upon the emergence of consciousness into art, than is settled by either the theory of Romanticism and the state of society, or by Symbolism and the state of language: she claims that the first step towards self-conscious literature is made by nothing less than Caxton's printing press.

The printing press brought the past into existence. It brought into existence the man who is conscious of the past the man who sees his time, against a background of the past; the man who first sees himself and shows himself to us. The first blow has been aimed at Anon when the author's name is attached to the book. 10

Virginia Woolf's Anon is her representative character for the company of such figures as troubadours, minstrels, mummers, and illiterate peasants who kept

alive an oral literary tradition in which there was no sense of an omnipresent author:

The audience was itself the singer. . . .  
 Everybody shared in the emotion of Anon's song, and supplied the story. Anon sang because spring had come; or winter is gone; because he loves; because he is hungry, or lustful; or merry; or because he adores some God. Anon is sometimes man; sometimes woman. He is the common voice singing out of doors, He has no house. He lives a roaming life crossing the fields, mounting the hills, lying under the hawthorn to listen to the nightingale. 11

With the advent of the printing press, Virginia Woolf continues, a writer such as Spenser became "word conscious; an artist; aware of his medium; that words are not paint, nor music; but have their possibilities; their limitations. To be thus aware a writer must have a past behind him".<sup>12</sup> And of Bacon she writes, that: "He was bringing the prose of the mind into being. And thus by increasing the range of the poet, by making it possible for him to express more, he was making an end of anonymity".<sup>13</sup>

It is a loss to Virginia Woolf's work as a whole that she died leaving "Anon" incomplete over a number of varying manuscripts. Her identification of the self-consciousness of language, so interesting with regard to her notions of her own art, is here more emphatic than anywhere else in her essays, and in its handling it is as aware of the consequences of self-consciousness to literary language (complete with wistful references to art and music) as are the Symbolists Valéry or Mallarmé. For all that most of the English literature she loves was written in the conscious, post-Caxton period, there

is a very definite sense of something lost with the passing of Anon; something each of her novels tries to recapture, as she asks herself before Jacob's Room: "the danger is the damned egotistical self; which ruins Joyce and [Dorothy] Richardson to my mind: is one pliant & rich enough to provide a wall for the book from oneself without its becoming . . . narrow & restricting?".<sup>14</sup>

The familiar criticism (Forster sets it out in his Rede Lecture of 1941)<sup>15</sup> that Virginia Woolf is unable to create character in her novels, does not take into account that perhaps her efforts to revive a kind of anonymity in fiction reflects in characters like Jacob and Mrs. Ramsay, one known by his surroundings and the other, as a purple triangle, or the six personalities in The Waves, whose individual narratives are given in a single undifferentiated and anonymous voice; a kind of erasure of the "egotistical self" as is seen, for example, in the faceless portraits painted by her sister, Vanessa Bell. In any case, there is real regret for the passing of the simple existence of the poem as a work of art, against the rise of the personality insisting its way through the self-conscious words of the poet:

Anonymity was a great possession. It gave the early writers an impersonality, a generality. It gave us the ballads, it gave us the songs. It allowed us to know nothing of the writer: and so to concentrate upon his song. Anon had great privileges. He was not self conscious. He is not self conscious. He can borrow. He can repeat. He can say what everyone feels. No one tries to stamp his own name, to discover his own experience, in his work. He keeps at a distance from the present moment. 16



If in "Anon" Virginia Woolf makes a very strong case for the integrity of the work of art as a form significant in itself, then again it can be said that she does not reach this awareness only at the end of her writing life. The same appreciation which can look past the quaint charm of old english ballads and read them as the serious creative expression of an age, is already fully formed at the beginning of the century. Just as in "Anon" she brings out the "reservoir of common belief" of the Morte D'Arthur that in Malory is "the voice of Anon murmuring still", so does the young Virginia Stephen of 1906 describe the travelling minstrel "Master Richard" from Gwythian who sings the legend of Tristram and Iseult to Mistress Joan Martyn, who records the event in her journal:

Such was the way he talked, as I have never heard any man talk. For in speaking he did not seem to speak his mind exactly, or to care whether we understood him: But words seemed dear to him, whether he spoke them in jest or earnest. 17

The implication is here, as it still is in 1940, that there is a life to words apart from their use as self-reflexive references to the personal meaning of the poet; but what can restore anonymity to a language that once has experienced consciousness of its own author? Before either Virginia Woolf or Paul Valéry, it is Mallarmé who defines the point of this transposition from a subjective art limited by personality to one anonymous and unrestricted by any material circumstance:

The pure work implies the disappearance of the poet-speaker who yields the initiative to words animated by the inequality revealed in their collision with one another; they illuminate one another and pass like a trail of fire over precious stone, replacing the audible breathing of earlier lyrical verse or the exalted personality which directed the phrase. 18

Mallarmé's ideal poet and Master Richard the minstrel alike hold words dear for their own beauty, as precious as jewels, and not for the sake of making themselves understood. Words are animated not so much by the things they represent, as by "the inequality revealed in their collision with one another". In this way is the life of a work of art generated entirely by the operations of its own form: meaning becomes enigma as it multiplies in the conflict of words and images within the context of the work itself. It is in this way, also, that the confusion in "Blue and Green" becomes the very life of the sketch: in the collision of the whale-image with the cathedral blue "veils of madonnas", the author's presence is de-centralized as the words themselves sustain the perpetual motion of reaching out towards the resolution of their conflicting meanings.

It is to this condition that David Daiches alludes in his objection to intellectual interference in the sketches. While he is sensitive enough to their atmospheric moods and writes without further elaboration of "Blue and Green", that "the technique here is more reminiscent of that of the French Symbolists than anywhere else in Virginia Woolf's writings",<sup>19</sup> yet the difficulty of

French Symbolism (and of Virginia Woolf's sketches) is precisely that it is more than merely a school of evocative and atmospheric style. To understand in what way the sketches are studies of consciousness is largely to understand the nature of Symbolism itself. Furthermore, it is significant that in a certain period, the art that was created or written on the extreme edge of aesthetic self-consciousness tended towards the kind of elliptical expression and brief, fragmented form that generally is associated with the condition of a sketch.

It is no coincidence, really, that Virginia Woolf should adopt a technique that can best be explained by placing it into the context of a very specific art form, and by the explanation of which is established a certain tradition of sketch writing. Neither is it very surprising that this tradition should be Symbolist in its course. Another reason for the comparative neglect of her sketches presents itself, therefore, for with the hesitation to read them seriously against similar kinds of work, their most important literary significance has gone unremarked.

This hesitation does not receive much encouragement from the notions set up by Virginia Woolf's own famous observation, that "in or about December, 1910, human character changed".<sup>20</sup> Her comment bears some responsibility for spreading an interpretation that as respectable a

critic as Richard Ellmann takes seriously:

Edward "The Peacemaker" had to die before the world became modern, and she pushed the dead Edwardians aside to make room for the lively Georgians. The distinction was more relevant, however, for describing Virginia Woolf's own accession to purposiveness than to George's accession to rule. 21

It confuses nice distinctions to remember that if 1910 marks Virginia Woolf's "accession to purposiveness", a work like "The Journal of Mistress Joan Martyn" was written already in 1906. Additionally, although those "dead Edwardians" Bennett, Wells and Galsworthy had written many of their best-known novels before 1910, their work continued to be published with great success throughout the following two decades. Only H.G. Wells was an established novelist by as early as the middle of the eighteen-nineties; Bennett may be Edwardian for what he wrote in the first ten years of the twentieth century, but he continued into the reign of George V with novels such as Hilda Lessways (1911) and Riceyman Steps (1923), and after the early Man of Property, the rest of Galsworthy's popular Forsyte series appeared almost entirely in the twenties and even in the early thirties. Conversely, of the so-called "lively Georgians", E. M. Forster had published all of his novels but one by 1910; A Passage to India came out in 1924. It is clear by even such a casual glance at publishing dates that these Edwardians and Georgians were writing contemporaneously. More to the point, such dates and labels prove too rigid in their categorization: thus, H. G. Wells himself comes

to suspect what Virginia Woolf charges him with in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown".

. . . I adjusted myself better to the needs of the magazine story and I turned out tale after tale like a baker making fruit tarts. . . . If it had not been for the incitement of all this talk about the short story as a work of art, which spoilt my tolerance for that kind of thing, I might have gone on doing it to the end of my days. . . . But those Yellow Book and National Observer people stirred up a feeling in me, that may have been latent in me all along, that not only might the short story be a lovely, satisfying, significant thing, but that it ought to be so, that a short story that wasn't whole and complete like a living thing, but just something bought and cut off like half a yard of chintz on a footstool, was either an imposture or a lost opportunity. . . . in the end I was forced to conclude that in most cases they [his own stories] ought never to have been written at all or they ought to have been written differently. And I found myself with new stories on hand that refused more and more definitely to be written either in the length or manner of the acceptable magazine article. 22

Even more than H. G. Wells, Arnold Bennett shows himself strikingly sympathetic to the essay in whose title he is immortalized together with Mrs. Brown. The event at which human character is supposed to have changed is, of course, Roger Fry's First Post-Impressionist Exhibition, which caused such a rumpus in London's social and intellectual circles. The controversy raged in most of the newspapers and magazines of the time, including The New Age in whose pages the show was vigorously defended, and by which action the journal aligned itself with the views of Roger Fry and the Bloomsbury friends behind him.<sup>23</sup> Not only was Arnold Bennett a frequent contributor in The New Age with his "Books and Persons" column written under the pen-name of Jacob Tonson, but he also championed Roger Fry in comments

whose enthusiasm conceals neither his very real understanding of the "shocking" new art of the French Post-Impressionists, nor his sympathy for the consequences it would have upon the arts in England. In themselves, his indictments of the British public for such philistinism, insularity and self-complacency that they are unable even "to suspect that it is London and not the exhibition which is making itself ridiculous" seem more like the opinions of Roger Fry (who had a habit of referring to the British as the "Custard Islanders"), than they do of the Bennett in Virginia Woolf's essay.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, if the character of Arnold Bennett in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" has become popular as a representative of both his own novels and those of his contemporaries (and it has), then it comes as a surprise to read his defence of the Post-Impressionists and his profession of love for the art of Cézanne and Gauguin: "I now surround myself with large photographs of these pictures of which a dozen years ago I was certainly quite incapable of perceiving the beauty". At least, as Jacob Tonson, Arnold Bennett seems very sensitive to radical aesthetic changes; like H.G. Wells he considers these implications for his own art, and comes to a conclusion that not only anticipates "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown", but positively invites Virginia Woolf to write it--and this, some thirteen years earlier:

Noting in myself that a regular contemplation of these pictures inspires a weariness of all other pictures that are not absolutely first-rate, giving them a disconcerting affinity to the tops of chocolate-boxes or "art" photographs, I have permitted myself to suspect that supposing some writer were to come along and do

in words what these men have done in paint, I might conceivably be disgusted by the whole of modern fiction, and I might have to begin again. This awkward experience will in all probability not happen to me, but it might happen to a writer younger than me. At any rate it is a fine thought. . . . Supposing a young writer turned up and forced me, and some of my contemporaries--us who fancy ourselves a bit--to admit that we had been concerning ourselves unduly with essentials, that we had been worrying ourselves to achieve infantile realisms? Well, that day would be a great and a disturbing day--for us. And we should see what we should see. 25

It is Roger Fry who, appropriately, took up Bennett's suggestion to "do in words what these men have done in paint" in his review of a show of modern French art at the Mansard Gallery in August, 1919 (surely he would have read the reviews of his Post-Impressionist exhibition and, if only subconsciously, would have remembered Bennett's idea);<sup>26</sup> he attempts the description of a street in words of surface detail, shape and colour, but then resigns himself to failure: "I see, now that I have done it, that it was meant for Mrs. Virginia Woolf--that Survage is almost precisely the same thing in paint that Mrs. Woolf is in prose".<sup>27</sup> \*

The only stories by Virginia Woolf in print by 1919 were "The Mark on the Wall" and "Kew Gardens"; therefore, it is to these which Roger Fry refers. However, shortly after his experiment appeared in The Athenaeum, Virginia Woolf wrote to Fry, that "I enjoyed immensely finding my name in your article. Also I thought your translation, what you call a parody, most charming. Why don't you do some more? Do, and let us print them".<sup>28</sup> Nothing ever

\* Entitled "The Town"; see Appendix C.

came of her suggestion for Fry to write more of his word-paintings, but it is not inconceivable that she received encouragement from his tribute, and was inspired to push the purely visual technique of the opening paragraph of "Kew Gardens" even further into those sketches that she must have had at the back of her mind at the time: "A Haunted House", "The String Quartet", "Monday or Tuesday", or "Blue and Green".

In an oblique way that is nevertheless an important one, therefore, already in 1910 the very man who was to be taken to task for all that is mediocre in modern fiction, was expressing ideas that had implications both for Virginia Woolf's criticism (in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown") and her "revolutionary" creative writing (the short impressionistic sketches in Monday or Tuesday). This is not to say that there is not a fundamental difference between the novels of Arnold Bennett and those of Virginia Woolf, nor that her analysis in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" is unfounded; however, to wield that distinction above the merely textual, as evidence of a schism in the very cultural milieu shared by both writers, is to give too much aesthetic independence to Virginia Woolf's work from that of her time.

The aspect that suffers most from this interpretation is her achievement in the sketch form, whose significance is precisely that it carries over into Virginia Woolf's work certain ideas as are expressed, for example, by Arnold Bennett in his response to the Post-Impressionist exhibition and which, in turn, belong to the Symbolist



tradition that was to give Post-Impressionism its start. No appreciation of her sketches, however sensitive to mood or lyricism, can root them in any kind of literary importance if it translates them out of history. Thus, even an analysis of such promising title as Eileen Baldeshweiler's "The Lyric Short Story: The Sketch of a History" (and there are not many articles that deal with the subject), relieves Virginia Woolf's sketches of their obscurity by including them in its scope, but at the same time denies them a life apart from their own idiosyncrasy:

Virtually abandoning external action, choosing as a subject shifts of emotion more subtle and more private than those depicted by Turgenev or Lawrence, tracing with the diction and rhythms of the poet the "fall of the atoms on the mind," Mrs. Woolf definitely abandoned the conventional short story to choose new subjects, new themes, new structures, and new language. Like that of Turgenev, her work marks an almost total break between old and new. 29

Baldeshweiler aligns herself with the old versus new position that has been made popular through "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown". But, the fallacy of such a distinction is shown in yet another way. In her essay Virginia Woolf expresses ideas that are in striking agreement with the standards set out by Roger Fry in "An Essay in Aesthetics"; he explains "unity" as one of the crucial aesthetic qualities, "necessary for our restful contemplation of the work of art as a whole, since if it lacks unity we cannot contemplate it in its entirety, but we shall pass outside it to other things necessary to complete its unity".<sup>30</sup> This "unity" that is really another word for the

idea of organic wholeness featured in aesthetic theory since Romanticism, is the issue to which the novelists Wells, Bennett and Galsworthy are compared by Virginia Woolf--to their disadvantage:

. . . they leave one with so strange a feeling of incompleteness and dissatisfaction. In order to complete them it seems necessary to do something--to join a society, or, more desperately, to write a cheque. . . . But with the work of other novelists it is different. Tristram Shandy or Pride and Prejudice is complete in itself; it is self-contained; it leaves one with no desire to do anything, except indeed to read the book again, and to understand it better. 31

Roger Fry's practical involvement with modern French art and aesthetic theory reveals itself even by his interest in translating the poetry of Mallarmé, which became a life-long occupation after the theft of his manuscript in a railway station necessitated a new beginning: this came in the years leading up to 1920, when Virginia Woolf would have found Mallarmé most interesting in the light of her own departure from conventional descriptive methods in the Monday or Tuesday sketches. Discussions with Fry about theories whose fuller versions can be traced in his books, often are noted by Virginia Woolf in her letters and diaries. Compare, for example, her transcription of Fry's conversations at the dinner table on November 22, 1917, with what he writes himself in the Introduction to his Mallarmé translations published posthumously almost twenty years later:

" . . . I've made out a little more about the thing which is essential to all art: you see, all art is representative. You say the word tree, & you see a tree. Very well. Now every word has an aura. Poetry combines the different auras in a sequence." 32

The version intended for publication by Roger Fry at the end of his life is so similar in its intent to the second-hand diary account written by Virginia Woolf decades earlier, that it is witness to how thoroughly, and with what seriousness, the subject must have been discussed: "Every word carries with it an image or an idea surrounded by a vague aura of associations. . . . The poet so arranges that each word shall have as full, as rich, as completely visible an aura as possible".<sup>33</sup> That Fry's literary preoccupations were more often aired in the dining-room than confined to the study prompted Virginia Woolf to write even in his biography, that "the guest sitting down to dinner would be asked to share the dangerous delight of helping translate Mallarmé into English", and that "Mallarmé, intoned in Roger Fry's deep and resonant voice, filled the dining-room with magnificent reverberations".<sup>34</sup>

Insofar as Fry's debt to Symbolism tends to be undisputed,<sup>35</sup> that of Virginia Woolf is more often overlooked in favour of the "December, 1910" interpretation, of which Eileen Baldeshweiler's article is a typical example. In fact, those arguments in "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" for the inherent qualities of a work of art, have their most resounding affirmation before 1910 in the various theories of Symbolism, Aestheticism and Decadence; Virginia Woolf could have looked to writers much more

recent than Laurence Sterne and Jane Austen. Wyndham Lewis is unintentionally quite perceptive in remarks meant to be derogatory: "there is, of course, a very much closer connection than people suppose between the aesthetic movement presided over by Oscar Wilde, and that presided over in the first post-war decade by Mrs. Woolf and Miss Sitwell".<sup>36</sup>

Virginia Woolf's friendship with Roger Fry has been charted convincingly for its influence upon her literary theories by Jean Guiget and J. K. Johnstone;<sup>37</sup> it has been charted somewhat less convincingly for a direct correspondence between his aesthetic theory and her literary practice by John Hawley Roberts and Allen McLaurin.<sup>38</sup> But the idea of influence need not be considered in such overtly tangible terms of friendship alone, if only for the fact, that Virginia Woolf was practising an already marked Aesthetic style long before she had met Roger Fry. The vaguely Paterian air of her early letters to female friends ("A letter should be flawless as a gem, continuous as an eggshell, and lucid as glass", she writes to Violet Dickinson<sup>39</sup>), immediately becomes sharper upon corresponding with men--her brother's friends Clive Bell and Lytton Strachey--whether out of self-consciousness, or respect for their Cambridge learning, or a sense of competition (or, more likely, all three). For example, the first letters she wrote to Clive Bell are more laboured and artificial than any others

she ever sent, but as such, it is Virginia Woolf at her most conscious in trying to create a desired impression:

I read then, and feel beauty swell  
like ripe fruit within my palm: I hear music  
woven from azure skeins of air: and gazing  
into deep pools skimmed with the Italian  
veil I see youth and melancholy walking hand  
in hand. Yet why separate and distinguish  
when all are pressed to your ardent lips in  
one clear draught? 40

Virginia Woolf quickly refines her prose style of this overt Symbolist fantasy, but the same spirit stays with her throughout her life. Twenty-two years later, setting forth her intentions for The Waves, she reins herself in for becoming "arty, Liberty, greenery yallery somehow; symbolic in loose robes".<sup>41</sup> Again, therefore, the letters and diaries reveal the scope of interests that otherwise would have to be interpreted from fiction alone, and show that the young Virginia Stephen who is closest in time to the Aestheticism of the nineteenth century is indeed as affected by its style as the early essays "The Memoirs of Sarah Bernhardt" (1908) and "Impressions at Bayreuth" (1909) would seem to suggest. Such is the only interpretation that can be put upon a passage like this:

Yes--one must dine and sleep and register one's life by the dial of the clock, in a pale light, attended only by the irrelevant uproar of cart and carriage, and observed by the universal eye of sun and moon which looks upon us all, we are told, impartially. But is this not a gigantic falsehood? Are we not each in truth the centre of innumerable rays which so strike upon one figure only, and is it not our business to flash them straight and completely back again, and never suffer a single shaft to blunt itself on the far side of us? 42

Here the influence of Pater is undeniable in obvious echoes of the "Conclusion" of The Renaissance: "How shall we pass most swiftly from point to point, and be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy"; "Not to discriminate every moment some passionate attitude in those about us, and in the very brilliancy of their gifts some tragic dividing of forces on their ways, is, on this short day of frost and sun, to sleep before evening".<sup>43</sup>

Further evidence of where Virginia Woolf's interests lay at this time is found in another early manuscript in the Monk's House Papers, dated Wednesday June 20-23, 1906, by Virginia herself; though it is in an extremely rough state, certain elements are recognizable already which mature and reappear years later in the novels. Two sisters figure in the story: Phyllis and Rosamond Hibbert (reminiscent of Hilbery in Night and Day), bred to the drawing-room, but rather bohemian misfits in a family where all the other daughters are married (recalling the Otways again in Night and Day), who, in their situation, raise political and social questions about what society expects of, and allows women to do. In their solidarity Phyllis and Rosamond undoubtedly are patterned upon Vanessa and Virginia, especially when the sisters abandon the drawing-room stuffiness of Belgravia and South Kensington, and spend an evening in Bloomsbury where "The talk was of certain pictures then being shown and their merits were discussed from somewhat technical standpoints".<sup>44</sup> With Virginia Woolf's own life so obviously

reflected in the events of this unfinished story, it is certainly not an arbitrary detail that, left on their own, Phyllis reads Anatole France, and Rosamond, Greek Studies by Walter Pater.

Such an oblique Aesthetic presence in Virginia Woolf's work comes as no surprise at a time when its influence was shaping modern art in general in ways now considered as hallmarks of the early twentieth century period. The similarities between Pater's "Conclusion" in The Renaissance and Pound's Imagist manifesto in Blast, or between Symbolist France and Vorticist England, are more than those parallels which are bound to arise whenever artists take it upon themselves to express a vision in a creative way. That moment which, for Pater, is "the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy"<sup>45</sup> is of the same order as Pound's "image": "An 'Image' is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time".<sup>46</sup> The idea of "time" in, for example, Bergson's theory of duration, Pater's metaphor of the "gem-like flame", Joyce's and Woolf's "epiphanies" and "moments of being", or in the general notion of Symbol itself, has been rehearsed often enough to recognize that Pound's explanation of the "image" continues such treatment of time in art:<sup>47</sup> "It is the presentation of such a 'complex' instantaneously which gives that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art".<sup>48</sup> Implicit in Pound's definition are the limitless

dimensions of experience and time that lie behind a fleeting moment and which, therefore, are brought to bear upon a single and deliberately formed work of art; implicit as well is the fact that the deliberation which chooses to contain that moment in a specific way, is as much a careful, disciplined craft as it is a spontaneous impulse. Pound lays out in his article the three criteria of "Imagisme"; all invoke a technical accuracy which belies the inspired ease of the poem:

1. Direct treatment of the "thing," whether subjective or objective.
2. To use absolutely no word that did not contribute to the presentation.
3. As regarding rhythm: to compose in sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome. 49

These directions echo a number of previous aesthetic ideals--the reference to the "musical phrase", for example, is in a direct line of development from Pater's "All art constantly aspires to the condition of music"--but as far as his insistence on the rigours of compositiion is concerned, this, too, is already found in Pater, who speaks of "a single, almost visual image, vigorously informing an entire, perhaps very intricate, composition, which shall be ornate, argumentative, fanciful, yet true from first to last to that vision within":<sup>50</sup>

. . . everything, every component element, will have undergone exact trial, and, above all, there will be no uncharacteristic or tarnished or vulgar decoration, permissible ornament being for the most part structural, or necessary. . . .  
 . . . For in truth all art does but consist in the removal of surplusage, from the



last finish of the gem engraver blowing away the last particle of invisible dust, back to the earliest divination of the finished work to be, lying somewhere, according to Michelangelo's fancy, in the rough-hewn block of stone. 51

Mallarmé as well is aware of the demands of form inherent in a work of art, to which succumb all external circumstances and devices of creation ("The structure of a book of verse must arise throughout from internal necessity--in this way both chance and the author will be excluded").<sup>52</sup> And, although Virginia Woolf, Pound's contemporary, does not come in any direct manner under his influence, she shares with him this varied Aesthetic and Symbolist tradition which, by her own ways, leads her to similar conclusions:

I mean to eliminate all waste, deadness, superfluity: to give the moment whole; whatever it includes. Say that the moment is a combination of thought; sensation; the voice of the sea. Waste, deadness, come from the inclusion of things that don't belong to the moment. . . . Why admit anything to literature that is not poetry--by which I mean saturated? Is that not my grudge against novel[ist]s--that they select nothing? The poets succeed by simplifying: practically everything is left out. 53

Arthur Symons describes Whistler's painting as a similar process of careful paring away and simplifying:

Whistler begins by building his world after nature's, with supports as solid and as visible. Gradually he knocks away support after support, expecting the structure to support itself by its own consciousness, so to speak. At the perfect moment he gives to the eye just enough to catch in the outlines of things that it may be able to complete them by that imaginative sympathy which is part of the seeing of works of art. 54

Symons' account is important for two reasons: it describes how a work purified of all "surplusage" becomes dependent upon its own consciousness; and it defines this self-conscious art as the creation of the "perfect moment", in which sketch-like technique is sufficient to impart to the viewer a sense of aesthetic consciousness, within the framework of whose suspended moment the presence of an object or an experience is invoked in its absence.

Any view that in this way lays emphasis upon the "moment" or "image" as an all-inclusive whole assumes that, in general, there is not a direct correspondence between art and life, that one is not a faithful reproduction of the other. The argument goes: the ability to be sensitive to those aspects of "reality" that do not behave according to the temporal march of chronological progression, are not bounded by minutes, hours or days, are more intuitive than rational--those aspects of a life in which "nothing is, or can be rightly known, except relatively and under conditions", that Pater calls "the relative spirit"<sup>55</sup>--naturally leads to the aesthetic approach that seeks to include the many in the one, where the singular represents or alludes to the greater complex. It is this approach that throws light upon the sketch, and grants the sketch form the integrity of aesthetic independence, for in this view is a word invested with heightened significance and understood as a Symbol; and Symbolist, Decadent or Imagist efforts at vers libre, prose poems, short poems of only a few lines, and enigmatic sketches are accepted as serious efforts

to give experience an aesthetic form. Thus, conventional proportion becomes irrelevant to Virginia Woolf, whether "one prefers a raindrop to the river Thames".<sup>56</sup> Worlds of meaning and emotion are caught in the gleam on Monet's water, or in the arrested movement of a dancer by Degas; in the same way, a less emotional and more substantial knowledge of, and response to physical existence is expressed in the planes of a Cézanne landscape; violins and wine-glasses can be recognized in the fragments of a still-life by Picasso; and ultimately, by such a view one is able to accommodate abstraction, to appreciate Mondrian's austere geometry as an attempted transcendence over the "relative spirit" that through "the rhythms and relations of colour and size, makes the absolute appear in the relativity of time and space".<sup>57</sup>

It is into the context of this early twentieth-century exploration of time and space as transformed by art, that Virginia Woolf's sketches fall together with her "moments of vision". While she may boast rather about Pound, that "I have never seen him, and only hate his works",<sup>58</sup> or beg from Duncan Grant the loan of Wyndham Lewis's Tarr, because "I was so rash as to say to Eliot the other night that Wyndham Lewis and Ezra Pound were the biggest humbugs unhung, and then had to own that this was mere inspiration on my part, as I have never read a word of either of them",<sup>59</sup> her professed ignorance neither pushes her own awareness nor her literary reputation into that peculiar moment of history and geography known as Bloomsbury. Her methods are as much

indebted to nineteenth-century Pater, to Symbolist France and Aestheticist England, as they are a contribution to Modernism. Indeed, not only were markedly Paterian ideas developed in Bloomsbury by Roger Fry and Virginia Woolf, but even Duncan Grant created an Abstract Kinetic Collage Painting with Sound, intended to be seen unrolling to the slow movement of a Bach concerto.<sup>60</sup> Of course, such synesthetic concerns are not confined to Pater's influence or to England alone; Kandinsky in Munich was familiar with neither when he wrote that "In recent times, the arts have never been closer to one another than in this latest period of spiritual transformation".<sup>61</sup>

That there is acrimony between various artists and the Modernist schools to which they ally themselves does not diminish the concentration of their common pursuit; behind announcements of secession and claims of destruction lies more often an anxiety of influence than a truly original, radical spirit. Pound, for example, abandoning even Imagism, declares the new art form:

The image is not an idea. It is a radiant node or cluster; it is what I can, and must perforce, call a VORTEX, from which, and through which, and into which ideas are constantly rushing. 62

Yet, for all his journeying, Pound arrives where Pater has been before, that "focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy".<sup>63</sup>

It is this sort of repetition of essential themes and ideas that makes it difficult to distinguish not only between the fine meanings behind the various

"ism" labels of movements in the decades around the turn of the century, but also between genres and art forms, and thus, between the arts of countries themselves.<sup>64</sup> That the definition of these issues should be so evasive and indistinct, is as much a desired indication of their general nature--the synesthesia of heady sense combinations, or the evocative amorphousness of crossing the effects of different arts--as it is the result of concerns that inevitably run to the same end. If a single title can be put upon these diverse concerns, it is "Aesthetic", not in the restricted sense of lilies and Oscar Wilde, but rather in its Greek sense of aisthanomai, the word for vision, or perception. In the progression towards self-consciousness, the arts of the nineteenth century may be indebted to changes in aesthetic attitudes from the literary or linguistic, to the sociological or moral, but ultimately it is the attitude that holds the work of art itself as an art form of pure perception, that liberates creative activity from the idiosyncracies of personality and circumstance.<sup>65</sup> And, if perception is the fundamental condition of the "Aesthetic", then it is this perception functioning as the consciousness of a significant moment of experience, that identifies the Aesthetic art form. Thus, the sketch becomes the ideal vehicle for the Aesthetic vision, as the purest form of self-conscious art; and, in the sense of being such an aesthetic consciousness, it is equally a form of painting, music or literature.

The fact that the sketch should occur across all three arts is not because they go through a rough-draft preliminary stage, in the same way that Virginia Woolf's sketches are not experiments conducted in preparation for her novels; neither can the sketch be defined as a matter of a certain artistic style. First and foremost, the sketch is the expression of belief itself, that understands why its condition must be brief and enigmatic; mere atmospheric style alone does not display an inherent justification for its artistic effects. As the affirmation of an aesthetic stance, therefore, the sketch is the most successful vehicle for the "modern" vision, the belief that consciousness of perception becomes the inescapable self-conscious condition of all art.

In this sense the sketch tradition in music, painting and literature is comprised neither of experimental practice, nor of an enthusiasm for impressionism, but rather, of nothing less than consciousness itself as formal aesthetic perception. And, it is also in this sense that those works in which Virginia Woolf leaves her reader with no identifiable character or plot, may be read as examples of Aesthetic sketch writing: the sketch as the creator of its own perspective, in which the "damned egotistical self" is as absent as it is in the voice of "Anon", and to which words are as wonderful in artistic possibility as they ever were to Master Richard of Gwythian.

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

CHAPTER TWO

- 1 Virginia Woolf, "Monday or Tuesday," A Haunted House, p. 12.
- 2 -----, "The Legacy," A Haunted House, p. 129.
- 3 -----, Jacob's Room, pp. 81-84.
- 4 The first two essays are published in The Captain's Death Bed; the latter, in The Moment and Other Essays.
- 5 See Malcolm Bradbury, The Social Context of Modern English Literature (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), pp. 75-76.
- 6 Edmund Wilson, Axel's Castle (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931). See also: Clive Scott, "Symbolism, Decadence and Impressionism," in Modernism, eds. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), pp. 206-227.
- 7 Paul Valéry, "Remarks on Poetry," in Symbolism: An Anthology, ed. and trans. T. G. West (London: Methuen, 1980), pp. 49-50. (First given as a lecture in 1927 at the Université des Annales.)
- 8 Virginia Woolf, "'Anon' and 'The Reader': Virginia Woolf's Last Essays," ed., Intro. and commentary by Brenda Silver, Twentieth Century Literature, 25, No. 3/4 (1979), pp. 380-400. Further references will be acknowledged as "Anon".
- 9 Quoted in Clive Scott, "Symbolism, Decadence and Impressionism," in Modernism, p. 207.
- 10 Virginia Woolf, "Anon," p. 385.
- 11 Ibid., p. 382.
- 12 Ibid., p. 390.
- 13 Ibid., p. 397.

- <sup>14</sup> Virginia Woolf, Diary II, p. 14. (January 26, 1920.)
- <sup>15</sup> E. M. Forster, Virginia Woolf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1942), see esp. pp. 17-18.
- <sup>16</sup> Virginia Woolf, "Anon," p. 397.
- <sup>17</sup> -----, "The Journal of Mistress Joan Martyn," p. 261.
- <sup>18</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé, "Crisis in Verse," in Symbolism: An Anthology, p. 8.
- <sup>19</sup> David Daiches, Virginia Woolf (London: Editions Poetry London, 1945), p. 52.
- <sup>20</sup> Virginia Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," The Captain's Death Bed, p. 91.
- <sup>21</sup> Richard Ellmann, "The Two Faces of Edward," in Edwardians and Late Victorians, ed. Richard Ellmann (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), p. 188.
- <sup>22</sup> H. G. Wells, Intro., The Country of the Blind (London: The Golden Cockerell Press, 1939), p. 5.
- <sup>23</sup> See George Calderon, "The Post-Impressionists," The New Age, November 24, 1910, pp. 88-89; also, various articles and letters to the editor in issues immediately following.
- <sup>24</sup> The article referred to throughout is: Arnold Bennett (Jacob Tonson), "Books and Persons," The New Age, December 8, 1910, p. 135.
- Roger Fry: see Judith Collins, The Omega Workshops (London: Secker and Warburg, 1984), p. 1.
- <sup>25</sup> Arnold Bennett, op. cit. These comments on the Virginia Woolf-Arnold Bennett relationship have been published by me as a separate article, "Mr. Tonson and Mrs. Brown," in The Charleston Newsletter, No. 11 (1985).



- <sup>26</sup> "The Town," by Roger Fry: included in Appendix C.
- <sup>27</sup> Roger Fry, "Modern French Art at the Mansard Gallery," The Athenaeum, August 8, 1919, pp. 723-724.
- <sup>28</sup> Virginia Woolf, Letters II, No. 1076, p. 385. (August 17, 1919.)
- <sup>29</sup> Eileen Baldeshweiler, "The Lyric Short Story: The Sketch of a History," Studies in Short Fiction, No. 6 (1969), p. 450.
- <sup>30</sup> Roger Fry, "An Essay in Aesthetics," Vision and Design (London: Chatto and Windus, 1957), p. 31.
- <sup>31</sup> Virginia Woolf, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," p. 99.
- <sup>32</sup> -----, Diary I, p. 80.
- <sup>33</sup> Roger Fry, "Early Introduction," in Poems by Stéphane Mallarmé, trans. Roger Fry, commentaries by Charles Mauron (London: Chatto and Windus, 1938), p. 296.
- <sup>34</sup> Virginia Woolf, Roger Fry, p. 239. Roger Fry and the Woolfs were hoping to publish his Mallarmé translations, and for letters about this, see: Nos. 1139, 1141 and 1295 in Letters II, pp. 438, 439 and 565. Also: Roger Fry, Nos. 480 and 481 in Letters, II, ed. Denys Sutton (London: Chatto and Windus, 1972); pp. 485, 486. (The date of Woolf's letter No. 1139, specified by her as only "Sunday" is given by Nicolson and Trautmann as 1 August, 1920. Their estimation is at least one week off, as the corresponding answer dated by Fry himself is written one week before, on 27 July, 1920. Woolf's letter, therefore, would have been written probably on Sunday the 20th of July, 1920.)

<sup>35</sup> Edward Engelberg justifies his inclusion of Fry's Mallarmé translations in his anthology of English Symbolist poetry, when there were earlier examples for him to choose from (Arthur Symons, for instance), because "although Fry became eminent in the twentieth century, he belonged in spirit to the nineties. He was an "Aesthete," in the best sense of the word, in his views towards all the arts, and he is a direct descendant of men like Wilde and Pater". Edward Engelberg, Intro., The Symbolist Poem (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1967), p. 47. Yeats, too, in retrospect looked to Fry in a letter to Dorothy Wellesley (a friend he shared with Virginia Woolf): "I am reading Roger Fry's translation of Mallarmé. . . . I find it exciting, as it shows me the road I and others of my time went for certain furlongs. It is not the way I go now, but one of the legitimate roads". W. B. Yeats, The Letters of W. B. Yeats, ed. Allan Wade (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954), p. 887.

<sup>36</sup> Wyndham Lewis, Men Without Art (London: Cassell and Co., 1934), p. 170.

<sup>37</sup> These studies are the most complete of their kind: see Jean Guiget, Virginia Woolf and her Works, trans. Jean Stewart (London: The Hogarth Press, 1965), p. 155; and, J. K. Johnstone, The Bloomsbury Group (London: Secker and Warburg, 1954), chapter III, pp. 46 ff.

<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, these studies are representative of the kind of criticism that draws unnecessarily close parallels between conventional novelistic devices such as colour, characterization or plot-structure, and the theory and practice of visual art: John Hawley Roberts, "'Vision

and Design' in Virginia Woolf," PMLA, LXI (1946); and Allen McLaurin, Virginia Woolf, The Echoes Enslaved (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

<sup>39</sup> Virginia Woolf, Letters I, No. 323, p. 264. (December 16, 1906.)

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., No. 345, p. 282. (February, 1907.)

<sup>41</sup> -----, Diary III, p. 230. (May 28, 1929.)

<sup>42</sup> -----, "The Memoirs of Sarah Bernhardt," Books and Portraits, p. 207. The review first appeared in Cornhill Magazine, February, 1908.

<sup>43</sup> Walter Pater, "Conclusion," The Renaissance (London: Macmillan and Co., 1917), pp. 236, 237.

<sup>44</sup> Virginia Woolf, MS. A 23 f, Monk's House Papers, University of Sussex.

<sup>45</sup> Walter Pater, "Conclusion," The Renaissance, p. 236.

<sup>46</sup> Ezra Pound, "Imagisme," Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, I (March, 1913), p. 199.

<sup>47</sup> For such a discussion of the nature of Symbol, see A. G. Lehmann, The Symbolist Aesthetic in France 1885-1895 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1968).

<sup>48</sup> Ezra Pound, "Imagisme," op. cit., p. 199.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Walter Pater, "Style," Appreciations (London: Macmillan and Co., 1890), p. 20. My italics.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., pp. 15-16.

<sup>52</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé, "Crisis in Verse," in Symbolism, p. 8.

<sup>53</sup> Virginia Woolf, Diary III, pp. 209-210. (November 28, 1928.)

- 54 Arthur Symons, "The Painting of the Nineteenth Century," Studies in Seven Arts (London: Archibald Constable, 1906), p. 52.
- 55 Walter Pater, "Coleridge," Appreciations, p. 65.
- 56 Virginia Woolf, "Joseph Addison," Times Literary Supplement, 19 June, 1919; rpt. (slightly revised) as "Addison," The Common Reader, p. 144.
- 57 Piet Mondrian, "Natural Reality and Abstract Reality," in Theories of Modern Art, ed. Herschel Chipp (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 323. The essay was first published in De Stijl, I, 1919.
- 58 Virginia Woolf, Letters III, No. 1422, p. 71. (September 24, 1923, to Ottoline Morrell.)
- 59 -----, Letters IV, No. 990a, p. 494. (November 29, 1918.)
- 60 In the Tate Gallery.
- 61 Wassily Kandinsky, On the Spiritual in Art (Munich: 1912); quoted by Peter Vergo in "Music and abstract painting: Kandinsky, Goethe and Schoenberg," Towards a New Art (London: The Tate Gallery, 1980), p. 41. Again, Lehmann's The Symbolist Aesthetic in France (q.v.) is a good source for the synthesis of the arts in the nineteenth century.
- 62 Ezra Pound, quoted by Hugh Kenner in The Pound Era (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 185.
- 63 Walter Pater, "Conclusion," The Renaissance, p. 236.

<sup>64</sup> For an illustration of the difficulties in drawing lines of definition and influence between various movements of the time, see: Claude de L. Ryals, "Toward a Definition of Decadent as Applied to British Literature of the Nineteenth Century," Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, XVII, No. 1 (1958), 85-92. Also: Robert L. Peters, "Toward an 'Un-Definition' of Decadent as Applied to British Literature of the Nineteenth Century," Ibid., XVIII, No. 2 (1959), 258-264. The issues have yet to be resolved: in the week that this chapter was written there appeared in the TLS a review of a new essay by Wendell Harris, "An Anatomy of Aestheticism," who "distinguishes six streams that fed into that handy but ultimately confusing term". Robert B. Martin, "Masters and Models," rev. of Victorian Literature and Society, eds. James Kincaid and Albert Kyhn, Times Literary Supplement, 8 March, 1985, p. 262.

<sup>65</sup> In addition to such interpretations as those by Bradbury or Valéry that have already been discussed, there is the analysis that emphasizes the importance of changes in moral attitudes for the work to stand apart from its author's opinions. Valerie Shaw attributes this rise of the short story in general to these changes in moral expectation, with a painting (Holman Hunt's The Awakening Conscience) as her example: "The painter's moral attitude is absorbed into the picture itself, and unity is inherent in the subject, not imposed by the artist", in The Short Story (London: Longman, 1983), p. 144.

CHAPTER THREE"MYSTERY AND VAGUENESS":  
SOME CONSIDERATIONS OF THE SKETCH  
IN RELATION TO THE SHORT STORY

The theory that would seek to understand the nature of the sketch, before all else must be able to realize for it a separate existence apart from other more finished works of art; for, the history of the sketch is a steady development towards, and acceptance of its independence as an aesthetic form in its own right. It is no coincidence that this emergence of the sketch took place in the respective ways of art, music and literature: though not accorded the significance of completion, in its unfinished state the sketch was appreciated nevertheless for its felicitous hints at ideas and experiences beyond its own powers of execution, and it is not surprising to find its capacity for suggestion attractive to the methods of the various arts. Whether or not, therefore, the sketch is received as a finished work of art, there are certain qualities that have always been recognized as germane to the form, and these qualities have to do with fleeting impressions and transient moments.

The sketch in itself seems paradoxical: it assumes that the mood it captures or evokes, though fleeting, is somehow more complete than that of a more long-winded piece of prose, or an elaborately worked painting--yet,

at the same time it demonstrates, necessarily, its own incompleteness. This is a paradox that cannot be truly resolved, which, in part, helps to make the sketch the enigmatic thing that it is. But, the form of the sketch is also appealing to the artist who is aware of how often life does seem to be just a collection of random, fleeting, half-seen moments. A writer very different from Virginia Woolf, G. K. Chesterton, identifies the short story as a form congenial to the modern spirit for precisely this reason: "it is not an accident of form; it is a sign of a real sense of fleetingness and fragility; it means that existence is only an impression, and, perhaps, only an illusion. . . . We have no instinct of anything ultimate and enduring beyond the episode".<sup>1</sup>

Chesterton writes this in 1906; sixteen years later Virginia Woolf conveys the same thoughts in a letter to Gerald Brennan:

The human soul, it seems to me, orientates itself afresh every now and then. It is doing so now. No one can see it whole, therefore. The best of us catch a glimpse of a nose, a shoulder, something turning away, always in movement. Still, it seems better to me to catch this glimpse, than to sit down with Hugh Walpole, Wells, etc. etc. and make large oil paintings of fabulous fleshy monsters complete from top to toe. 2

Restated here, Virginia Woolf's conviction in temporal progress as a succession of alterations and not of profound changes, seems to imply that there is, nevertheless, a state of being that is ideal and constant: because the artist is incapable of realizing this whole, therefore his art necessarily must be one that accepts

itself as a fragmented approximation, and he may draw upon a technique that could be regarded as sketch-like. Far from being a defeated form, however, the sketch does seem to possess to Virginia Woolf a peripheral vision in which larger significance can be sensed obliquely:

. . . the truth is, one can't write directly about the soul. Looked at, it vanishes: but look at the ceiling, at Grizzle [her dog], at the cheaper beasts in the Zoo which are exposed to walkers in Regents Park, & the soul slips in. 3

Regardless of the estimation of the form itself, therefore, whatever respect the sketch has been accorded in history, and even now, lies in its success in handling transitory subjects with a characteristic light touch. One of the earliest critics to single out the sketch from other works of art is Denis Diderot writing on the Salon of 1767, where it is for just this reason of evocative spontaneity that the sketch is singled out for praise:

Why does a good sketch please us more than a good picture? It is because there is in it more life and less defined forms. As forms become more accurately defined life departs. . . . a sketch is the work of enthusiasm and genius, and the picture is the result of industry and patience. . . . Perhaps one reason why we are strongly attracted by a sketch is that being undefined it leaves our imagination free to see what we like in it. 4

Diderot is ahead of his time in his appreciation of the sketch, discerning those qualities for which the sketch was to be valued increasingly throughout the next century and a half. If the sketch rose in critical



estimation partly in reaction to what was regarded more and more as lifeless and over-elaborate Victorian art, then Diderot was arguing for freshness and inspiration already in the ornamental world of late-rococo France, criticizing Boucher with words that are just as applicable to the "fabulous fleshy monsters" of the late nineteenth century: "The eye finds no resting place among so many objects, each carefully reproduced and calling for attention. There is no atmosphere, no repose. . . . Must a writer say everything that comes into his head? Must a painter paint everything that he sees?"<sup>5</sup> In the midst of such profusion "life departs", writes Diderot-- these difficulties defy time, and Virginia Woolf wrestles with the same problem when she writes that the life of the soul in her art lives delicately only within the limits of her glimpse of "something turning away, always in movement".

It can be accepted, then, that a sketch will always display to a greater or lesser degree, aspects of indirectness or ambiguity, and it can be assumed, too, that the subject of the illusion will often seem to be abstract, emotional, impressionistic, momentary, or as Diderot writes, an invitation to the imagination. These aspects have not gone unnoticed in Virginia Woolf's sketches--indeed, they are the criteria for which her sketches usually are appreciated, and, so far as it goes, it is quite right to read her short pieces as "sketches" in this sense.<sup>6</sup> However, to qualify her impressionistic sketch in the way that David Daiches

explains as "simply a study in impressionism, . . . no more a finished work than a painter's preliminary study of a hand or an arm is a finished portrait",<sup>7</sup> is to overlook another basic assumption that is made already by Diderot with reference to the Salon pictures. Implicit in Diderot's criticism is the idea that art is not necessarily better by virtue of size, finish, or the amount of time spent on it; only the acceptance of this premise can complete the change in critical perspective to include a new appreciation of subtlety and enigma such as is seen in the arts of late-Victorian and Edwardian England.

Virginia Woolf's ability to shed the constraints of conventional proportion is part of the same Aesthetic tendency that encouraged the Decadents to flout all sense of proportion, and that ultimately leads to the modern willingness to suspend outside reference for the sake of the abstract world of the art itself. "There is", Virginia Woolf writes, "no universal scale of values. . . . It is all a question of one's point of view"<sup>8</sup>--a position which owes both its justification and previous reference to Pater's "relative spirit" in which "nothing is, or can rightly be known, except relatively and under conditions".<sup>9</sup> She reads the historian Froude, who compares the size of Elizabethan ships to the average modern yacht, but her imaginative reading of Froude's historical facts is purely Paterian in its method and spirit:

The ships, Froude says, were no bigger than a modern English yacht. As they shrink and assume the romantic proportions of the Elizabethan ship, so the sea runs enormously larger and freer with bigger waves upon it than the sea of our time. . . . For directly England and the coast of France are beneath the horizon, the ships swim into the unfamiliar, the air has its voices, the sea its lions and serpents, evaporations of fire and tumultuous whirlpools. The clouds but sparely hide the Divinity; the limbs of Satan are almost visible. 10

Such dependence of proportion upon the relative spirit renders it irrelevant whether (as Virginia Woolf writes elsewhere) "one prefers a raindrop to the river Thames".<sup>11</sup> Perhaps what Daiches considers a sketch cannot attain to the complete person that he expects from a visually finished portrait, but the complete personality can be preserved nevertheless in such abstracted figurations as Lily Briscoe's purple triangle of Mrs. Ramsay, or Vanessa Bell's portrait of her sister Virginia, immediately recognizable in spite of being featureless.<sup>12</sup> Daiches' sentiments that the sketch is "no more a finished work than a painter's preliminary study of a hand or an arm is a finished portrait", echoed by Joan Bennett ("in these tales, as in the sketches of a great painter, we can observe the characteristic method"<sup>13</sup>), do not consider that a hand or an arm could very well convey the subject in its own way as wholly as is represented in the conventional portrait. Indeed, it is clear in Orlando, that a hand is all that is needed to convey the personage of Queen Elizabeth complete with the spirit of her reign:

It was a memorable hand; a thin hand with long fingers always curling as if round orb or sceptre; a nervous, crabbed, sickly hand; a commanding hand too; a hand that had only to raise itself for a head to fall; a hand, he guessed, attached to an old body that smelt like a cupboard in which furs are kept in camphor; which body was yet caparisoned in all sorts of brocades and gems; and held itself very upright though perhaps in pain from sciatica; and never flinched though strung together by a thousand fears; and the Queen's eyes were light yellow. All this he felt as the great rings flashed in the water and then something pressed his hair--which, perhaps, accounts for his seeing nothing more likely to be of use to a historian. 14

All this from one hand: it may not be of historical use, but surely the great Queen herself is present in the flash of her jewels? The sketch that Virginia Woolf writes in response to "a glimpse of a nose, a shoulder, something turning away", does not aspire to life-like recreation any more than a Symbol acquires its significance through verisimilitude to subject.

At the same time, therefore, as it is established that the sketch draws upon transience and suggestion for its material, there must be the corollary understanding that, in principle, a sketch does not adopt its brief form in direct imitation of its subject matter: there are no immediate, logical connections between fleeting images and moments, evocative style, abbreviated form, and the actual conditions and process of creating a sketch. It is the tendency to equate these matters that is the most common misapprehension concerning the sketch, and which prevents the resolution of the general confusion over its exact nature and place in art and literature. Even Diderot anticipates this pitfall when he writes that

"a sketch is the work of enthusiasm and genius, and the picture is the result of industry and patience". If only as a matter of logic, why necessarily should there be a polarization of inspiration and hard work? And, in practice, even if such a distinction is made, there is no ready guarantee that one work of art is better than another simply by virtue of genius and enthusiasm. Diderot's is essentially a false distinction, for a sketch can be an uninspired scribble as easily as an elaborate painting can be a masterpiece of genius. Furthermore, it is erroneous to assume that the sketch is always the product of hurried execution; in literature especially, such as the vers libre poems of Mallarmé or, for that matter, the sketches of Virginia Woolf, every word has been chosen and placed with rigorous attention to meaning, syntax and rhythm--so that, while the writer does not "say everything that comes into his head", yet the creative process is still an elimination of surplusage as painstakingly slow as any slavish reproduction of everything within the artist's sight.

Diderot subscribes to a kind of "myth of spontaneity"--the artist in the white-heat of inspiration--which assumes that not only does a work of art spring full-blown from its creator's forehead, but also that it is a mark of excellence that it should do so. Behind this assumption lies a fundamental confidence in the capacity of the sketch to capture successfully an aspect of fleeting reality. Though "reality" may be different for each individual--so much Diderot admits with his claim for

the freedom of the imagination--nevertheless, he believes that it is possible, with implication and allusion, to recreate the moment intact for the viewer or reader. Thus, though its form may be incomplete, the sketch can function in the wholeness of artistic vision: the sketches of Constable, Turner, and the Impressionists record the transience of external nature in their renderings of clouds, mist, water and light, but although their technique may be equally hurried, at no time does such volatility of subject and method shake confidence in the substance of vision itself. With so much emphasis upon genius, there is assumed a simultaneity of sight and identification for both the artist and reader/viewer; indeed, were the simultaneity of this correspondence not achieved, the sketch would be judged a failure for its inability to confront the impermanent and fragile moment of certain external effects.

The confusion of issues relating to the quality and substance of subject matter, with those of form and the actual technique of the sketch itself, is not helped by the fact that the short story became increasingly popular contemporaneously with the experiments made in sketch writing. Both the short story and the sketch are, of course, related genres which arise from a common reaction to certain aesthetic matters for similarly aesthetic reasons, but the impulse to connect the two forms, on

closer examination, is never really based on anything more valid than the similarity they share in being short. Thus, the sketch is interpreted variously as simply a specialized version of the short story; either as a kind of literary impressionism, or the development of a purely 'Nineties style, or then again as a form that is either specifically psychological, or an example of the Lyric in prose.

The number of times that the sketch is singled out in aesthetic theory, is very few indeed. Diderot's early remark is interesting, but it is made incidentally and is nothing like a manifesto heralding the advent of a new form. Such proclamations are saved for the short story alone, and often it is in these that claims are made which seem better suited to describe the sketch rather than the short story. J. Brander Matthews is the self-acknowledged pioneer philosopher of the short story, publishing an Appendix to the 1901 reissue of an essay which first appeared in 1887, and in which he states that:

So far as the author is aware, he had no predecessor in asserting that the Short-story differs from the Novel essentially,--and not merely in the matter of length. So far as he knows, it was in the present paper the suggestion was first made that the Short-story is in reality a genre, a separate kind, a genus by itself. 15

Matthews' essay is important as being, apart from the implications for the short story made by Poe in "The Poetic Principle", the first vigorous and conscious defence of the short story in literary criticism. More important, however, is the way in which he goes about making his claim: "A true Short-story is something other

and something more than a mere story which is short".<sup>16</sup>

By deliberately playing down the most obvious characteristic, Matthews indicates a willing sensitivity to the more subtle features of impression unified with style, and his is the attitude towards, and definition of the short story that is repeated by every one of the form's early theorists. The opening sentence of Henry Harland's article on the short story in The Academy Fiction Supplement reads as an echo of Matthews ("by the short story, one does not mean the story that is merely short") and his conclusion is no more original for defining that the writer's "difficulty will be to present his impression in the briefest space in which it can be presented without losing any of its significance or any of its beauty".<sup>17</sup> Clayton Hamilton summarizes the short story in one conclusive sentence, which he claims "has subsequently been repeated in nearly every book that deals with this subject": "The aim of a short story is to produce a single narrative effect with the greatest economy of means that is consistent with the utmost emphasis".<sup>18</sup>

And finally, although Henry Seidel Canby believes that the dearth of criticism on the short story makes it "necessary in his book to blaze, for the first time, the path of its development", nevertheless, his is not a new interpretation either: "It is the short narrative used for life-units, where only brevity and the consequent unified impression would serve, that becomes the short story".<sup>19</sup>



The spirit of early short story theory, of which these four critics are a representative example, is quite remarkable for its sensitivity to the organic interdependence between the structural elements and the overall impression of a short story. Matthews' and his contemporaries' analysis of the short story gives it an emphasis which easily places it into that arena of modern fiction which is accepted as being concerned with psychological truth, and for this reason alone their position should anticipate naturally the coming achievements of novelists such as Joyce and Woolf. At the same time, to read these critics is to be perplexed as to whether they understand the application of their theory in the way that it would seem to imply with the advantage of hindsight. Certainly, they seem sensitive enough to the organic and impressionistic qualities of the modern short story, but their choice of illustration has quite the opposite effect: Kipling and Stevenson are the writers most often mentioned, along with such other minor or long-forgotten names as Harte, Cable, Hale, Besant, Perkins, Stockton and Aldrich, to name a few. If one were to conduct one's reading of short stories solely from the examples chosen by these four critics, one would derive an erroneous impression of modern fictional method in short prose. It is, of course, easy to criticize in the knowledge that by 1920 such pieces were being published and written as Virginia Woolf's "The Mark on the Wall", "Kew Gardens", "Monday or Tuesday", or "Blue and Green", but it is nevertheless a feature of

early short story criticism and theory that in spite of considerable sensitivity to poetic effects and a tendency to make much of impressionistic qualities, it imparts neither significance to, nor a sense of the direction in which this kind of short writing was developing.

The fundamental inconsistency in early short story theory ultimately derives from critical assumptions similar to those made by David Daiches, Bernard Balckstone and Jean Guiget in their assessment of the sketches and short stories of Virginia Woolf. For all his insistence that the short story is a lyric and not anecdotal form, Brander Matthews disagrees with Zola's prediction that the novelist in the future will not have to concern himself with plot, and announces his decision: "What you have to tell is of greater interest than how you tell it".<sup>20</sup> Yet, the very nature of lyricism--its evocation of mood and atmosphere--depends equally upon the manner in which the form is used, as well as the subject. Matthews' point rules out the possibility that the subject of a story could consist entirely of the way in which it is told.

Clayton Hamilton reasons with Arnold's dictum "to see life steadily and to see it whole", and comes to the conclusion that the short story falls into the first category, and novels, into the second: "It follows that the novelist requires an experience of life far more extensive than that which is required by the writer of short stories. . . . Steadiness of vision is a quality of mind quite distinct from the ability to see things whole".<sup>21</sup>

Still another early critic whose interpretation is flawed with an inherently false distinction, is Bliss Perry, who can seem sensitive enough even to accommodate the most extreme literary experiment:

The nature of the short story is such that both characters and action may be almost without significance, provided the atmosphere--the place and time--the background--is artistically portrayed. . . .

. . . it allows a man to make use of the vaguest suggestions, a delicate symbolism, a poetic impression, fancies too tenuous to hold in the stout texture of the novel. Wide is the scope of the art of fiction; it includes even this borderland of dreams. 22

Perry seems to point the way towards an understanding of the sketch, but the judgement that completes his analysis of the short story, by implication, could never grant the sketch the integrity necessary for its independence as a literary form:

The novelist has his theory of this general scheme of things which enfolds us all, and he cannot write his novel without betraying his theory. . . . But the short story writer . . . need be nothing of the sort. He deals *not* with wholes, but with fragments; . . . His story may be . . . the merest sketch of a face, a comic attitude, a tragic incident; it may be a lovely dream, or a horrible nightmare, or a page of words that haunt us like music. Yet he need not be consistent; he need not think things through. 23

Perry in turn-of-the-century America may not have been familiar with an art of fragment such as that of Mallarmé, but his attitude needs more than just concrete example to rid itself of the condescension in the proposal that an artist who deals in fragments "need not think things through". There are more things in Mallarmé's philosophy

than are dreamt of by Perry, and although the unceasing round of daily activity in a sketch like "Monday or Tuesday" gives the "story" an arbitrary rather than dramatic direction, still, there is a sense of "the general scheme of things which enfolds us all" more powerful in this sketch than it is in many longer novels with entire successions of days.

The kind of theory that bases its assumptions on a comparison between the short story and the novel, as do Matthews, Hamilton and Perry, necessarily must conduct its criticism by the standards of one against the other--in the same way that Daiches, Blackstone and Guiget are seen to hold the stories and sketches of Virginia Woolf up against her own novels. Matthews' emphatic claim, therefore, that "A true Short-story is something other and something more than a mere story which is short" does not follow up its implied promise to establish the artistic and theoretic independence of the form in its own right. In order to do so, there can be no inherent difference between the vision of a writer when composing a novel, and his vision when writing a story. The novelist's "general scheme of things which enfolds us all" does not depend upon the number of pages in a book; his vision is a subjective one, and surveys all things equally through the design of his art, be it a sketch, a story, or a novel. The same error is found in its reverse form in Diderot's reasoning that a sketch is intrinsically superior to an elaborate painting because it somehow manages to convey a more convincing idea of

"reality": this sort of judgement by comparison holds no relevance for the sketch, whose very form takes for granted the assumption that there is neither a common scale of apprehension for experience, nor a conventional sense of proportion in art.

It is this kind of inconsistency in early short story criticism that has had a subsequent effect on the way that the sketch is read and understood. There is not an immediate connection between the sketch and the short story, but because from the very beginning there was a marked sympathy for (in Perry's words) "the vaguest suggestions, a delicate symbolism, a poetic impression", there was established in the method of short prose criticism a certain allowance for what is regarded as a sketch. Furthermore, because there already seemed to exist in the critical method a language capable of dealing with the obscurity of the sketch, it is therefore not surprising that the sketch has never been properly distinguished from the short story either as a separate genre, or in terms of its own aesthetic theory.

The curious nature of early short story criticism in being able to appreciate a tendency towards abstraction that was really quite radical for its time, without recognizing the true examples of this tendency in literature and the implications thereof, has much to do with the influence of the 'Nineties upon the arts. Again, the sketch and the short story are associated with each other in the fin-de-siècle taste for an

arcane and suggestive style of literary impressionism, concurrent with the rising popularity of the short story form especially after 1880. H. G. Wells' self-acclaimed debt to "those Yellow Book and National Observer people" for alerting him to the organic qualities of the short story as "whole and complete like a living thing"<sup>24</sup> is more than a little responsible for the general confusion that places the literature of the Aesthetes and the Decadents, various examples of short story and sketch writing, and the oblique narratives of certain early modern novels into an arena of common influence without first distinguishing some very important differences.<sup>25</sup>

Osbert Burdett's statement that the short story is "the most popular form that the Beardsley period touched . . . [and] one of its achievements that posterity overlooks undeservedly", is an interpretation critically accepted early on in the twentieth century:<sup>26</sup> by including the 'Nineties in the scope of short story criticism and theory, there is added to those sketch-like qualities already perceived by Matthews and Perry, yet more significance with the weight of a definite French Symbolist and English Aesthetic tradition.<sup>27</sup> Mallarmé and Pater are recognized influences upon the short story in early studies such as those by Bernard Muddiman and Blaikie Murdoch, although the development of this influence remains acknowledged rather than analyzed.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, the fact that from the beginning of short story criticism there has been present not only a sensitivity to a near-abstract prose style, but also the awareness of a precedent for this style

in the various forms of Symbolist literature, raises the expectation that the sketch would be appreciated for its own sake apart from any similarities it may share with the short story.

Certainly, the extreme self-consciousness of the sketch as an art form, is a quality to which the sensitive reader in the decades around the turn of the century could not have been blind. One of the best historical analyses of the short story, and also one of the most recent, is Valerie Shaw's book, in which she writes that "only towards the end of the nineteenth century, when in fact all branches of literature and the arts were becoming acutely self-conscious, did people begin to acknowledge that short fiction might be shaped according to its own principles";<sup>29</sup> her claim is both illustrated and supported by Holbrook Jackson, whose 1913 study of the 'Nineties is not only one of the first critical works to have appeared after that decade, but is also one that is tolerant of its excesses and sympathetic to its claims. He defends the writers of the eighteen-nineties from the charge of decadence by countering with precisely this issue of consciousness, and asks, "What, after all, is human consciousness when compared with Nature but a perversity-- the self turning away from Nature to contemplate itself?".<sup>30</sup>

Like Muddiman and Murdoch, Holbrook Jackson pays tribute to the influence of France, and is even astute enough to recognize that this French influence "survives today in the development of the decorative arts among the Post-Impressionists";<sup>31</sup> yet, his analysis never conquers

the subjectivity that he says is a 'Nineties hallmark, but remains subjectively vague itself with a conclusion that does not go beyond the "individual preference as the surest guide to the fine arts and the bigger and more difficult art of life".<sup>32</sup>

If the legacy of Mallarmé and Pater is the consciousness of exact expression, then indeed it is not at all clear that Muddiman, Murdoch, or Holbrook Jackson understand that tradition which they claim gave rise to the true short story. A certain conciseness of climactic effect such as is seen in the stories of Stevenson and Kipling, or the more atmospheric touches of mood that are typical of stories by Symons or Crackanthorpe, are no more similar to the rigorously disciplined craft of Pater or Mallarmé than the short story is to the sketch by virtue of its length. Thus, although Bernard Muddiman writes that in the eighteen-nineties "the short story came into its own", and that the decade saw the popularity of all things short, from "the small black and white drawing" to the "one act play", it is not the Mallarméan brevity that arises from precision, which he has in mind.<sup>33</sup> In the end, Muddiman stumbles upon the fallacy of proportion, for he, too, compares the story writer to the novelist, and considers that, far from strenuous exercise, it is lack of "staying power" that prevents the short story form from achieving the effects of the novel: "the art of the nineties was essentially an expression of moods--and moods, after all, are such evanescent brief conditions".<sup>34</sup>



To single out "mood" as a literary quality is not necessarily to stray into the amorphous regions of generality; in the absence of plot, mood becomes predominant in shaping the work and giving it the direction in which it can be read. However, in the way that the criticism of Matthews or Perry is at odds with the stories that they choose as representative examples, so those critics who attend to the aesthetic concerns of the eightennineties, are not able to combine their analysis in theory with practical textual reading.

Blaikie Murdoch appreciates that the art of the nineteenth century developed variously from the Romantic poets, through movements such as Impressionism and Symbolism in France, and Pre-Raphaelitism in England, until in the last decade it became concerned with "moods and moments", "shades of thought and emotion", "strange, fleeting sensations", and "passing atmospheric conditions";<sup>35</sup> yet, instead of clarifying, his interpretation has the effect of circumventing his meaning. Murdoch's historical account proves to be nothing more than a gloss if he distils a century of literary and artistic influence into the conclusion that Arthur Symons "is pre-eminently the subtle and delicate poet of his movement and period, if not the most subtle and delicate English poet since the Renaissance of Wonder" (i.e. the Romantic Movement).<sup>36</sup>

Arthur Symons is a rather interesting figure in the midst of this fin-de-siècle aesthetic activity. With works such as "The Decadent Movement in Literature" and The Symbolist Movement in Literature he is one of those

rare critics whose writings confirm contemporaneously (or near-contemporaneously) the direction of movements that are generally understood only in fuller retrospect; as such, he is--in England--one of the true shaping spirits of his time. However, for all that Symons is a penetrating critic, when it comes to his own attempts at creative writing there is an anomaly between theory and practice as curious as that of early short story criticism in which the text somehow does not correspond with the place given to it by a larger critical interpretation.

Symons is aware of the problem when it is isolated in theory:

All art hates the vague; not the mysterious, but the vague; two opposites very commonly confused, as the secret with the obscure, the infinite with the indefinite. 37

His simple distinction easily makes it clear that because qualities of mood and fleeting experience are never read by the early short story critics as anything other than expressions of the vague, it is inevitable that their critical method should remain similarly imprecise and oblivious to the effects of an art in which meaning is manifested deliberately in its most spare form. The nature of this "vagueness" is best understood by analyzing a poem by Symons himself, as one example of what is acclaimed by Blaikie Murdoch as the supreme achievement of "subtlety and delicacy" in late nineteenth century English literature:

"At Dieppe: Grey and Green"

Intermezzo and Pastorale: III

To Walter Sickert

The grey-green stretch of sandy grass,  
Indefinitely desolate;  
A sea of lead, a sky of slate;  
Already autumn in the air, alas!

One stark monotony of stone,  
The long hotel, acutely white,  
Against the after-sunset light  
Withers grey-green, and takes the grass's tone.

Listless and endless it outlies,  
And means, to you and me, no more  
Than any pebble on the shore,  
Or this indifferent moment as it dies. 38

This poem well illustrates Hugh Kenner's criticism that, "Symons is using the darkness as an excuse for leaving things out, as on other occasions he and his allies used mist or twilight".<sup>39</sup> The title itself already displays an over-evocativeness which sinks under its own verbosity into meaninglessness--instead of the meaningfulness Symons intends with his rather contrived allusions to painting, music and literature. The mood of melancholy conjured up by the juxtaposition of faded colours, and the vague unsettlement of the foreign location; the artfulness of the poem both as an intermezzo and a pastorale (but what is the point of the relation?), as well as the enigmatic gravity of the numeral III; the dedication to Sickert that both assumes the air of ceremony as well as an admission into a select aesthetic company: compared to Ezra Pound's poem, "In a Station of the Metro", that is composed similarly of details, and in which the

title is also a crucial part of the reading, Symons' epithets are merely a case of wanting his cake without baking it first.\* And, indeed, the poem confirms the insufficiencies set up by its title: the scarcity of verbs, and the fact that what few there are, are in the present tense, puts the onus of supporting the action of the poem onto the words and structure; they must prove their own worth in a way that would usually be granted in part by the completed significance of the past tense. But Symons does not work his adjectives and nouns with sufficient rigour: the poem quickly degenerates into syllabic run-on ("indefinitely desolate"), stock images and phrases ("a sea of lead, a sky of slate"), superfluous interjections ("alas!" or "you and me"), and the rhythm founders for no reason ("Withers grey-green, and takes the grass's tone"), to the effect that the poem dies as indifferently as the moment it attempts so weakly to describe.

The weakness inherent in this poem is a hazard of the method that does not extend its aesthetic reasoning beyond matters of style. If, as Murdoch claims, Symons is the master of the 'Nineties in literature, then he is writing still as part of the Aesthetic movement; and if the true sense of "Aesthetic" derives from the Greek for "to perceive", then the best works of the Aesthetic movement rightly

\* "In a Station of the Metro"

The apparition of these faces in a crowd;  
Petals on a wet, black bough.

From Imagist Poetry, ed. Peter Jones (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 95.

should be recognized as formal expressions of nothing less than the artist's perception, rather than as stylistic devices arranged merely for the sake of effect. In "Dieppe: Grey and Green" Symons does not take responsibility for the fact that, more than being a descriptive technique, his poem is his own vision manifested in a specific way. His failure to realize this in the poem is both the cause and nature of its softness, and so its supposed significant mystery remains, in reality, only simple vagueness.

When, therefore, early critics such as Brander Matthews or Bliss Perry single out sketch-like features of the short story, and even if, like Bernard Muddiman and Osbert Burdett, they relate these qualities to issues of the 1880's and 1890's, their analysis is never conducted under any other consideration than that of style. On the other hand, if the sketch as it is practised, for example, in the visual art of the Impressionists, is accepted precisely because passing moments are described as insubstantially in words as they are reflected in painted water, then there is little reason for critics to see beyond the surface effect of the sketch in either art or literature.

The interpretation that in this way bases itself mainly upon style assumes that in either the sketch or the sketch-like short story, not only can the quick

impression be recalled, but also that it can be reproduced in art through exterior manner alone. Thus, it is not surprising that a literary form which is regarded as a complete representation in art of that which is incomplete in reality, should inspire the writing of practical handbooks giving instructions on how to produce an effective short story, dramatic or atmospheric. Although these books present themselves as additions to the body of early short story criticism, their "how to" approach is but thinly disguised by theory: the assumption that the correspondence between vision and reality can be achieved directly in an art form, finds it easy to accept that a short story can be defined by formula and, again, such instruction can only refer to matters of style.<sup>40</sup>

By the middle of the second decade of the twentieth century, manuals of short story writing grew fewer as the form received new attention in a different way: the annual "best of" collections that were to prove popular until the 1930's. In these anthologies the importance of the short story as style is reinforced still further by the inevitability that "style" is the one criterion for elimination and choice that is most easily understood and least objectionable to a wide range of the reading public.

It is apparent in these collections that the predominance of style in short story appreciation encourages the critic to conduct his analysis according to the divisions suggested by different stylistic qualities.

Henry James, in 1898, was aware already that there can be two general kinds of short stories:

the one with which we are most familiar is that of the detached incident, single and sharp, as clear as a pistol-shot; the other, of rarer performance, is that of the impression, comparatively generalised--simplified, foreshortened, reduced to a particular perspective--of a complexity or continuity. 41

The sensitivity of James' distinction, however, becomes an imposed categorization if it is by style alone that short stories are sorted into groups. In the prefaces to annual short story anthologies particularly, the generality of Henry James' incident/impression dualism has been transformed into rigidly polarized stylistic affinities. These can be determined by an English (European)/American dichotomy, as followed by Edward O'Brien or Bliss Perry in the "best of" collections of 1915 and 1925,<sup>42</sup> but more often it is the division suggested by James that is carried out, according to dramatic or psychological type.<sup>43</sup> More importantly, it is this general tendency to counter the psychological short story with the kind that is more dramatic, that again perpetuates the neglect of the sketch as an independent literary form. After all, as far as style is concerned, the psychological short story and the abstract or impressionistic sketch are very similar indeed, and there would seem to be no reason to differentiate between the two. Even when the sketch is noticed in such recent criticism as Ian Reid's contribution to the Critical Idiom series, it is qualified immediately as a

"tributary form", in just these terms of psychological versus dramatic effects: the sketch is about conditions, the story concerns events; the former is descriptive and "virtually static" whereas the latter follows a line of action and is dramatic.<sup>44</sup>

It is a distinction neither easily nor usually made, therefore, that while the sketch may be plotless and atmospheric, is is so not for reasons of style, and still less for any resemblance it may bear to the stylistic qualities of the psychological short story.

A typical example of literary practice that limits itself to the psychological and the dramatic, is the explanation given for the choice of stories that make up Georgian Stories 1922:

"Georgian Stories" is published in the hope that the art of the short story is once again coming into its own. . . . those who have followed with interest the fortunes of the English short story must have noticed a slow but steady revival of interest in this fascinating form of literary Art. More good short stories are being written today than when Mr. Wells raised his lament for the lost glories of the nineties. . . .

"Georgian Stories" is not the work of any one school; it is not a manifesto of the ultra modern. The editor's preferences are rather for the old-fashioned story with a dramatic plot and a surprise curtain than for the modern subtle and psychological study of emotions. Both types, however, have their charm, and both types of story will be found in these pages. 45

Georgian Stories, together with the Best of British Short Stories series, continued to appear throughout the twenties (the former was discontinued after 1927) in much the same spirit as its editor proclaimed in 1922. Of course,



such collections ultimately remain as representative surveys of popular taste--most of the writers chosen are now either recognizable only to the specialist, or forgotten altogether--but nevertheless, their implications for short story writing and criticism set up by psychological/dramatic alternatives, did not go unnoticed even at the time. John Middleton Murry reviewed Georgian Stories 1922 for the Nation and Athenaeum, and proves that there did exist, contemporaneously, critical attitudes which saw through surface style and went beyond standards based on formula rather than applied reading: "an anthology of short stories is not a magazine, and the editor who tries to make one by rule of thumb is bound to fail. He is bound to judge by accidental, and not by essential qualities".<sup>46</sup>

Murry's criticism allows each literary form a separate identity without making the comparisons by which the merits of one form become the failures of another; in this, he is correcting exactly Diderot's assumptions that a sketch is superior to a full painting because there is more life in its enthusiasm for the moment:

. . . anyone who goes about dividing stories into these two classes is bound to miss the essential, which is "interestingness" or vividness of presentation. A study of emotions can be as dramatic in the same way, as a story with a "strong" plot; and a story with "a dramatic plot and a surprise curtain" can be just as dull as a psychological short story where the author fails to present the emotion he records. 47

The point here is that every form is self-determined by its own intrinsic merits; but, as long as these "essential qualities" are overlooked in favour of those that are "accidental" (i.e., to do with style alone), there will be no real individual appreciation of any kind of short story, be it psychological or dramatic--or, therefore, even a sketch.

Thus, Middleton Murry is justified in his complaint that Georgian Stories, by not representing the kinds of stories being written, gives no sense of the possibilities currently being explored in short prose: "The 'London Mercury' lately printed a story by Mr. Ernest Bramah which was better than all the stories in this book save three. . . A year ago it contained a story by Mrs. Virginia Woolf, which was also far superior to most of these".<sup>48</sup> Although the reviews of "Kew Gardens" and Monday or Tuesday had been favourable and sensitive,<sup>49</sup> Murry is the first not only to consider Virginia Woolf's stories and sketches in the light of short story writing in general, but also he is the first to perceive how the modern short story could proceed in the direction set up by her work. Certainly, Virginia Woolf was aware of Murry's opinion, and was sufficiently amused by it to present no objection in her diary: "Yes, Murry actually goes out of his way to drag in my name with moderate praise today".<sup>50</sup>

It is no surprise that Murry's advice went unheeded by the editors of Georgian Stories; of those writers whose work has endured, Forster, Lawrence, Mansfield and

Maugham are included, but no story by Virginia Woolf ever appeared in the annual collections. For the purposes of these surveys, her work is perhaps too individual, in the way that prompted the reviewer of Monday or Tuesday to confess that "In the more extreme experiments there is nothing I can appreciate but the flexibility and beauty of Mrs. Woolf's prose: I do not in the least know what they mean."<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, the standards by which the "best of" books made their choice, were not confined to such surveys alone; the period was one that also favoured lists of all important short writing to date in supposedly thorough indexes, and Virginia Woolf's name is notably absent from these as well.

Such an index is Ina Ten Eyck Firkins' Index to Short Stories which appeared first in 1923, and later with supplements in 1929 and 1936. It is intended as a scholarly work, and includes both American and English authors equally.<sup>52</sup> Firkins explains that the criteria for inclusion do not consider those authors whose stories have been published in magazines alone, "except in a few instances where a single story is of some special interest"-- Virginia Woolf is exempt from this category, having brought out Monday or Tuesday in 1921, but even in magazines such as the London Mercury her story is of "special interest" at least to Middleton Murry. Firkins continues, that "the rule has been to include the work of no American or English author unless he has had published by a reputable publishing house, at least one volume of collected stories"; perhaps the Hogarth Press was not yet

considered reputable enough (although Firkins does include Katherine Mansfield, whose "Prelude" was first published in 1917 by the Hogarth Press). But, even if the stories of Virginia Woolf had somehow escaped Firkins' notice, surely the following provision makes it reasonable to expect that she would have known of Virginia Woolf's work: "[a]lapse in literary discrimination is to be found in the inclusion of many short sketches which are not, in the strict sense, stories. . . . it is often difficult to tell whether the sketch should be classed as a short story or as a descriptive narrative".

This Preface is repeated word for word in the revised Index of 1929, where there is still no mention of Virginia Woolf; it is only by 1936 that she is put in, and even so, because "in one or two instances the magazine stories of a contemporary writer whose work in other fields is of current interest have been indexed in order that anyone interested in a complete survey of his work may readily find the stories".<sup>53</sup> At this time, then, Firkins specifies Virginia Woolf's stories as: "Dr. Burney's Evening Party", "The New Dress", and "An Unwritten Novel", and these are listed as having appeared only in insignificant contemporary anthologies.

Short story criticism in the first decades of the twentieth century, therefore, continues the curiously handicapped vision of Brander Matthews and Bliss Perry which almost manages to embrace its subject, but gets caught up instead in the surface effects of style. A critic contemporary with Virginia Woolf, for example,

is A. C. Ward, whose work on the short story (1924), is conducted in a spirit that seems very tolerant and sensitive indeed. He blames the reader's own "sluggish perception" for any objection "made against a particular type of short story on the ground that it has no plot and contains no action",<sup>54</sup> and his defence of the individual integrity of literary forms, by implication, takes the sketch into its account:

The legitimate function of criticism in relation to the impressionistic method is, however, to consider the degree of power instilled by the author into his work. . . . to say that the impressionistic style is less desirable than the descriptive or the dramatic--is mere evasion. A bootmaker is judged by the quality of his boots; he is not condemned because his wares are different in appearance from those of a neighbour who makes kettles. 55

Such observation proves Ward as capable as Middleton Murry of appreciating the undeniably impressionistic method of Virginia Woolf, although he does not include her in this particular study; that mention comes four years later in his survey of literature in general from 1901 to 1925:

Virginia Woolf is not so tedious as . . . [Joyce or Dorothy Richardson], though she is exasperatingly shapeless. Jacob's Room (1922) and Mrs. Dalloway (1925) are like snippets cut from a number of cinemaphotograph films and indiscriminately joined up. . . . Much of the "new fiction" is laborious to read, and impossible to re-read; it creates a distaste that can be removed only by turning to more normal writers. . . . By 1950 Dorothy Richardson will no doubt rest "quite, quite forgot" in company with Ethel M. Dell, and Virginia Woolf with E. M. Hull; while a novelist so little trumpeted as the author of Elizabeth and her German Garden may be among the survivors. 56

In 1925 the Times Literary Supplement published a leading article entitled "The Modern Short Story" in which, as in Ward's analysis, the modern novel is distinguished from its more conventional fictional relations; here, however, its fragmentation is not cause for confusion, but rather reminds the author that the short story is "an ideal form whose characteristic quality is indeed to be found in a few modern novels as well as in brief tales".<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, the author asks,

What could more eloquently testify to the dearth of formal criticism than the fact that we have no term by which to designate this short story quality? Of a narrative poem we are permitted to say, "This has (or has not) a powerful lyrical element." But we cannot say, without tiresome paradox, "Here is a novel rich in the quality of the short story." 58

The article describes this particular short story quality as the poetic emotion of a moment of illumination, which is achieved through an "unusual economy of diction and in a convention more austere than that of the novelist", and that is also suggestive, intense, and of a "tempo" different from that of the novel.<sup>59</sup>

Perhaps the contemporary reader of the article would recognize in this description the sketches, short stories and novels of Virginia Woolf, but again, these most obvious examples go unremarked. Whether her work is overlooked, therefore, or misinterpreted as it is by A. C. Ward, it is clear that at the time that Virginia Woolf was writing both her sketches and novels, there was no general understanding of the similarity between certain kinds of modern short stories and certain modern

novels: to agree with the Times Literary Supplement, that the novel was not able to break free from its conventional restrictions until the short story had proven first the worth of a psychological, lyrical, or near-abstract style, is as erroneous an assumption as that which believes Virginia Woolf incapable of having written her novels without the foregoing existence of Monday or Tuesday. On the other hand, not to make any relations at all between the "new fiction" and the modern short story, like A. C. Ward, is to misunderstand, again, the nature of the "modern" vision in literature.

The idea of a modern vision reintroduces the idea of the "Aesthetic": for, whatever inspiration modern literature derives from the achievements of a previous movement, is to be seen in both the novel and the short story alike, as forms that are equal in the intensity of perception. And, unless critical theory can separate the work of art itself from whatever its reference may be to external phenomena, there can be no real appreciation of art without considering the relation of its form to the nature of its subject matter.

From Diderot to recent short story criticism, therefore, the presence of the sketch or sketch-like in art has been received for precisely this reason: it is both the felicitous arrest of transient effects and sensations, and it is the vehicle for a certain quality

of experience that cannot be placed either in time or space. However, the inherent conflict in this view--disembodied art in the process of capturing that which is no longer there--is enough to shatter the already paradoxical sketch form into an aesthetic vacuum. In order to escape this conclusion, it is necessary to realize that, although the sketch is rather evanescent by nature, it is so not because it stylistically reflects its subject; rather, as a form that is truly Aesthetic, it reflects only the mutability and disconnectedness of perception itself, and for that reason it is incomplete. The sketch that, for Diderot, could fling out its net and catch some aspect of external experience, could never succeed in Virginia Woolf's vision of her world:

It is thus that we live, they say, driven by an unseizable force. They say that the novelists never catch it; that it goes hurtling through their nets and leaves them torn to ribbons. This, they say, is what we live by--this unseizable force. 60

In this way the sketch that is tamely suggestive of fitful reality has given way to an admission of chaos that cannot be got at in any lasting aesthetic form; at best, inconsistent reality is confronted by, but still coexistent with the aesthetic order of the sketch. The paradox, therefore, is no longer one of absence postulated through an insubstantial medium, but rather, that the sketch is both the assertion of its own creating vision in an art form, as well as its denial through inconfident self-consciousness. This paradox is at the heart of what can be termed the "Aesthetic"



sketch, and it goes a long way towards explaining the nature of the difficulty in the sketches of Virginia Woolf.

NOTES AND REFERENCES:CHAPTER THREE

<sup>1</sup> G. K. Chesterton, Charles Dickens (London: Methuen and Co., 1906), p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> Virginia Woolf, Letters II, No. 1337, p. 598. (December 25, 1922.)

<sup>3</sup> -----, Diary III, p. 62. (February 27, 1926.)

<sup>4</sup> Denis Diderot, "Extracts from 'Le Salon,' 1767," Diderot's thoughts on Art and Style, trans. Beatrix L. Tollemache (London: Remington and Co., 1893), p. 83.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>6</sup> It is not insignificant to give as examples two women who are themselves short story writers: Katherine Mansfield attempts to create an atmosphere appropriate to the subject in her review of "Kew Gardens", and commends it for "that vivid, disturbing beauty that haunts the air the last moment before sunset or the first moment after dawn", in Novels and Novelists, ed. J. M. Murry (London: Constable and Co., 1930), p. 36. Eudora Welty favours a similarly evocative description of Virginia Woolf's short story technique: "The scent, the gesture, the breath moving from the lips, the sound of the horn striking in the clock, the rippling texture of surface in running water and flowing air--all these things she sought with all her being to apprehend, for they were the palpable shadows and coloured reflections of the abstract world of the spirit, the matter that mirrored the reality". In: "The Reading and Writing of Short Stories," Atlantic Monthly, vol. 183, No. 3 (March, 1949), 47.

<sup>7</sup> David Daiches, Virginia Woolf (London: Editions Poetry, 1945), p. 46.

<sup>8</sup> Virginia Woolf, "A Sentimental Journey," New York Herald Tribune, 23 September, 1928; rpt. (slightly revised) in The Common Reader: Second Series, p. 81.

<sup>9</sup> Walter Pater, "Coleridge," Appreciations (London: Macmillan and Co., 1890), p. 65.

<sup>10</sup> Virginia Woolf, "Reading," The Captain's Death Bed, p. 147.

<sup>11</sup> -----, "Joseph Addison," Times Literary Supplement, 19 June, 1919; rpt. (slightly revised) as "Addison," The Common Reader, p. 144.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, reproductions of Virginia Woolf Seated (1912) in John Lehmann, Virginia Woolf and her World (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), p. 36; Virginia Woolf at Asheham (1912) in Richard Shone, Bloomsbury Portraits (Oxford: Phaidon, 1976), p. 93. Also: the detail of a portrait of Virginia Woolf on the cover of the paperback Mrs. Dalloway (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975).

<sup>13</sup> Joan Bennett, "Virginia Woolf," New Statesman and Nation, 26 February, 1944, p. 144.

<sup>14</sup> Virginia Woolf, Orlando, p. 23.

<sup>15</sup> J. Brander Matthews, The Philosophy of the Short Story (New York: Longman's, Green and Co., 1901), p. 77; incorporating "Short Stories," in The Saturday Review, 5 July, 1884, pp. 32-34, (which Matthews published anonymously); and "The Philosophy of the Short Story," in Lippincott's Magazine, October, 1885, pp. 366-374.

<sup>16</sup> Matthews, The Philosophy of the Short Story, p. 15.

<sup>17</sup> Henry Harland, "Concerning the Short Story,"  
The Academy Fiction Supplement, 5 June, 1897, p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Clayton Hamilton, Materials and Methods of Fiction  
(London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1918), p. 177.  
This is a revised edition; the book was first published  
in 1908, and reviewed by Virginia Woolf as "The Anatomy  
of Fiction," in the Athenaeum, 16 May, 1919, p. 331.

<sup>19</sup> Henry Seidel Canby, The Short Story in English  
(New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1909), v, xii.

<sup>20</sup> Matthews, The Philosophy of the Short Story, p. 34.

<sup>21</sup> Hamilton, Materials and Methods of Fiction, p. 184.

<sup>22</sup> Bliss Perry, A Study of Prose Fiction (New York:  
Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1903), pp. 313-314, 321-322.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 328.

<sup>24</sup> H. G. Wells, Intro. The Country of the Blind  
(London: The Golden Cockerell Press, 1939), p. 5.

<sup>25</sup> Wells' personal account of his literary development  
has been referred to regularly in twentieth century short  
story criticism, for e.g.: Holbrook Jackson, The Eighteen  
Nineties (London: Grant Richards Ltd., 1922; first pub. 1913),  
p. 228; Editor's Preface (Anon.), Georgian Stories 1922, p. 5;  
Osbert Burdett, The Beardsley Period (London: The Bodley  
Head, 1925), p. 232; W. C. Frierson, The English Novel in  
Transition 1885-1940 (New York: Cooper Square Publishing  
Inc., 1965; first pub. 1942), see ch. IV; Derek Stanford,  
ed., Short Stories of the 'Nineties (London: John Baker,  
1968), pp. 13-14; Valerie Shaw, The Short Story (London:  
Longman, 1983), p. 3.

<sup>26</sup> Osbert Burdett, The Beardsley Period. An Essay in Perspective (London: The Bodley Head, 1925), p. 233.

<sup>27</sup> In his Introduction to Short Stories of the 'Nineties (London: John Baker, 1968), p. 32, Derek Stanford's proclamation, that "The 'nineties can claim to have given birth to the atmospheric short story and novel as far as our own English culture is concerned", is representative of the general evaluation of the contribution made by the 1890's to literature; see also H. E. Bates, The Modern Short Story (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1941). Wendell Harris, in "English Short Fiction in the Nineteenth Century," Studies in Short Fiction, VI, No. 1 (1968), looks at Rossetti's influence upon Morris, Pater and Yeats (pp. 44-45); also at Realism and the Yellow Book short storyists (p. 68). The fragmentation of experience as represented in the Little Magazines is well documented by Ian Fletcher in "Decadence and the Little Magazines," Decadence and the 1890's, ed. Ian Fletcher, Stratford-Upon-Avon Studies 17 (London: Edward Arnold, 1979); this is also the subject of Lionel Stevenson's "The Short Story in Embryo," English Literature in Transition 1880-1920, XV, No. 4 (1972). Other particular fin-de-siècle influences upon the short story are listed by Helmut Gerber in The English Short Story in Transition 1880-1920 (New York: Pegasus, 1967), xii: Imperialism, the Little Englanders, decline of the Empire, Fabianism, increased mechanization, labour problems, urbanization, decline of agricultural economy, Darwin, Lamarck, T. H. Huxley, Herbert Spencer, Samuel Butler, pre-Freudian psychology, French Impressionism, and Wagner.

<sup>28</sup> Bernard Muddiman, The Men of the Nineties (London: Henry Danielson, 1920).

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<sup>29</sup> Valerie Shaw, The Short Story: A Critical Introduction (London: Longman, 1983), p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> Holbrook Jackson, The Eighteen Nineties (London: Grant Richards Ltd., 1922), p. 64. The book first appeared in 1913.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 269.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 271.

<sup>33</sup> Muddiman, The Men of the Nineties, pp. 62, 56.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>35</sup> Murdoch, The Renaissance of the Nineties, pp. 26-27.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>37</sup> Arthur Symons, "Maeterlinck as a Mystic," The Symbolist Movement in Literature (London: William Heinemann, 1899), p. 153.

<sup>38</sup> Taken from: Derek Stanford, ed., Writing of the 'Nineties From Wilde to Beerbohm (London: Everyman's Library, 1971), pp. 246-247.

<sup>39</sup> Hugh Kenner, The Pound Era (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 183.

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<sup>41</sup> Henry James, "The Story-teller at Large," Fortnightly Review, New Series, LXIII (1898), p. 652.

<sup>42</sup> Edward J. O'Brien, Intro., The Best Short Stories of 1915 (Boston: Small, Maynard and Co., 1916).

Bliss Perry, Intro., The Harper Prize Short Stories (New York: Harper and Bros., 1925).

<sup>43</sup> See, for example: Editors's Preface (Anon.), Georgian Stories 1922 (London: Chapman and Hall, 1922); also, John Cournos, Intro., The Best British Short Stories of 1922, eds. Edward J. O'Brien and John Cournos (Boston: Small, Maynard and Co., 1922).

<sup>44</sup> Ian Reid, The Short Story. The Critical Idiom (London: Methuen and Co., 1977), p. 30.

<sup>45</sup> Editor's Preface (Anon.), Georgian Stories 1922, p. 5.

<sup>46</sup> John Middleton Murry, "The Short Story," rev. of Georgian Stories 1922, The Nation and Athenaeum, 26 August, 1922, pp. 712-713.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>50</sup> Virginia Woolf, Diary II, p. 196. (August 28, 1922).

<sup>51</sup> By "E. S." in The London Mercury, July, 1921, p. 321.

<sup>52</sup> For the following discussion see the Preface to Ina Ten Eyck Firkins' Index to Short Stories (New York: The H. W. Wilson Co., 1923).

<sup>53</sup> Firkins, Index to Short Stories Supplement (New York: The H. W. Wilson Co., 1936), vi.

<sup>54</sup> A. C. Ward, Aspects of the Modern Short Story: English and American (London: University of London Press, 1924), p. 17.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>56</sup> A. C. Ward, Twentieth Century Literature 1901-1925 (London: Methuen and Co., 1928), pp. 51-52. In the revision published by Methuen in 1940, Ward revokes his earlier dismissal; however, he may have been gratified to know that Elizabeth and Her German Garden could be having a minor revival with the publishing in April, 1985 of a facsimile of its first edition, by Virago.



57 "The Modern Short Story," Times Literary Supplement, 29 January, 1925, p. 62.

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60 Virginia Woolf, Jacob's Room, p. 155.

CHAPTER FOUR"THE OBJECT IN ITS ABSENCE":  
DE QUINCEY, LANDOR, PATER AND MALLARMÉ  
AND THE IDEA OF A SKETCH

The sketch that represents, to Diderot, the antidote to the inertia of popular contemporary painting, does not mean that the sketch in general is the sole force behind such shifts in art and literature as developed throughout the Romantic movement and the Victorian years. It is only one manifestation or symptom of those changes which can be interpreted along two very general lines: the notion implied in Diderot's Salon criticism, that the artist's vision is a triumph of aesthetic form over capricious nature, is more fully realized in the Romantic view of that vision; a powerful reinforcement of the artist's communion with nature through his own energetic and creative Imagination. The second view is a minor reaction to such Romanticism, strongest in France during the 1860's: the Positivist philosophy of Hippolyte Taine, in which aesthetic activity is reduced to the primary intellectual assimilation of external phenomena, and the subsequent translation of this received information, systematically by chosen methods, into a finished work of art.<sup>1</sup>

By either such approximately Romantic or Positivist views, is the aesthetic status of the modern sketch denied. For all that Diderot's attention to the sketch

anticipates its later recognition as a respectable subject, nevertheless, his estimation of it as a brief and brilliant flash of inspired genius together with the Romantic faith in complete perceptual identification with the phenomenal world, assigns the sketch to the position of literary curiosity--a form whose success depends more upon happy coincidence than careful, deliberate hard work. Any view that would aspire to grant the sketch aesthetic equality with other forms cannot dismiss the labour of its creation and the effect of its art as simple matters of happenstance and legerdemain.

By contrast, the Positivist view would seem more congenial to the idea of the sketch: not only does it discount genius from its theory of artistic creation, but it also allows for--indeed, it requires--the sustained work of literary or artistic composition. But inspiration in this way cannot be banished altogether; the evocative powers of the sketch lose their effect as a second-hand summary, and moreover, such creation by rote can never produce a work with sufficient integrity to merit aesthetic independence. There is no allowance in Taine's philosophy for imitation, already inferior by inference, to stand as an art form in its own right, autonomous from the superior reality that gives it life.

The idea of a sketch in modern art and literature is, therefore, crucially different from the Romantic or the Positivist: it is a matter of recreation for the former, and imitation for the latter, but in neither case is there consideration of the form itself as a reflexive state of art, referring not to external conditions but

rather to its own. Such a state is more than one of self-consciousness--the self-conscious narrator is a familiar device in, for example, Tristram Shandy; the reflexiveness that is found in modern art, however, is more an introversion of aesthetic structure upon itself. That structure is not an operation of externalities (in which case it would be merely a matter of style), but of the internal process of seeing and creating. Self-consciousness of form takes precedence over that of content: the condition of aesthetic existence has become itself the subject matter.

It is Walter Pater who emerges from the Romantic and Positivist attitudes as a figure in those changes that led to the extreme self-awareness of Modernist art. In the "Conclusion" to The Renaissance he acknowledges that "to regard all things and principles of things as inconstant modes or fashions has more and more become the tendency of modern thought",<sup>2</sup> but the mutability of the world gives way to the instability of vision and understanding:

But when reflexion begins to play upon those external objects they are dissipated under its influence; the cohesive force seems suspended like some trick of magic; each object is loosed into a group of impressions--colour, odour, texture--in the mind of the observer. And if we continue to dwell in thought on this world, not of objects in the solidity with which language invests them, but of impressions, unstable, flickering, inconsistent, which burn and are extinguished with our consciousness of them, it contracts still further: the whole scope of observation is dwarfed into the narrow chamber of the individual mind. 3

It stands to reason in Pater's breakdown of the transience of existence, beginning with physical life and ever converging towards solipsism, that impressions should become the criteria by which "experience dwindles down" for the isolated individual mind. With such self-consciousness gaining ascendancy in the arts towards the end of the nineteenth century, it is apposite that sketch-like technique should have been adopted by writers and artists, and its effects incorporated into their art. Indeed, considering the new emphasis upon the importance of "unstable, flickering, inconsistent" individual impressions--such as Virginia Woolf glimpses of "something turning away, always in movement"--the sketch is the form most faithful to this fragmented, Paterian vision, and as such it embodies a transition in consciousness from the Aesthetic to the Modern.

Walter Pater considers the contraction of understanding from objective, solid entities to subjective and inconstant impressions, the condition of modern art and thought. Yet, this reductive vision leads as surely to twentieth-century existentialist philosophy, as it finds its previous expression in the writings of De Quincey. Compare, for example, the progressively disintegrating first half of Pater's "Conclusion" with the action of De Quincey's "Savannah-La-Mar" in Suspiria de Profundis. Pater narrows down experience into isolation and fragmentation, in which the impressions of the solitary mind are themselves "limited by time, and that as time is infinitely divisible, each of them is infinitely divisible also; all that is actual in it being a single moment, gone while we try to

apprehend it, of which it may ever be more truly said that it has ceased to be than that it is".<sup>4</sup> In this sense, De Quincey realizes the implications of reductivist analysis long before The Renaissance, and his explanation of the consequences is considerably more overwhelming than are the careful and reserved cadences of Pater:

You see, therefore, how narrow, how incalculably narrow, is the true and actual present. Of that time which we call the present, hardly a hundredth part but belongs either to a past which has fled, or to a future which is still on the wing. It has perished, or it is not born. It was, or it is not. Yet even this approximation to the truth is infinitely false. For again sub-divide that solitary drop, which only was found to represent the present, into a lower series of similar fractions, and the actual presence which you arrest measures now but the thirty-sixth-millionth of an hour; and so by infinite declensions the true and very present, in which only we live and enjoy, will vanish into a mote, distinguishable only by a heavenly vision. . . . The time which is contracts into a mathematical point; and even that point perishes a thousand times before we can utter its birth. 5

De Quincey's expression does not measure out its logic in the scrupulous, though ornate manner of Pater; although it is true that in the above passage, the meaning is very much complimented by its diffuse and confusing structure, nevertheless as a work of literary art it fails where De Quincey does not intend it to. "Most often", writes Virginia Woolf of this difficulty, "he spreads himself out in a waste of verbosity, where any interest that there may have been peters out dismally and loses itself in the sand. We can read no more".<sup>6</sup>

Pater's elaborate style is a deliberate artifice, whereas De Quincey's is an approximation, ever loaded with more ideas and new thoughts, until all sense of his

original intention is lost. The difference between the two men lies not in the nature of their fragmented vision--indeed, it is significant that they both limit experience to "unstable, flickering, inconsistent" individual impressions; rather, it is how they approach the language of their art that induces calm scepticism in one, and drives the other to despair.

In his essay on "Style" Pater sets out his criteria for literary art: "To give the phrase, the sentence, the structural member, the entire composition, song, or essay, a . . . unity with its subject and with itself:--style is in the right way when it tends towards that".<sup>7</sup> "Style" by Pater's definition is precisely not the operation of appearances such as is seen in Symons' poem, "At Dieppe"; in this sense at least the ultimate inadequacy of De Quincey's aesthetic order in coming to terms with multitudinousness, is a failure that is stylistically different from the surfeit of external effects that deprives fin-de-siècle Decadent art of any real creative power. Superficially, De Quincey's art could be interpreted as being Decadent in its admission of the inexhaustible possibilities of both life and artistic expression: if any finite abstract or concrete entity is considered to be infinitely divisible, and if nothing can ever be fully defined by a particular aesthetic form, then it follows that it is irrelevant whether something is great or small, good or bad; the consequences are, that not only is it pointless to differentiate between things, but more seriously, that it becomes almost impossible to do so. In his inability

to form any aesthetic priorities De Quincey is defenceless against the enormity of experience, but what keeps him from Decedence is the fact that it is his inability, and not deliberate choice; he lacks aesthetic authority because he cannot comprehend the infinity of time and space within a work of art, whereas Symons is Decadently ineffectual only because any larger significance in his poem is for the sake of style alone.

De Quincey's prose, therefore, demonstrates almost too effectively Pater's formulation for good literary art, that the unity of the author's mind and his material is achieved when "the term is right, and has its essential beauty, when it becomes, in a manner, what it signifies".<sup>8</sup> If the mind of De Quincey longs to embrace the multiplicity and simultaneity of experience, and if he strives to realize this in his prose, then it is surely a sign of the presence of mind in style, that mentally he should be excited to near-madness, and that his essays should be digressive and incomplete, or arrive at a conclusion that is only a gesture towards revealed meaning.<sup>9</sup> It is only by the following qualification that Pater indirectly seems to imply that De Quincey does not fulfil the requirements of "Style":

The otiose, the facile, surplusage: why are these abhorrent to the true literary artist, except because, in literary as in all other art, structure is all-important, felt, or painfully missed, everywhere?--that architectural conception of work, which forsees the end in the beginning and never loses sight of it, and in every part is conscious of all the rest, till the last sentence does but, with undiminished vigour, unfold and justify the first. 10



"One of the greatest pleasures of really good prose literature", Pater continues, "is in the critical tracing out of that conscious artistic structure, and the pervading sense of it as we read".<sup>11</sup> The important terms in the above passages are "structure" and "consciousness", and it is with reference to these two issues that De Quincey's is not, in the end, a truly Aesthetic vision. In his critical assessment of Whistler's art, Arthur Symons similarly draws attention to consciousness and structure by proposing that structure is consciousness when all other aesthetic supports within the painting are eliminated.<sup>12</sup> That crucial removal of surplusage, however, which is found in all Symbolist and Aesthetic art, is a task beyond De Quincey, whose method is best described by J. Hillis Miller:

For De Quincey there is no subject with just limits, a finite goal which may be seen from the beginning and pursued through a logical train of thought. The realm of his essays is . . . a space of infinite wandering. . . . The divine presence has withdrawn, or made itself invisible, so it is impossible for him ever to know whether he is going toward God or away from him. Neither inside the mental space nor outside it is there any manifest power which gives it a structure. 13

Lacking any sense of a structure in his own vision, let alone in the world, De Quincey is powerless to create an art whose structure is informed by its own aesthetic consciousness; while the method of Whistler or Mallarmé pares down expression to its most spare form, De Quincey can only expand in the hope that consciousness will emerge as the boundlessness of space and time is

filled by his art. Art, however, can only become supremely conscious if it stands outside of the relativity of time and space, and so it is his ambition to recreate time and space in language, and to give it an aesthetic form, that ultimately defeats De Quincey.

There is a sense, therefore, in which the sketch is a similar kind of aesthetic failure; it succumbs to the multiplicity of "reality" and is overwhelmed into fragmentation much as the essays of De Quincey are riddled with unfilled gaps and prone to verbal wandering. But, De Quincey is an artist of the fragment, and not of the sketch. His diffuse essays carry within themselves the same implications as are found in the fleeting and evocative sketch, but they are long precisely where the sketch is short. De Quincey's aesthetic dilemma shows that a fragment becomes a sketch directly in proportion to how independently it stands in its individual time-sense and space-sense. In this way, what De Quincey is unable to possess with a language that spreads ever wider to accommodate the expansion of his own consciousness, the sketch can suggest elliptically, through allusion and scruple. The sketch is the Mallarméan "pure work" whose structure "must arise throughout from internal necessity--in this way both chance and the author are excluded".<sup>14</sup>

De Quincey can never exclude himself from his work--and chance is the very condition of his existence; he writes the Autobiographical Sketches whereas Pater writes the consciously fictive Imaginary Portraits. Therefore, in the way that the sketch exhibits the introversion of

aesthetic structure upon itself, De Quincey turns in upon his own mind. "He wanted a subject that would allow him all possible freedom", Virginia Woolf explains, and "he found it, naturally, in himself".<sup>15</sup> The freedom that De Quincey seeks, however, is precisely the freedom of the sketch form, that is determined by its own order: unable to divine order through aesthetic language, De Quincey finds it in opium, and so he achieves his "moment of vision" through imposed and temporary means. Nevertheless, with the introduction of necessary fragment into literature, De Quincey's writings are an important preparation for the acceptance of fragmentation in a specialized art form. He is also significant for being one of the first English writers to genuinely believe that no one thing is more infinite in its meaning than any other, and his corresponding method anticipates the advice Virginia Woolf gives in The Common Reader: "Let us not take it for granted that life exists more fully in what is commonly thought big than in what is commonly thought small".<sup>16</sup> Although De Quincey's equalizing vision did overreach his literary capabilities, he introduced a confusion into art that was necessary in order to comprehend the inversion of scale and proportion as its own kind of aesthetic order, and eventually, to understand the terms in which a sketch is an independent art form.

It is impossible either to conceive imaginatively or to objectify in art, a reality that is constantly disintegrating into ever smaller and more fleeting fragments, even as it increases in significance; to escape this insupportable condition the work of art cannot establish itself aesthetically according to the laws of eternal time and infinite space. It is only such an external sense of scale, after all, that defines the fragmentary state: De Quincey acknowledges an immeasurable reality against which all things perforce must remain incomplete, and thus the fundamental condition for existence is, inevitably, the fragment. Without reference to spatiotemporal proportion, however, the idea of a "fragment" loses its relevance. There is no objective sense by which to portion out degrees of completeness: a work of art in the state of conscious self-reference sets its own aesthetic limits, and achieves its sufficient form and meaning according to the internal necessities of its own structure. It is this that determines the essential difference between what is a fragment, and what, a sketch.

It is as a fragment lifted out of common space and time that the sketch similarly must be allowed to decide upon its own limits for truth; for, again, it is only by a received notion of time that things are endowed with meaning, and in this way the sense of time through temporal progression becomes invested with the accepted truth of History. Therefore, it is precisely in history treated as art, that the currency of fact can best be

questioned; it is not surprising, then, to find De Quincey and his contemporaries Lamb and Landor addressing in their writings the relation between time and fact, in ways that were to be continued in such examples as Rossetti's "Hand and Soul", Pater's Imaginary Portraits and Marius the Epicurean, and by implication, in the speculations upon past personalities and circumstances to which Virginia Woolf repeatedly returns in her reviews, essays, biographies, and fiction. "It is so difficult to refrain from making scenes which, if the past could be recalled, might perhaps be found lacking in accuracy", Virginia Woolf confesses in a piece entitled "The Lives of the Obscure".<sup>17</sup> and elsewhere: "In all this there is no doubt much exaggeration, much misunderstanding. One is tempted to impute to the dead the qualities we find lacking in ourselves".<sup>18</sup>

For all her recognition of a certain historical authenticity, nevertheless, Virginia Woolf does allow for the imaginative reconstruction of the individual character. Indeed, it seems nothing short of a crime not to make use of any literary documents that afford glimpses into a past age or the lives of famous people:

To have in one's possession this private door into the past, through which one can see back to the pale beginnings of English life four or five centuries ago, and to keep it locked against the public, is no less heinous an offence than to burn a portrait by Velasquez once a year. 19

What Virginia Woolf does not specify, is to what degree one should read into a life; "it is a question to be asked, and not one to be answered", and she shifts the

problem onto individual responsibility, away from the critic's jurisdiction: "It will be answered, that is to say, in an instinctive and irrational manner, as our disposition inclines us".<sup>20</sup>

How far, we must ask ourselves, is a book influenced by its writer's life--how far is it safe to let the man interpret the writer? How far shall we resist or give way to the sympathies and antipathies that the man himself rouses in us--so sensitive are words, so receptive of the character of the author? These are questions that press upon us when we read lives and letters, and we must answer them for ourselves, for nothing can be more fatal than to be guided by the preferences of others in a matter so personal. 21

The dichotomy between truth and personality is given an affective life by Virginia Woolf in her image of granite and rainbow, "and if we think of truth as something of granite-like solidity and of personality as something of rainbow-like intangibility and reflect that the aim of biography is to weld these two into one seamless whole, we shall admit that the problem is a stiff one".<sup>22</sup>

It is not to biography alone, however, that Virginia Woolf ascribes an imaginative freedom that is at the same time responsible to a sense of fact. The method of her own literary criticism functions with a similarly twofold aim, and although she does realize that the chance of biographical fallacy is greatly increased, it is worth the risk if only for the sake of the studies that do succeed. Twentieth-century criticism tends to keep to the autonomy of the work of art, with emphasis upon

textual problems, or else it deals with structures of language and patterns of literature which dwarf the personality--Virginia Woolf's own closest friends took this as their aesthetic creed with the concept of "significant form".<sup>23</sup> While this approach has its merits, nevertheless with the expulsion of biographical information, much that has become an accepted part of the reader's heritage and, indeed, synonymous with literary tradition and history, would disappear. Virginia Woolf asks what would be the loss to literature of a work such as the life of Johnson, but this same observation is quickly becoming, if it has not already become, just as true for Virginia Woolf herself and her Bloomsbury circle:

It is therefore a wise precaution to limit one's study of a writer to the study of his works; but, like other precautions, it implies some loss. We sacrifice an aesthetic pleasure, possibly of first-rate value--a life of Johnson, for example--and we raise boundaries where there should be none. A writer is a writer from his cradle; in his dealings with the world, in his affections, in his attitude to the thousand small things that happen between dawn and sunset, he shows the same point of view as that which he elaborates afterwards with a pen in his hand. It is more fragmentary and incoherent, but it is also more intense. 24

These convictions Virginia Woolf expressed in 1909, which confirm once again her faith in a singularity of purpose that is present not only throughout a writer's life, but also is sustained over the whole of his creative work, and which makes no distinction between emotions experienced at any age, or felt in either fragmented or consummate form. Here, too, any notions of

hierarchy are brought in from without, for perception in itself is an isolated and impartial faculty, and it is only a common sense of time and space that gives a specific social or aesthetic value to individual experience. There is no inherent qualitative order to subjective life; De Quincey attempted to discover just that, and lost control of both his subjective vision and its outward expression. This De Quincey's most successful passages for Virginia Woolf are not his "cries of anguish", but rather, his "descriptions of states of mind in which, often, time is miraculously prolonged and space miraculously expanded".<sup>25</sup> Within its own construction of time and space, therefore, his writing is able to achieve a certain "state of mind" which is precisely the point at which his subjective self-consciousness is transcended by the aesthetic consciousness of his art itself. The "state of mind" is Arthur Symons' meaning exactly in describing the method of Pater's Imaginary Portraits as "the study of a soul, or rather of a consciousness",<sup>26</sup> and its manifestation in a work of art is what Pater himself traces back to "the vital wholeness and identity, of the initiatory apprehension or view".<sup>27</sup>

The emphasis, therefore, is consistent with the original meaning of the "Aesthetic": in the state of self-reflection all that remains is consciousness of structure (as Symons observes of Whistler's painting) which itself becomes the functioning of perception in a formal aesthetic order. The art which, in this way, has become concerned with modes of seeing, is that aspect of



Walter Pater's Aestheticism which is most relevant for the consideration of the sketch as a particular form of late nineteenth and early twentieth century art.

Art, then, is thus always striving to be independent of the mere intelligence, to become a matter of pure perception, to get rid of its responsibilities to its subject or material; the ideal examples of poetry and painting being those in which the constituent elements of the composition are so welded together, that the material or subject no longer strikes the intellect only; nor the form, the eye or the ear only; but form and matter, in their union or identity, present one single effect to the "imaginative reason," that complex faculty for which every thought and feeling is twin-born with its sensible analogue or symbol. 28

In his essays in The Renaissance, and especially in the Imaginary Portraits, Pater's method is a combination that is neither criticism nor creation, but a "spirit" or an "imaginative colouring" by which the subject becomes "expressive to the spirit"; he uses these terms to explain Botticelli's choice of colour which may seem "cadaverous" at first, "and yet, the more you come to understand what imaginative colouring really is, that all colouring is no mere delightful quality of natural things, but a spirit upon them by which they become expressive to the spirit, the better you will like this peculiar quality of colour".<sup>29</sup> What Pater refers to, in other words, is not at all Botticelli's easily identified painting style, with its wan and slightly anaemic palette; rather, it is what he also recognizes in the work of della Robbia: "some subtler sense of originality--the seal on a man's work of what is most inward and peculiar in his moods,

and manner of apprehension".<sup>30</sup> Pater, in this way, does not create so much a critical analysis of art, as he recreates a consciousness, or a "manner of apprehension". Ian Fletcher describes his writing as "a mode of perception, a total responsive gesture of the whole personality",<sup>31</sup> and Pater's fusion of the intellect and the senses (granite and rainbow) into an "imaginative reason" is responded to by Virginia Woolf with a sensitivity that is close to kinship:

There is no room for the impurities of literature in an essay. Somehow or other, by dint of labour, or bounty of nature, or both combined, the essay must be pure--pure like water or pure like wine, but pure from dulness, and deadness, and deposits of extraneous matter. Of all writers in the first volume, Walter Pater best achieves this arduous task, because before setting out to write his essay ('Notes on Leonardo da Vinci') he has somehow contrived to get his material fused. He is a learned man, but it is not knowledge of Leonardo that remains with us, 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. 32

If his appreciation of Renaissance artists strives to convey some sense of the men themselves, important because a genius like da Vinci's is not understood by designs and mathematical calculations alone, then Pater's Imaginary Portraits is even more an exercise in the invocation of the state of mind of the artistic personality. In these pieces the Aesthetic principles of his biographical/critical method are most fully worked out; all sense of critical judgement or evaluation is passed by in the attempt to comprehend the artist's own perceptive consciousness.

Pater perfected this type of aesthetic criticism, but in the same way that his sense of the fragmentariness of fleeting impressions is anticipated by De Quincey, so is his fascination with the personalities of past figures preceded in the Imaginary Conversations of Landor, who describes it thus:

Among the chief pleasures of my life  
and among the commonest of my  
occupations, was the bringing before me such  
heros and heroines of antiquity, such poets  
and sages, such of the prosperous and unfortunate,  
as most interested me by their courage, their  
eloquence, or their adventures. Engaging them  
in the conversations best suited to their  
characters, I knew perfectly their manners,  
their steps, their voices. . . . 33

Landor, of course, could know no such thing. He approaches history not by the parts that his characters played in important events, but rather through how those events affected their own states of mind: in "Leofric and Godiva" there is no curiosity in the circumstances of her famous ride, but only in how that ride came about through the conflict of the different characters of Lady Godiva and her husband. Landor also displaces the customary emphasis upon familiar historical situations by choosing to highlight a moment before the event itself, and thus the reader's awareness of the character's fate plays against the character's own ignorance, and shifts the focus of the narrative away from completed incident to a state of mental uncertainty.<sup>34</sup> With actual time and space treated more as premonition than fact, Landor's historical sense is no more exact than is Virginia Woolf's--

Orlando being its most fanciful expression. It seems hardly accurate, therefore, to speak of their method as biographical; Virginia Woolf thanks Sainte-Beuve for drawing attention to "the mind of the writer, to see each work of art by itself, and to judge how far each artist has succeeded in his aim",<sup>35</sup> but such an approach does not presume to recreate factual history, as Landor admits:

Of all studies the most delightful and the most useful is biography. The seeds of great events lie near the surface; historians delve too deep for them. No history was ever true: lives I have read which, if they were not, had the appearance, the interest, and the utility of truth. 36

Landor's sense of biography is Pater's art of "pure perception", without "responsibilities to its subject or material": it appeals to the "imaginative reason" in the same way that Dame Elizabeth Partridge's need for stockings in "The Journal of Mistress Joan Martyn" says more to Rosamond Merridew than can be conveyed either through the facts of medieval land tenure, or in the worn and fragmented pages of Joan Martyn's journal.<sup>37</sup>

The extent to which biographical fact can be trusted, is put to the test by Virginia Woolf in a critical analysis of Robinson Crusoe through her knowledge of its author's life. She presents quotations regarding Defoe's birthdate, the correct spelling of his name, his family tree, his profession, his wife and children--down to his "hooked nose, grey eyes, and a large mole near his

mouth".<sup>38</sup> Of course, Virginia Woolf puts forward such facts with tongue in cheek; but, once one has recognized the entertaining mischief of her prose style, one then has to return and consider what is the point of her departure:

. . .to be reminded in the middle of this private interview that Defoe sold stockings, had brown hair, and was stood in the pillory is a distraction and a worry. Our first task, and it is often formidable enough, is to master his perspective. . . . All alone we must climb upon the novelist's shoulders and gaze through his eyes until we, too, understand in what order he ranges the large common objects upon which novelists are fated to gaze: man and men; behind them Nature; and above them that power which for convenience and brevity we may call God. 39

The facts of an individual at a certain time and in a certain place, therefore, must appeal to the imaginative reason through the "perspective", that is nothing but a mental or spiritual state. Of the facts of De Quincey's life, for example, "one has been told only what De Quincey wished us to know", writes Virginia Woolf, "and even that has been chosen for the sake of some adventitious quality--as that it fitted in here, or was the right colour to go there--never for its truth".<sup>40</sup> Still, the implication is here, that there is a "truth" that is confirmed by the purely aesthetic condition of the work of art itself; and, that through this artificial "aesthetic truth", there nevertheless "grows upon us a curious sense of intimacy. It is an intimacy with the mind, and not with the body".<sup>41</sup>

It is the sense of a spiritual "intimacy" that Virginia Woolf continues in the tradition of Pater, De Quincey and Landor, but with this issue, too, there is easy danger in the attraction of style alone, that can achieve felicitous effects which do not lead to any larger understanding of the art or artist. Richard Le Gallienne isolates this as the particular quality of Decadence:

To notice only the picturesque effect of a beggar's rags, like Gautier; the colour-scheme of a tipster's nose, like Mr. Huysmans; to consider one's mother merely prismatically, like Mr. Whistler--these are examples of the Decadent attitude. 42

Virginia Woolf does owe something of her style to the Decadent disregard for conventional values and established methods--or for aesthetic proportion: her slightly off-centre treatment of figures who have become known by their standard portraits, such as the cameo appearances of Shakespeare or Queen Elizabeth in Orlando, or the oblique presence of Sterne in "Sterne's Ghost", throws a new perspective upon familiarity. The glorious past is turned on its head: in some ways there is almost an element of irreverence in this attitude (so William Bankes marvels of Lily Briscoe's painting, that "Mother and child then--objects of universal veneration . . . might be reduced . . . to a purple shadow without irreverence"),<sup>43</sup> but Virginia Woolf is saved from Decadence by the fact that she does not court such novelty for the sake of style or sensation alone. Nor can it be said that she romanticizes, although this description of Queen Elizabeth (like another in Orlando, where she

visits Knole) is pure inspiration:

[she] flaunts across the terrace superbly and a little stiffly like the peacock spreading its tail. She seems slightly infirm, so that one is half inclined to smile; and then she raps out her favourite oath as Lord Herbert of Cherbury heard it. . . . Perhaps, under all that stiff brocade, she has not washed her shrivelled old body? She breakfasts off beer and meat and handles the bones with fingers rough with rubies. 44

That last sentence reads almost as poetry, and not without those effects which Le Gallienne singles out for decadence. But, like Landor's historical personages and Pater's Imaginary Portraits, Virginia Woolf conveys her imaginative sense of fact. Of this aspect, Nigel Nicolson writes:

. . . if she were confronted by two versions of the same event, she would choose the more romantic. She cared little for accuracy, so long as the inaccuracy were truer. She never read a book to check her historical facts when writing Orlando, and in spite of her famous preface, never consulted anyone. It is a travesty of English history, as many correspondents delighted to point out. St. Paul's did not have a dome in 1620. Dahlias had not arrived in England in the early 17th century. Nor had pineapples. Her geographical fantasies were as random as her chronological. Ships at sea and the peak of Snowdon cannot be seen from the park at Knole; nor can the Athenian Acropolis be seen from central Turkey. What did she care? They ought to be. 45

Along these same lines as Landor, Virginia Woolf "virtually ignores" all major historical events and upheavals: "Virginia indicates that these things have happened by the way people behaved in consequence". In this way does the representation of character and event come

under the capricious influence of what Pater terms the "relative spirit".<sup>46</sup> Writing of his mother's reaction to her persona as Orlando, Nigel Nicolson qualifies that in fictional biography "another person can know more about oneself than one knows oneself".<sup>47</sup> Certainly, Virginia Woolf projects herself into history with the same intention; the imaginative sense of fact, unable to recreate the original experience, frequently can provide a fuller understanding of its implications. Like Walter Pater, she attempts the sense of a personality; more often than not, what remains of her criticism, the impression that stays, is not an analysis or an evaluation so much as a sense of the writer himself. George Crabbe riding sixty miles to the sea for a short swim; Captain Frederick Marrayat dying on a mattress on the floor of a trompe-l'oeil garden; Dr. Johnson, Mrs. Thrale, Mr. Greville and Dr. Burney sitting all evening in a silence so excruciating that even the reader is relieved when the carriage is called and the "story" can come to an end; the Duke and Duchess of Newcastle scribbling in adjoining rooms and calling to each other as inspiration strikes; Sir John Paston spending the gold meant for his father's tomb upon volumes of Lydgate and Chaucer; or, Lady Fanshawe strolling calmly on the beach, obeying her husband and not ducking the Dutch bullets whizzing past her ears: these details are more than accounts of eccentricities.<sup>48</sup> To the same effect, Walter Pater relates the story of the pupil Leonardo in Verocchio's studio, how the master "turned away as one stunned" when he realized



that the apprentice-work angel outshone all else in his painting.<sup>49</sup> What matters is that, in truth, Verocchio never really thought much of painting at all; "the legend is true only in sentiment", but very often, sentiment can go farther in conveying the import of something as unfathomable as the genius of da Vinci, than fact.

"Imaginative reason" bestows truth upon sentiment, as it does upon another frequent practice that Virginia Woolf has of taking in scores of years at a single bound: so Parson Woodforde and his household placidly "munch, day after day, year in, year out, until between them they must have devoured herds of sheep and oxen, flocks of poultry, an odd dozen or so of swans and cygnets, bushels of apples and plums, while the pastries and the jellies crumble and squash beneath their spoons in mountains, in pyramids, in pagodas"; so, too does the Reverend Skinner step out of his ordered study, to be faced with "drunkenness and immorality; with indiscipline and irreligion; with Methodism and Roman Catholicism; with the Reform Bill and the Catholic Emancipation Act, with a mob clamouring for freedom, with the overthrow of all that was decent and established and right".<sup>50</sup> Here again is the imaginative sense of fact; hard reality does not figure on the epic grandeur of the Woodforde's dining-room table, nor are there riots on the lawns beneath the Reverend Skinner's library window, but nonetheless, Virginia Woolf conveys a sense of the secure monotony of the former's daily life, and the turbulent times of the latter which puts the writings of both men into a certain

context. Thus, by responding to the work of these two men through her knowledge of their characters, their habits, and the atmosphere of their time, Virginia Woolf manages some sense of their perspectives. While there is, no doubt, much exaggeration in her method, there is no reason why the "truth" of experience should be lodged only within the knowledge of a specific occurrence of limited duration. The savage on board the Elizabethan ship, for example, seems acutely embarrassed by the presence of a woman intended for him as a companion:

the sailor notices it but knows not why it is. . . . The erratic searchlight cast by these records falling for a second upon those blushing cheeks three hundred years ago, among the snow, sets up that sense of communication which we are apt to get only from fiction. We seem able to guess why they blushed; the Elizabethans would notice it, but it has waited over three hundred years for us to interpret it. 51

The interpretations of the savage's discomfiture is completed by imaginative and not ratiocinative knowledge. Similarly, then, it is not the certainty of Defoe's hooked nose or brown hair that conveys to the modern reader the sense of the man himself, just as the stockings of Dame Elizabeth Partridge have no imaginative life as relics. These facts and objects have endured in spite of their mere external characteristics and practical use; they are things that are seen "always by the light of an understanding more entire than is possible for ordinary minds, of the whole mechanism of humanity . . . the manner, the outward mode or fashion, always in strict

connexion with the spiritual condition which determined it".<sup>52</sup>  
 Such is Walter Pater's appreciation of Charles Lamb, whose interest in "customs, stiff to us,--stiff dresses, stiff furniture--types of cast-off fashions, left by accident" penetrates beyond their circumstance and manner, to an "inward temper". These things live delicately in the imagination, almost as a colouring upon the mind, a sympathy for what Pater calls "the poetry of things old", which nevertheless has as real an existence as have the observations of an Elizabethan seaman become newly significant through the fuller interpretation of the modern reader. Thus, Lamb "feels the poetry of these things . . ."

surviving as an actual part of the life of the present, and as something quite different from the poetry of things flatly gone from us and antique, which come back to us, if at all, as entire strangers, like Scott's old Scotch-border personages, their oaths and armour. 53

Pater's comparison of Walter Scott and Charles Lamb points to a fundamental distinction between history given an aesthetic treatment of antique style, and the sense of an aesthetic history as a state of "pure perception", in which the subject is determined by the limits of consciousness itself within an ever-present time. Therefore, the art that takes for its primary aim Virginia Woolf's directive to master an artist's "perspective", does not have to do with unrelated biographical facts, with stockings and brown hair; rather, it desires some sense of the artist's manner of perception--his aesthetic consciousness--and it is this that Virginia Woolf shares

with Walter Pater and the other artists of the Aesthetic movement. Thus, too, does Rossetti stand apart from his fellow Pre-Raphaelites with a work like "Hand and Soul": here the Italianate medieval setting enhances the artist Chiaro's state of mind, and only secondarily provides a rich background for his character, whose physical beauty and melancholy air, described in the long repetitive rhythms of Rossetti's almost Biblical style ("Now it happened, within these days, that there fell a great feast in Pisa"), presents a whole that is altogether closer to one of Pater's Imaginary Portraits.<sup>54</sup> Whereas the art of the Pre-Raphaelites receives its moral sanction directly from Nature, it is Chiaro's own soul that appears before Rossetti's artist-persona, and bids him paint not the truth of what he sees outside, but the truth of his inner nature.

With consciousness personified as the subject of art itself, Rossetti puts an aesthetic limit upon De Quincey's endless subjectivity, and gives a symbolic dramatic form to Landor's emotionally suggestive states of mind, so that the direction is firmly established towards an art form that is self-reflexive in both its structure and subject matter. By the last decade of the century, this direction is fully identified in a Yellow Book essay by Hubert Crackanthorpe, who assigns its significance equally to all forms of art--including the rendering of a merest impression:

. . . the novel, the short story, even the impression of a mere incident, convey each of them, the imprint of the temper in which their creator has achieved this process of adaption and blending together of his material. . . . A work of art can never be more than a corner of Nature, seen through the temperament of a single man. . . . Every piece of imaginative work must be a kind of autobiography of its creator--significant, if not of the actual facts of his existence, at least of the inner working of his soul. 55

Continuing the subject, Virginia Woolf writes, "Somewhere, everywhere, now hidden, now apparent in what ever is written down is the form of a human being";<sup>56</sup> and with reference to George Moore, "But are not all novels about the writer's self, we might ask? It is only as he sees people that we can see them; his fortunes colour and his oddities shape his vision until what we see is not the thing itself, but the thing and the seer inextricably mixed".<sup>57</sup>

It is clear, therefore, by even a desultory analysis, that fragmentariness and subjectivity as introduced into art by De Quincey and Landor, determine the spirit of the Aesthetic tradition which continues in the late nineteenth century. But, while it is evident enough that art becomes self-reflexive as it becomes less responsible to the sense of truth in time and space, it is also clear that there is no ordinary critical terminology with which to measure this progression towards intangibility.

Rossetti's outward manifestation of his soul to appear before him as both the subject and director of his art, hardly constitutes the way in which a creative vision can turn in upon itself and be sustained aesthetically by the consciousness of its own structure. This reading of literature as experience, in which art does what it means, is as difficult as Pater's attempt to pin down an impression, "gone while we try to apprehend it", in the "Conclusion" to The Renaissance.<sup>58</sup> It is the difficulty that forms the very substance of the sketch, which is conscious of neither fragmented form nor subjective content alone, but is a fusion of the two such as Virginia Woolf discerns in Walter Pater, where the condition that remains is one of aesthetic vision--the state of pure perception.<sup>59</sup> It is to the work of Pater, and ultimately, to Mallarmé, that one must go for the best example of the fusion of fragmentariness and subjectivity into the "conscious artistic structure" which Pater himself designates as the "necessity of mind in style".<sup>60</sup>

Observe, for instance, the behaviour of the opening sentence of the "Conclusion" in The Renaissance: "To regard all things and principles of things as inconstant modes or fashions has more and more become the tendency of modern thought".<sup>61</sup> Pater's sentence begins solidly enough, but there follows a series of qualifications, one after another, that the reader must balance while keeping the original assertion in mind. But reading is a teleological process, and the successive parts of the sentence depend on a drive towards totality: a sentence

is started in the expectation of a completed meaning, and this "drive" allows a thematic value to be given to whatever qualifications are encountered on the way. Pater sets out his condition, verb first, and the reader is immediately launched into the essay with the authority that can take not only "all things" but even "the principles of things" into its assured grasp. Yet, these sweeping statements are quickly paralleled: things are paired with "inconstant modes" and principles are brought down to the level of "fashions". Already in the first half of the sentence, therefore, there is set up a conflict which casts doubt upon both the confidence of the statement as well as that of the reader, which increases as the sentence continues in the second half. The self-assurance of the opening verb has become self-doubt in the subordinate "has become", divided and diluted as it is by the rather weak "more and more", so that by the time the end is reached (and it is, for Pater, a very short sentence), the reader has experienced already in the syntax itself, the inconstancy that is the tendency of modern thought.

Like the disintegration of his faith in certainty and permanence, so does Pater's prose reflect the stages of this breakdown: even as he claims for his language the investiture of an aesthetic solidity, the object already is destroyed by its naming; things "burn and are extinguished with our consciousness of them". This, therefore, is not De Quincey's faith that self-consciousness has behind it the support of a complete language, but rather, it is the awareness that language and consciousness

are one: that language is not only the power by which impressions are conjured up to consciousness, but that it is also the paradoxical condition in which those revelations both "burn and are extinguished". "The truth is, one can't write directly about the soul. Looked at, it vanishes" is Virginia Woolf's observation to herself in her diary;<sup>62</sup> Walter Pater made this simultaneous assertion and denial of his vision the very action of his aesthetic creed:

. . . a single moment, gone while we try to apprehend it, of which it may ever be more truly said that it has ceased to be than that it is. . . . It is with this movement, with the passage and dissolution of impressions, images, sensations, that analysis leaves off--that continual vanishing away, that strange, perpetual weaving and unweaving of ourselves. 63

It is this process of weaving and unweaving, of assertion and denial, that becomes the paradigmatic movement of the Aesthetic creative vision and of its structure in art, and it is in this sense that the sketch is its purest expression. As reflection ponders its objects and shatters them into impressions, and as those impressions are ever more confined to the individual perspective, it is clear that these original preoccupations of De Quincey and Landor are the tendencies in art and literature that become the preoccupations of (to some extent) Impressionism, and (more specifically) Aestheticism, and which necessarily give rise to such techniques as the sketch best demonstrates. Mallarmé recognizes this spirit of the times, and sets it on the course towards



abstraction:

It is not description which can unveil the efficacy and beauty of monuments, seas, or the human face in all their maturity and native state, but rather evocation, allusion, suggestion. These somewhat arbitrary terms reveal what may well be a very decisive tendency in modern literature and yet sets it free. 64

Just as the condition of Aesthetic consciousness is more than a narrative attitude, so are these qualities of allusion and suggestion more than an oblique treatment of difficult subject matter. Mallarmé specifies that it is not mere description he refers to--such description as is assumed by Diderot to be the quality of the sketch, or which constitutes Symons' stylistic mannerisms in his poem "At Dieppe". Description in its literal sense, to write down from or copy off, depends upon the assumption that, however fragmentary its subject, the original effect can be reproduced. "Evocation, allusion, suggestion", on the other hand, are invoked by means more organic--the very stuff of literature as well as its affective quality. Again, Mallarmé:

The Parnassians take something in its entirety and simply exhibit it; in so doing, they fall short of mystery; they fail to give our minds that exquisite joy which consists of believing that we are creating something. To name an object is largely to destroy poetic enjoyment, which comes from gradual divination. The ideal is to suggest the object. It is the perfect use of this mystery which constitutes the symbol. 65

There are two essential ideas here: that the ideal, most pleasurable reading "consists of believing we are

creating something"; and that the optimum expression of art is one of suggestion. Through this suggestiveness that involves its audience as creative participants, emerges the symbol which gives the work of art its significance. To understand this proposition by Mallarmé for the absolute condition of art, is largely to understand in what way his ideals found their favourable expression in the sketch form.

Mallarmé charges the Parnassians with simple exhibition: the transcription of natural phenomena into art, confident of successful repetition in a formal framework. However, in a world of multiplicity in which Mallarmé considers even a supreme language out of reach, such conviction that the experience can be understood well enough in its entirety to bear translation into an art form that gives it new life in single definition, is gross aesthetic presumption. Moreover, with completion already assumed in both the original experience and the subsequent art, there is nothing left for the reader to do but observe what is put before him.

Mallarmé's second prescription, then, is that the reading process should be an experience of mystery; a more difficult condition to imagine, as his intention for allusion and suggestion is not that they should be qualities of either subject or style, but rather a combination of the two that somehow transcends both into a higher state of mysterious Symbol:

If the poem is to be pure, the poet's voice must be stilled and the initiative taken by the words themselves, which will be set in motion as they meet unequally in collision. And in an exchange of gleams they will flame out like some glittering swath of fire sweeping over precious stones, and thus replace the audible breathing in lyric poetry of old--replace the poet's own personal and passionate control of verse.

The inner structures of a book of verse must be inborn; in this way, chance will be totally eliminated and the poet will be absent. From each theme, itself predestined, a given harmony will be born somewhere in the parts of the total poem and take its proper place within the volume. . . . Everything will be hesitation, disposition of parts, their alternations and relationships--all this contributing to the rhythmic totality, which will be the very silence of the poem, in its blank spaces, as that silence is translated by each structural element in its own way. 66

"Purity" is a familiar Aesthetic notion, invoked by Virginia Woolf, for example, in "The Modern Essay" where the purity she demands is attributed with praise to that purest of Aesthetes: "the essay must be pure--pure like water or pure like wine, but pure from dulness, and deadness, and deposits of extraneous matter. Of all writers . . . Walter Pater best achieves this arduous task".<sup>67</sup> Mallarmé's caution is that, for the sake of purity, the authorial voice be stilled--"the poet will be absent". Here, too, there is agreement expressed by Virginia Woolf in her diary: "the danger is the damned egotistical self . . . is one pliant and rich enough to provide a wall for the book from oneself".<sup>68</sup>

The damned egotistical self--the "audible breathing" of Mallarmé's poet--is silenced if the creative impulse is generated from within the work of art itself. Essentially,

what Mallarmé calls for is the organic whole: "the inner structures of a book of verse must be inborn"--these structures being the use and effect of words and syntax, in whose taut relation to certain standards of genre and style, the work becomes a conscious and self-sufficient operation of aesthetic vision. Herein enters the paradox: for, the confidence of consciousness is, at best, limited; it wields its authority only within the range of its own perspective. And, just as multiple perspectives prohibit the ascendancy of any one over the other, so is the voice of perspective in literary art--language--an instrument of compromises: "the diversity of languages on earth means that no one can utter words which would bear the miraculous stamp of Truth Herself Incarnate".<sup>69</sup> "Words do not live in dictionaries", observes Virginia Woolf, "they live in the mind",<sup>70</sup> and thus, though the "damned egotistical self" is eliminated, yet the fact is ever more apparent that the work of art is the expression of a perspective and a language with no real power of escaping its own self-reference. On all levels is the creative process confounded: from the word, to the form, to the perspective it seeks to establish.

Mallarmé takes the Parnassians to task for their erroneous faith in the single successful representation of a greater "reality", but in his own acknowledgement of multiplicity, the writer is no more capable of rendering significance to his art beyond his own individualism than, in their ways, were Leconte de Lisle, Prudhomme or Banville. Mallarmé counsels the disappearance of the poet,

yet given the nature of the problem, this can mean no more than camouflage.

The paradox converges upon language itself, for not only must the poet retreat before art, but the initiative must be taken "by the words themselves". Therefore, Mallarmé recommends with reference to the Parnassian poets, that definition must go into hiding-- that the object be "suggested" rather than named. But it is the nature of a word that it exists to define some quality, and its purpose to be a counter for experience; at the same time, however, there is no supreme language, and the word itself is untrustworthy. In this sense Mallarmé's idea of abstraction can only mean language that is taking a detour through indirect terms; a language whose abstraction is merely a matter of a vaguer style.

Mallarmé's analysis followed through in this way reveals that the specifically Aesthetic condition of pure conscious perception indeed describes an art which asserts its own creative power, but which is at the same time its own denial. This apparent paradox is, nevertheless, a necessary end: by overcoming it alone can Mallarmé hope to attain his Ideal, whereby such dichotomies as individuality/multiplicity or assertion/denial have no meaning.

When I say "a flower!" then from that forgetfulness to which my voice consigns all floral form, something different from the usual calyces arises, something all music, essence, and softness: the flower which is absent from all bouquets. 71

The problem is surmounted, then, only through its direct confrontation: it is not the hindrance which keeps back the Ideal, but is the very way towards it-- the perpetual oscillation between presence and absence becomes the paradigmatic action of its attainment. The "flower" which is "absent from all bouquets" is rendered abstract through just this never-ending doing and undoing of assertion and denial; and it is this same movement that is described by Pater as "that continual vanishing away, that strange perpetual weaving and unweaving of ourselves".

Such fluctuation is in itself the nature of the Aesthetic: through creation the artist takes away. Man is not only a thinking animal, but a speaking one, and both thought and speech rely upon a definition-mongering language whose words, in Mallarmé's aesthetic, defeat the purity of the original nameless emotion or experience even as they conjure it up. The process is, therefore, a self-perpetuating one, and by its very nature relegates itself to the invocation of what is missing or no longer there. Thus does Pater lose the actuality of the moment ("gone while we try to apprehend it, of which it may ever be more truly said that it has ceased to be than that it is"); and it is assigned by Mallarmé to the artist as both the state of his aesthetic existence, as well as the nature of his struggle to give form to abstract experience:

To create is to conceive an object in  
its fleeting moment, in its absence. 72

In effect, therefore, there is no difference between the circumstances of artistic creativity, and what ultimately constitutes the life of a work of art: both merge and become indistinguishable in the movement between presence and absence. Such confusion of cause and effect is found only in phenomena that are self-determining, or what Stanley Fish calls "self-consuming artifacts".<sup>73</sup> Fire becomes the obvious analogy here; how can a flame be distinguished from the action of its burning? Its very self-sufficiency is the state of its self-destruction. Pater's "gemlike flame"--the utmost awareness of "the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy"--is the imagination itself as it burns in the emotions and impressions elicited from natural phenomena, yet whose creative burning also destroys any true understanding of those phenomena by its process of consumption; thus do impressions "flicker" in Pater's imagination: "which burn and are extinguished with [his] consciousness of them".

In its exact sense, a paradox is the condition in which two things that are antithetical, nevertheless are able to stand in coexistence. The aesthetic object, however, that is in a state of simultaneous imaginative presence and absence exceeds a paradox's structural tension: all relations snap as one entity is cancelled out by the other. In Pater's consciousness the impression both burns and is extinguished, like words in Mallarmé's (rather Paterian) sentence: "the words themselves . . .

will be set in motion as they meet unequally in collision. And in an exchange of gleams they will flame out like some glittering swath of fire sweeping over precious stones".<sup>74</sup>

Mallarmé's words are "unequal", and they "collide". The collision occurs in their mutual assertion and denial, as meanings that are set up create the object as it is already in its absence. The fire image continues: it is this perpetual collision that is the substance of the flame. But, if both the imagination and the work of art behave as implied in the aesthetics of Pater and Mallarmé, then there is question over the true nature of the "self-consuming artifact": if it is caught in the constant present of being consumed, the imagination and the work of art are condemned to a state of extreme simultaneity that becomes aesthetically unbearable; or, if it actually completes itself and is burned up, the resulting state of non-existence is aesthetically insupportable.

This is not to disprove either Pater or Mallarmé: such possibilities are precisely not what their theories imply. Out of presence and absence emerges a third state, which is that of being symbolically significant. And that significance is attained when imaginative self-consumption becomes aesthetic self-realization: neither escape from nor solution to the problem is sought, but simply the recognition that the ultimate state of self-reflection is the imagination's (and the work of art's) understanding that it is itself its own symbol. This is



more than Rossetti's fictive materialization of his own soul and consciousness; it is the awareness that the very action of the imagination is the over-all Symbol for the conscious work of art.

Such a reading of art should not be encouraged for all artistic styles and genres: indeed, all art is in some sense self-reflexive, but this also means that each genre or style should suggest its own most appropriate form of criticism and appreciation. The art which involves itself with such issues as have been discussed is already by nature extremely self-conscious of its own artifice: it concerns itself with the perspective of the imagination; with how that perspective is expressed by the work of art in relation to other perspectives, according to such structural rules and stylistic traditions as have been set up by established aesthetic praxes; and, finally, it is self-conscious to the degree where that self-consciousness generates into the "self-consuming artifact".

Therefore, the art that is its own aesthetic consciousness is the sense of Wallace Stevens' "the poem of the act of the mind", which is significant beyond the fact of self-sufficiency that it grants the work of art.\* The poem is the act of the mind and, in aesthetic terms, there is no other act for the mind but the poem: it is both the function and embodiment of the poet's perceptive

\*The sense of a poem "wholly/containing the mind, below which it cannot descend,/beyond which it has no will to rise." See Wallace Stevens' "Of Modern Poetry" in The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), pp. 239-240.

consciousness. Poem and imagination are one--Mallarmé's Ideal--and the flame of self-consumption in this way becomes the creative fire which destroys not the aesthetic object, but rather all that is not intrinsic to its vision. Pater's "gemlike flame", the burning of the imagination at its most intense, is the Aesthetic precursor of Stevens' "hottest fire of sight":

Let's see the very thing and nothing else.  
Let's see it with the hottest fire of sight.  
Burn everything not part of it to ash.

Trace the gold sun about the whitened sky  
Without evasion of a single metaphor.  
Look at it in its essential barrenness  
And say this, this is the centre that I seek. 75

The fire of Stevens' imagination is a purging one: the thing must be seen with a near-violent directness "without evasion by a single metaphor", stripped of meretricious style and references to any experience or aesthetic construct that is not integral to the vision itself. Of course, Stevens gives his instructions knowing as well as Mallarmé the unresolvable incongruity between a strange reality and its approximation through the compromise of language: therefore he prescribes a rigorous activity, to be at least ever-vigilant, that art will never presume beyond its own shortcomings, but rather, concentrate on making itself as capable and absolute an artifice as possible. And once again, Stevens takes up Pater's direction, for his "poem of the act of the mind" is of the same order as that "conscious artistic structure" which is apparent in the "function of mind, in style".<sup>76</sup>

Such variations upon Aestheticism as are seen in the theories of Pater, Mallarmé, or Wallace Stevens, have important consequences for the sketch, whose form demands that there is a point at which suggestiveness and incompleteness become the requirements for its aesthetic existence. Mallarmé's method, therefore, would seem at first glance rather weak in comparison with Stevens. "The tendency of modern literature", he specifies, is to suggest the object through evocation and allusion, which certainly is not implied in the directness of Stevens' exhortation to "see the very thing and nothing else". If the naming of an object is to destroy it, then Mallarmé seems to reverse the process of destruction: instead of the name deactivating that which defies naming, he places the act of definition beyond the authoritative range of the work of art. It is as important to an understanding of Mallarmé's idea of mystery as it is to that of the sketch, therefore, that the aesthetic state of being suggestive is not comprised of coy language and mystical vague hints.

Suggestion itself is an inherently two-fold process: in theory it consists of a partial statement which invites a tacit completion by the reader or viewer, and it is this what both the art of Mallarmé and the condition of the sketch depend upon. Thus, suggestion is followed by its complement just as evocation is succeeded by its appropriate counterpart, and allusion, by the thing that is absent. Mallarmé works with these qualities not in hopes that some larger reality may have caught itself,

haphazardly, in his net, but rather because he recognizes this impulse for completion as a necessary part of the art-object's aesthetic life. A work of art like the sketch is left incomplete (in the conventional sense of description and technique) because creative activity includes the drive towards totality. As the ideal modern art form, therefore, it depends upon its own incompleteness, its self-consuming oscillation between assertion and denial, because in itself that incompleteness is already the establishment of the reader's presence. The sketch is truly Stevens' "act of the mind"--as in visual art it is the act of seeing--because, but for the participating mind of the reader, or vision of the viewer, the work of art is only half there. Suggestion, therefore, is not the hallmark of the lax artist, but properly, is the condition by which the sketch becomes concerned with the process of its own interpretation. By this token is there truth ascribed to Mallarmé's statement that "to create is to conceive an object . . . in its absence". His Ideal emerges from the conflict between presence and absence by realizing, through its own incomplete suggestiveness, that this in itself constitutes aesthetic consciousness: as a result, the poem or picture becomes the symbolic embodiment of the process by which things are endowed with meaning.

The disregard for truth and proportion in time and space that is brought into art by De Quincey and Landor, becomes an aesthetically viable position in the theories of Pater and Mallarmé; it is for such reasons that the sketch has a formal authority in spite of its dependence upon suggestion and its "unfinished" state. The sketch is in this way, not a simple representation of that which is fugitive, but rather, it is the expression of a vision that is committed to transience for motives other than of surface effect. This is the Aesthetic sketch of Virginia Woolf, which neither seeks the impression for its own sake, nor the fuller experience through fragmented form. It is the art of perspective as set up by the sketch, which makes the form a creating one, but which also denies it the escape from its own self-conscious position, and it is for this reason that the sketch is congenial to Virginia Woolf's aesthetic vision. If she courts impression, it is because of the action of language, by which (Pater's words) "each object is loosed into a group of impressions"; and, if her sketch is characterized by its incompleteness, it is but evidence of her continuity of Mallarmé's dictum: "To create is to conceive an object in its fleeting moment, in its absence".

Therefore, the "self-consuming artifact" which is its own simultaneous assertion and denial is very much the emblem of Virginia Woolf's sketches, and indeed, of her literary attitudes. Noticeable among her titles alone is the high incidence of complementary constructions-- "Monday or Tuesday", "Together and Apart", Night and Day--

which in themselves display a kind of oscillation of meaning. This movement is more than an alternation of states to mark the indifferent passage of time. "Life is pleasant; life is good", says Bernard in The Waves. "After Monday comes Tuesday, and Wednesday follows". Yet, he realizes that such complacency in time is a false security; rather, "It is the effort and the struggle, it is the perpetual warfare, it is the shattering and piecing together--this is the daily battle, defeat or victory, the absorbing pursuit".<sup>77</sup> All processes, then, in Virginia Woolf's world--mental, emotional, or physical--recur in constant succession of presence and absence. For literary composition, there again speaks Neville: "Now begins to rise in me the familiar rhythm; words that have laid dormant now lift, now toss their crests, and fall and rise, and fall and rise again".<sup>78</sup> There is give and take even in the issue of the "damned egotistical self": evidence for this is the frequent appearance of Virginia Woolf's impersonal narrator, yet there is also the literary critic whose method is almost entirely an attention to the relation between personality and art. This attention may be due partly to her own sensitive mental condition, and awareness of how quickly balance can lapse into disorder, but in another sense Virginia Woolf is far too committed an artist to allow unwarranted confusion between aesthetic standards and emotional ills. Her comment in her diary, therefore, has a range beyond her own mental life; in fact, she had just finished re-reading "Kew Gardens" and "The Mark on the Wall";

One should aim, seriously, at disregarding ups and downs; a compliment here, silence there . . .; the central fact remains stable, which is the fact of my own pleasure in the art. And these mists of the spirit have other causes, I expect; though they are deeply hidden. There is some ebb and flow of the tide of life which accounts for it; though what produces either ebb or flow I'm not sure. 79

This movement of ebb and flow--implied, perhaps, most strongly of all in The Waves, may be a cyclical alternation, but before renewal there comes destruction. Hence, the movement between assertion and denial in art is not an easy one: Mallarmé's poetry is notoriously obscure, and neither are such Woolf sketches as "Blue and Green", "A String Quartet", "A Haunted House" or "Monday or Tuesday" simple to read. Their difficulty, of course, is the very stuff of their self-denial; if Virginia Woolf wonders at the cause of ebb and flow, at least in art it is self-generating. Those enigmatic sketches are aesthetic to the finest degree: as expressions of her imaginative vision, their creative fire has consumed all else to the extent that they remain as analyses of their own perspectival movement. As such, they are instances of Pater's observation continuing into modern art: "It is with this movement, with the passage and dissolution of impressions . . . that analysis leaves off--that continual vanishing away, that strange, perpetual weaving and unweaving of ourselves".

NOTES AND REFERENCES:CHAPTER FOUR

<sup>1</sup> By far the best account of the nature of Positivism is by A. G. Lehmann, in The Symbolist Aesthetic in France 1885-1895 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1950); see Ch. 2, p. 21 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Walter Pater, "Conclusion," The Renaissance (London: Macmillan and Co., 1917), p. 233.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 235.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas De Quincey, "Savannah-La-Mar," in Suspiria de Profundis, The Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey, ed. David Masson (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1890), XIII, pp. 360-361.

<sup>6</sup> Virginia Woolf, "Impassioned Prose," Times Literary Supplement, 16 September, 1926; rpt. in Granite and Rainbow, p. 36.

<sup>7</sup> Walter Pater, "Style," Appreciations (London: Macmillan and Co., 1890), p. 19.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, the essay "Sir William Hamilton," in The Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey, V, pp. 303-347.

<sup>10</sup> Walter Pater, "Style," op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>12</sup> Arthur Symons, "The Painting of the Nineteenth Century," Studies in the Seven Arts (London: Archibald Constable, 1906), p. 52. See also the discussion of this passage in Chapter Two, pp. 69-70.



<sup>13</sup> J. Hillis Miller, The Disappearance of God. Five Nineteenth Century Writers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 29. I am indebted to Professor Miller for his authoritative analysis of ideas which I first formulated in the course of considering De Quincey's place in a possible sketch tradition.

<sup>14</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé, "Crisis in Verse," in Symbolism. An Anthology, ed. and trans. by T. G. West (London: Methuen, 1980), p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> Virginia Woolf, "Impassioned Prose," Granite and Rainbow, p. 37.

<sup>16</sup> -----, "Modern Novels," Times Literary Supplement, 10 April, 1919; rpt. (slightly revised) as "Modern Fiction," The Common Reader, p. 190.

<sup>17</sup> -----, "The Lives of the Obscure," London Mercury, January 1924; rpt. (slightly revised) as "Taylors and Edgeworths," in The Common Reader, p. 155.

<sup>18</sup> -----, "Reading," The Captain's Death Bed, p. 151.

<sup>19</sup> -----, "The House of Lyme," rev. of The House of Lyme from its Foundation to the End of the Eighteenth Century, by the Lady Newton, Times Literary Supplement, 29 March, 1917, p. 150.

<sup>20</sup> -----, "Reading," op. cit., p. 161.

<sup>21</sup> -----, "How Should One Read a Book?," Yale Review, October 1926; rpt. (considerably revised) in The Common Reader: Second Series, p. 262.

<sup>22</sup> -----, "The New Biography," rev. of Some People, by Harold Nicolson, New York Herald Tribune, 30 October, 1917; rpt. in Granite and Rainbow, p. 143.

<sup>23</sup> Clive Bell easily makes the connection between "significant form" and the possibility for an abstract art--for surely abstract art is the best example of an art that is devoid of all reference to personality and external circumstance. Roger Fry, however, never really resolves his uneasiness with the idea of significant form: he retracts his early analysis of Giotto (1901) which allowed for the influence of personality upon art, and reprints the essay in Vision and Design (London: Chatto and Windus, 1929) with the qualification that his former opinion was "due to [his] imperfect analysis of [his] own emotional state" (p. 301). Yet, at the same time as he insists upon the autonomy of art, he denies it the logical development towards abstractness that is implied by significant form. At best, he admits his inability to account for the nature of significant form at the end of "Retrospect": "I put these questions without much hope of answering them, since it is of greatest importance to recognize clearly what are the questions which remain to be solved. . . . Any attempt I might make to explain this would probably land me in the depths of mysticism. On the edge of that gulf I stop" (Vision and Design, pp. 301-302). Graham Hough proposes a simple resolution to the dilemma: "But why stop? If a train of thought has led to a point where it can only be completed by mysticism, why not complete it nevertheless? . . . the kind of mysticism necessary to complete Roger Fry's theory is hardly more mysterious than the existence of a purely aesthetic emotion unrelated to anything else."

(Graham Hough, "Ruskin and Roger Fry: Two Aesthetic Theories," Cambridge Journal, I, 1 October, 1947, p. 26). However, to be fair, as early as 1912, Fry was aware of the implications of his theories, and acknowledged that the French paintings in his Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition did lead to "a purely abstract language of form": "They may or may not be successful in their attempt. It is too early to be dogmatic on the point, which can only be decided when our sensibilities to such abstract form have been more practised than they are at present. But I would suggest that there is nothing ridiculous in the attempt to do this"; Roger Fry, "The French Group," Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition (London: Grafton Galleries, 1912), pp. 26-27.

<sup>24</sup> Virginia Woolf, "Sterne," rev. of The Life and Times of Thomas Sterne, by Wilbur L. Cross, Times Literary Supplement, 12 August, 1909; rpt. in Granite and Rainbow, p. 167.

<sup>25</sup> -----, "Impassioned Prose," Granite and Rainbow, p. 39. My italics.

<sup>26</sup> Arthur Symons, "Walter Pater," Studies in Two Literatures (London: Leonard Smithers, 1897), p. 174.

<sup>27</sup> Walter Pater, "Style," Appreciations, p. 19.  
My italics.

<sup>28</sup> -----, "The School of Giorgione," The Renaissance, p. 138. The italics are mine.

<sup>29</sup> -----, "Sandro Botticelli," The Renaissance, p. 58.

<sup>30</sup> -----, "Lucca della Robbia," The Renaissance, p. 71.

<sup>31</sup> Ian Fletcher, quoted in "The Crystal Man," Intro. to Harold Bloom's edition of Selected Writings of Walter Pater (New York: New American Library, 1974), xxiv.

<sup>32</sup> Virginia Woolf, "The Modern Essay," The Common Reader, p. 270; a slightly different version appeared first as "Modern Essays," rev. of Modern English Essays, ed. Ernest Rhys, Times Literary Supplement, 30 November, 1922.

<sup>33</sup> Walter Savage Landor, quoted in "Ernest de Selincourt on Landor," in Landor Poetry and Prose, Intro. and ed. E. K. Chambers (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), xxvi-xxvii.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, "Leofric and Godiva" and "Roger Ascham and Lady Jane Grey" (on the eve of the marriage that was to bring about her death) in Landor Poetry and Prose, pp. 85-91, and 91-94.

<sup>35</sup> Virginia Woolf, "Creative Criticism," rev. of Creative Criticism: Essays on the Unity of Genius and Taste, by J. E. Spingarn, Times Literary Supplement, 7 June, 1917, p. 271.

<sup>36</sup> Walter Savage Landor, Imaginary Conversations of Literary Men and Statesmen, Vol. I (London: Henry Colburn, 1824), iii.

<sup>37</sup> See Virginia Woolf's "The Journal of Mistress Joan Martyn," Intro. and eds. Susan Squier and Louise De Salvo, in Twentieth Century Literature, 25, No. 3/4 (1979). The piece is described and analyzed at greater length in Chapter One, pp. 25-30.

<sup>38</sup> -----, "Robinson Crusoe," rev. of The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe; Further Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, and Serious Reflections of Robinson Crusoe, Nation and Athenaeum, 6 February, 1926; rpt. in The Common Reader; Second Series, p. 51.

<sup>39</sup> Virginia Woolf, "Robinson Crusoe," The Common Reader: Second Series, p. 52.

<sup>40</sup> -----, "Impassioned Prose," Granite and Rainbow, p. 38.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>42</sup> Richard Le Gallienne, "Considerations Suggested by Mr. Churchton Collins' 'Illustrations of Tennyson'," The Hobby-Horse, No. 27 (July, 1892), p. 81.

<sup>43</sup> Virginia Woolf, To the Lighthouse, p. 85.

<sup>44</sup> -----, "Reading," The Captain's Death Bed, p. 146.

<sup>45</sup> Nigel Nicolson, "The Fictional Biography," Books and Bookmen, January 1982, p. 10.

<sup>46</sup> Walter Pater, "Coleridge," Appreciations, p. 65.

<sup>47</sup> Nigel Nicolson, "The Fictional Biography," op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>48</sup> The essays are, respectively:

"Crabbe," The Captain's Death Bed.

"The Captain's Death Bed," Times Literary Supplement, 26 September, 1935; rpt. in The Captain's Death Bed.

"Dr. Burney's Evening Party," New York Herald Tribune, 21 and 28 July, 1929; rpt. in The Common Reader: Second Series.

"The Duchess of Newcastle," The Common Reader.

"The Pastons and Chaucer," The Common Reader.

"Lady Fanshawe's Memoirs," rev. of The Memoirs of Lady Anne Fanshawe 1600-1673, Times Literary Supplement, 26 July, 1907.

<sup>49</sup> Walter Pater, "Leonardo da Vinci," The Renaissance, p. 112.

<sup>50</sup> Virginia Woolf, "Two Parsons," The Common Reader: Second Series. pp. 96, 101; originally appeared in part as, "Life Itself," rev. of The Diary of a Country Parson, vol. 3, by James Woodforde, ed. by John Beresford, New Republic, New York, 17 August, 1927.

<sup>51</sup> -----, "Reading," The Captain's Death Bed, p. 150.

<sup>52</sup> Walter Pater, "Charles Lamb," Appreciations, p. 117. My italics.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>54</sup> Dante Gabriel Rossetti, "Hand and Soul," in The Germ: Thoughts Towards Nature in Poetry, Literature and Art, January, 1850, p. 27.

<sup>55</sup> Hubert Crackanthorpe, "Reticence in Literature," in The Yellow Book, II (July, 1894), p. 261.

<sup>56</sup> Virginia Woolf, "Reading," The Captain's Death Bed, p. 161.

<sup>57</sup> -----, "George Moore," The Death of the Moth, p. 101.

<sup>58</sup> Walter Pater, "Conclusion," The Renaissance, p. 235.

<sup>59</sup> See Virginia Woolf, "The Modern Essay," The Common Reader, p. 270.

<sup>60</sup> Walter Pater, "Style," Appreciations, see pp. 18-22 passim.

<sup>61</sup> -----, "Conclusion," The Renaissance, p. 233.

<sup>62</sup> Virginia Woolf, Diary III, p. 62. (February 27, 1926.)

<sup>63</sup> Walter Pater, "Conclusion," The Renaissance, pp. 235-236. X

<sup>64</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé, "Crisis in Poetry," Mallarmé: Selected Prose Poems, Essays and Letters, Intro. and trans. Bradford Cook (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1956), p. 40. The italics are Mallarmé's. Further references to Mallarmé's essays are taken from this collection.

<sup>65</sup> -----, "The Evolution of Literature," Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., "Crisis in Poetry," pp. 40-41.

<sup>67</sup> Virginia Woolf, "The Modern Essay," The Common Reader, p. 270.

<sup>68</sup> -----, Diary II, p. 14.

<sup>69</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé, "Crisis in Poetry," p. 38.

<sup>70</sup> Virginia Woolf, "Craftsmanship," The Death of the Moth, pp. 130-131; first delivered as a broadcast on April 20, 1937.

<sup>71</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé, "Crisis in Poetry," p. 42.

<sup>72</sup> -----, "Music and Literature," p. 48.

<sup>73</sup> Stanley Fish develops this idea in his analysis of seventeenth century literature in Self-Consuming Artifacts (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), in which he argues how the activity of reading is a process of continually revised interpretations, until understanding itself becomes subject to revision and question. The work of art is self-consuming in the sense that it works against its own rhetorical and grammatic structures, and thus the reader's own confidence in revealed meaning is consumed as well. Fish stipulates that this method need not be relegated to the study of Metaphysical poets and sermon writers alone. Significantly, he takes as his most frequent example in the exposition of his method, Walter Pater from the "Conclusion" in The Renaissance (see the Appendix, pp. 390-404 passim).

74 Stéphane Mallarmé, "Crisis in Poetry," pp. 40-41.

75 Wallace Stevens, "Credences of Summer,"

The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens, p. 373.

76 Walter Pater, "Style," in Appreciations, p. 21.

77 Virginia Woolf, The Waves, pp. 192, 191 .

78 Ibid., p. 59.

79 Virginia Woolf, Diary I, p. 271. (12 May, 1919.)



CHAPTER FIVE"NOTES TOWARDS A SUPREME SKETCH":IMPLICATIONS FOR CUBISM IN THE SKETCHES OF VIRGINIA WOOLF

That periodic movement of weaving and unweaving, of ebb and flow that is present already in Virginia Woolf's titles, is felt even more strongly in the structure of her sketches. That structure in itself occurs with enough frequency in her work to merit recognition as her own peculiar literary device: the "surprise ending" or the rug-pulled-out-from-underneath effect, which occurs in stories from the earliest "Mark on the Wall" (1917), to the posthumous "Flying Over London" (1950). The movement of these stories is clear assertion and denial: as the imagination proceeds with its creation, there is no fancy that cannot become its own reality--until its artifice is exposed at the end, and the story is left without a leg to stand on. Thus, as Minnie Marsh, the poor relation and maiden aunt of "An Unwritten Novel", alights from the railway carriage to be met by her waiting real-life son, the imagination is confounded: "Minnie Marsh" literally does not exist, and in this sense the title of the piece acquires a different meaning as the obliteration of the character's reality truly "un-writes" or denies the "novel". With similar action the credibility of the imagination is exposed in "A Mark on the Wall", where the various possible identities

of the mark are limited to the single mundane reality of a snail; so, too, in the "Searchlight" manuscripts is the substance of the story itself rendered non-existent by the explosion of a bomb in which all evidence of truth is destroyed.<sup>1</sup> Like the bomb itself, in the final paragraph of one of the manuscript versions, the narrator explodes what has just been created, and the story becomes self-consuming:

Should anyone object, the story here given is not to be found in the Dictionary of National Biography, and is therefore untrue; should they say birds never sang so loud; hollyhocks never grew so high, it is impossible now to contradict them. For whereas the Dictionary of National Biography remains intact, the book in which this story is told, and the album in which you could see him draped in a shawl posed as King Arthur were destroyed only the other day "by enemy action". 2

As the reader adjusts himself anew to the story in the light of this disorientation, he becomes self-consciously aware of the enforced discrepancy between the "subject" and the manner of its telling. And, as the subject disappears or undergoes transformation, only the perspective of the imagination remains, which is encouraged in its independence if only because there is no truth in what it sees. The entire action of a story such as "An Unwritten Novel", therefore, resembles the movement of a poem by Mallarmé, in which what is invoked is immediately taken away, because "to conjure up . . . the negated object, with the help of allusive and always indirect words, which constantly efface themselves in a

complementary silence, involves an undertaking which comes close to the act of creation".<sup>3</sup> It is in this sense, then, that the story reduced to technique is no longer a way into a secondary experience, but itself becomes the primary: it forms a hard, seemingly transparent surface in which perception does not recreate the object, but only reflects perception itself, and as such the story exists by virtue of aesthetic consciousness.

It is in this sense, also, that Virginia Woolf's technique depends for its effect upon that teleological reading which keeps the end in mind to resolve the enigmatic discontinuities and gaps encountered along the way. When that completion is frustrated by the deliberate negation of the very substance of that reading, then the story is not so much rendered non-existent as it is thrown into question: instead of being able to allow his understanding to stop in definition, the reader is forced to return to the text, and there to find whatever satisfaction he can. In this way, denial prevents the work of art from achieving stasis by demanding for itself a reading, wherein the reader is caught as interpreter in a recurring and various instant. And it is in this way, too, that through denial the sketch becomes dependent upon itself as its own temporal regulator and context of meaning. Therefore, the sketch as Diderot knew it assumes a vision that looks away from itself towards an external significance, and brings it back into a finished work of art; but,

Virginia Woolf's art does not rest upon a confident foundation:

When [nature] set about her chief masterpiece, the making of man, she should have thought of one thing only. Instead, turning her head, looking over her shoulder, into each one of us she let creep instincts and desires which are utterly at variance with his main being, so that we are streaked, variegated, all of a mixture; the colours have run. Is the true self this which stands on the pavement in January, or that which bends over the balcony in June? Am I here, or am I there? 4

Where the personality stands in relation to the fiction, ultimately is as unimportant to Virginia Woolf as the true facts of biographical circumstance are to Walter Pater's sense of Leonardo's character and artistic genius. It does not matter that "The Lady in the Looking-Glass" is not the real Isabella Tyson, nor that the Minnie Marsh of "An Unwritten Novel" does not exist outside of Virginia Woolf's irrepressible imagination; the authority for these figures rests in the activity of vision itself, and for this reason Virginia Woolf's sketches seem fragmented in the conventional expectations for completion.

Straightforward negation of the story's truth is, therefore, the most obvious example of the sketch as self-consuming artifact. However, the simultaneous affirmation and denial is present in other, subtler ways: a trick-ending has the power to confuse, but not to question profoundly the assumptions of aesthetic vision by which art is both created and understood.

To a certain extent, all readings of literature are teleological: it is partly what keeps one going, in the

desire to find out why the various elements are important in relation to one another, and to the work of art as a whole. But in sketches such as "A Haunted House", "Monday or Tuesday" or "Blue and Green" the teleological becomes foreshortened, condensed by the intense simultaneity of what is going on, to the effect that the kind of reading which normally suspends its interpretation throughout the entire course of the story, is aggravated to puzzle each sentence step by step in the effort to find for itself identification with some kind of thematic unity. Immediately, for example, the first paragraph of "A Haunted House" introduces the reader into a confusion of syntax and meaning which never truly resolves; from the very first, the sketch denies itself the ease of recognition in an established time and space:

Whatever hour you woke there was a door shutting. From room to room they went, hand in hand, lifting here, opening there, making sure--a ghostly couple. 5

"A Haunted House" demonstrates exactly how any attempt to discover its action in particular space and time, necessarily would not be able to appreciate it as anything other than a fragment. To be understood as a "sketch", therefore, "A Haunted House" cannot be held up to notions of spatiotemporal existence: there is no time assigned to the action--it takes place at "whatever hour"--and thus the shutting door repeats itself endlessly into a constant present of perpetual motion. The sense of place, in turn, is frustrated by

a specific "there" with no determined direction, as is the sense of subject with the indeterminate "you". In this way, the sketch begins already in denial, with the door literally ever shutting itself upon all efforts to ascribe to it an external context.

Confusion multiplies as the sketch continues: enter an abstract "they" in never-completed movement, "lifting", "opening", and "making sure". Although the switch to the past tense in the second paragraph ("she murmured", "he whispered") should impart a certain predicative weight to the participial indefiniteness of the first, nevertheless, the absence of all reference confounds any attempt to keep the sketch in single definition--who is "it"-, where is "here"-, who are "them"? This movement towards abstraction that a present participle encourages is matched by an equally abstract subject and narrator; thus, the assertive creativity that is forced upon the sketch by its necessity to exist solely by virtue of the meanings its words derive from their relation to one another (instead of relying upon finished concepts that can be brought to their aid from without), is simultaneously its denial, as those relative meanings can never complete themselves into finished action. The sketch is its own subject, therefore: not only do its own syntax and expression determine its content, but that content, in turn, becomes the method of its own interpretation as the ghostly couple, the narrator, and the reader all intersect within the confines

of the form, each in endless search of some meaning to their respective experience.

Leonard Woolf reveals that "A Haunted House" was influenced somewhat by a sense of the memories stored up within the house itself at Asham, the Woolfs' country home before Monk's House.<sup>6</sup> But surely the sketch is no mere ghost story; this "nameless spirit" reappears years later in Pointz Hall, where it still defies all description in the manuscripts of Virginia Woolf's last, posthumous novel:

Certainly it is difficult to find a name for that which is in a room, yet the room is empty; for that which perceives . . . knife and fork, also men and women; and describes them; and not only perceives but partakes of them, and has access to the mind in its darkness. And further goes from mind to mind and surface to surface, and from body to body, creating what is not mind or body, not surface or depths, but a common element in which the perishable is preserved, and the separate become one. 7

This passage is condensed to the much shorter description in Between the Acts of the empty dining-room set for lunch, but there is nevertheless a spirit in the room that remains:

Empty, empty, empty; silent, silent, silent. The room was a shell, singing of what was before time was; a vase stood in the heart of the house, alabaster, smooth, cold, holding the still, distilled essence of emptiness, silence. 8

The tripled reverberations of "A Haunted House"-- the "safe, safe, safe" that is its heartbeat-- are echoed in the emptiness and silence of the dining-room at

Pointz Hall, the "heart of the house" in which the emptiness and silence build up into a felt presence through the weight of the insistently triple-beating "empty, empty, empty; silent, silent, silent". This spirit that Virginia Woolf finds so difficult to name, exists in the simultaneous presence and absence ("that which is in a room, yet the room is empty") which Arthur Symons invokes with paradoxes such as "the expressive silences", "the voice of silence", or "the disembodied voice".<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, the spirit that haunts Virginia Woolf's various fictional rooms is neither one that is descriptive, nor is it the informing "spirit of place" that imbues a certain location with a significance which transcends space and time. Rather, it is a spirit in the sense that some quality can be recognized even in the absence of the actual object or experience; a recognition which is rehearsed in theory by the exercise proposed by Charles Mauron in The Nature of Beauty in Art and Literature (translated by Roger Fry and published by the Woolfs).<sup>10</sup> If, for example, one contemplates a cube, is it the cube as an object alone, or is it the three-dimensional squareness of its "form" that one appreciates, and finds interesting? And, in the light of this proposition, why should it be, that if the corners of the cube are worn down or chipped, "it is none the less a cube for the spirit"?<sup>11</sup> It is evident in Mauron's exercise, that art is capable of being appreciated through a kind of



aesthetic shorthand. There is a sense, of course, in which all works of art require an interpretive reception, but it is surely the seeming fragment that necessitates the most de-coding in order to be understood as a work of art at all. How is it, then, that a cube can be identified in spite of its material fragmentation, and especially, what is the nature of Mauron's "spirit" of the cube?

It is Arthur Symons, again, who describes an art form that emerges only as its more easily recognizable features are taken away. The paintings of Whistler, he writes, are grounded in visual nature, but "gradually he knocks away support after support, expecting the structure to support itself by its own consciousness".<sup>12</sup> Ultimately, therefore, it is its own consciousness of structure that defines the aesthetic existence of a painting by Whistler, and it is "spirit" in this same sense of a "consciousness" that preserves the cube in the disintegration of its more solid identity; in this way, too, the spirit of the cube can be held no more in geometrical calculations, than a painting can be reproduced merely by the mechanics of style.

In "A Haunted House", then, something as impalpable as a fleeting impression, as ephemeral as a sixth sense which cannot be grasped because it has no theme or concept, lives delicately within an aesthetic structure that is pared down to consciousness itself. It is this aesthetic consciousness that is the "nameless spirit"-- the "common element in which the perishable is preserved,

and the separate become one"--and in the way that this "nameless spirit" or consciousness translates the experience of time and space into an aesthetic dimension, that which has passed away in reality is still very much present in its sense. Thus, multitudinousness is abstracted to minimalism: meaning is in excess of its material substratum, as, for example, the baroque succession of food upon Parson Woodforde's dining-room table is in excess of the reality.<sup>13</sup> So, too, is the life of centuries glimpsed momentarily in "A Haunted House", between utterances that shut themselves like doors upon meanings whose truth is sensed only peripherally; the "nameless spirit" that haunts the consciousness is, therefore, synonymous with the spirit of this sketch:

"Waking in the morning--" "Silver between  
the trees--" "Upstairs--" "In the garden--"  
"When summer came--" "In the winter snowtime--"  
The doors go shutting far in the distance,  
gently knocking like the pulse of a heart. 14

Although there is more circumstantial definition in "Monday or Tuesday" than there is in "A Haunted House", nevertheless, again the sketch is in a state of active abeyance:

Desiring truth, awaiting it, laboriously  
distilling a few words, for ever desiring--  
(a cry starts to the left, another to the  
right. Wheels strike divergently. Omnibuses  
conglomerate in conflict)--for ever desiring--  
(the clock asseverates with twelve distinct

strokes that it is midday; light sheds gold  
 scales; children swarm)-- for ever desiring  
 truth. Red is the dome; coins hang on the trees;  
 smoke trails from the chimneys; bark, shout,  
 cry "Iron for sale"--and truth? 15

Here the present participle is forever postponing the action of the sketch which also, as in "A Haunted House", reflects as much its own subject as the action of interpretive vision: the search for "truth". The unremmitting pressure of the present tense is increased by the insistence of one observation after another, statements of fact whose homogeneity is their overall suspension (as the parentheses are suspended syntactically in mid-sentence) in the perpetual "desiring" of truth. If stability is denied in "A Haunted House" by temporal irresolution, in "Monday or Tuesday" it is hindered by these facts, seemingly arbitrary and unrelated, which stand as total utterances in themselves--"red is the dome; coins hang on the trees"--as the mind engages in endless oscillation between the completion of the statement in itself, and its inability to remain integrated in the larger structure of the sentence. It is like a Cubist painting, whose visual image does not rest in single completion, but rather is agitated by objects that are lifted out of conventional perspectival depth into a collection of disparate angles and planes upon the canvas surface, and whose only significance depends upon the construct-making impulse of aesthetic vision.

In the same way does "Monday or Tuesday" function on an even grammatical plane; with no one thing receiving temporal emphasis over another, as the light "covers and

uncovers, moves and remains" without any sort of preferential action, the sentences become de-centralized, and in their drive towards totality, challenge rather than achieve resolution. Thus, the lines do not successfully contain themselves: there is a prevalence of dashes and parentheses, and whole paragraphs leave off unfinished, hanging in mid-air by punctuation that trails off without even granting to the reading voice, rest in falling inflexion.

As "Monday or Tuesday" denies itself any form of completion, therefore, it literally sends itself into absence, like a poem by Mallarmé in which the solidity of words becomes ellipsis as they follow with no grammatical cohesion, and end in pause. This pause or silence, however, does not create the fragment; rather, that thought which stands fragmentarily in a Mallarmé poem or a sketch by Virginia Woolf, is incomplete only in the context of a literary understanding that is governed by conventions of grammar and syntax. It is precisely the silence--the forced questioning of self-expression--that completes the fragment in mental exercise. The fact that the sketch seems incomplete because of its technique or subject matter is, ultimately, of no importance: it is only the reader himself who is, or is not satisfied by the failure of completion, and so it is his own reading experience that wants some form of resolution. Unable to come away from the sketch with a completed meaning, the reader can find significance

only within the work itself, and it is the action of his "returning" that formally completes the sketch. Such an interpretation, therefore, closes in upon itself; it does not complete the action of the sketch, but prolongs it, as the doors are forever shutting in "A Haunted House", and as the action of "Monday or Tuesday" is suspended in the state of "laboriously distilling a few words, forever desiring--".

The work of art as self-consuming artifact, therefore, does not obliterate itself into a void, but into mental silence, in which the aesthetic sensibility remains ever active. In the dimensionless spaces of this silence, it no longer matters whether the work in question is a page-long sketch or a three-volume novel; the act of reading is as rigorous in silence as it is in the work which demands attention only in the course of its own duration. The "silence" that prevails in the sketch by means of evocation, suggestion and ellipsis is seemingly that which keeps it a slight, fragment-like, minor literary form--at the same time it is also the quality by which the sketch takes on the emotional and expressive depth required in a substantial work of art. And, in this silence begins to emerge the possibility for the Mallarméan Ideal:

Everything will be hesitation, disposition of parts, their alternations and relationships--all this contributing to the rhythmic totality, which will be the very silence of the poem, in its blank spaces, as that silence is translated by each structural element in its own way. 16

. . . in the tiniest and most scattered stopping-points upon the page, when the lines of chance have been vanquished word by word, the blanks unfailingly return; before, they were gratuitous; now they are essential; and now at last it is clear that nothing lies beyond; now silence is genuine and just. 17

Two things, therefore, set side by side, remain at odds with one another within the aesthetic structure, and are completed only by a third which emerges from this conflict; the dichotomy of the title itself-- "Monday or Tuesday"--follows through in the sketch from the juxtaposition of time in nature with that imposed by society, to natural and social images, down to whole paragraphs composed only of self-contained, unrelated sentences. A more radical juxtaposition is found in "Blue and Green", in which the component sketches of "green" and "blue" are printed on facing pages, yet between which there are no internal parallel images or correspondences of action. Their enigma borders on mutual repellant in the self-effacing manner of a Mallarmé poem which, together with their existence in a constant present, lends as almost opaque surface quality to all sense of subject and time. Certainly, both sketches deny (or defy) a reasoned reading into, as one hard image set against another resists attempts to fathom what is taking place. By these oppositions, like those in "Monday or Tuesday", the single image does not conform to the meanings of the other images among which it stands, but it is in such disparity that Mallarmé locates the higher significance:

The poet must establish a careful relationship between the two images, from which a third element, clear and fusible, will be distilled and caught by our imagination. We renounce that erroneous esthetic [sic] . . . which would have the poet fill his delicate pages of his book with the actual and palpable wood of trees, rather than with the forest's shuddering or the silent scattering of thunder through foliage. 18

By varying interpretations Mallarmé's ideas were to influence the arts and aesthetic theory until well into the twentieth century, so that there is a clear relation between his particular kind of synthesis and, for example, T. E. Hulme's concept of Imagism:

Say the poet is moved by a certain landscape, he selects from that certain images which, put into juxtaposition in separate lines, serve to suggest and evoke the state he feels . . . Two visual images form what one may call a visual chord. They unite to suggest an image which is different to both. 19

There is not present in Hulme's proposal, however, any sense that the two visual images should be incongruous or antipathetic as are, for example, the whale and cathedral in Virginia Woolf's "Blue and Green". It is an important distinction, therefore, that instead of resting in a mutually complementary state, connotations and meanings should "collide" and, in Mallarmé's words, generate the transcendent image through an "exchange of gleams".<sup>20</sup> And, thus it is also in this context that Virginia Woolf advises the young poet "to find the relation between things that seem incompatible yet have a mysterious affinity".<sup>21</sup> Such incompatibility of subject

matter is found, for example, in her sketch entitled "The Sun and the Fish":

The old lady in horn spectacles--the late Queen--is vivid enough; but somehow she has allied herself with a soldier in Picadilly [sic] who is stooping to pick up a coin; with a yellow camel who is swaying through an archway in Kensington Gardens; with a kitchen chair and a distinguished gentleman waving his hat. . . . For a sight will only survive in the queer pool in which we deposit our memories if it has the good luck to ally itself with some other emotion by which it is preserved. Sights marry, incongruously, morganatically (like the Queen and the Camel), and so keep each other alive. 22

No conventional narrative can make the leap from an eclipse in Yorkshire to tropical fish in the London Zoo; the only resolution of the irrational juxtaposition of "a dead world and an immortal fish"<sup>23</sup> lies in the making of relations--they converge in aesthetic consciousness. By countering Queen Victoria with a camel or a kitchen chair, the values of familiar things and figures are denied in their strangeness; but again, the "spirit" of the Queen or the camel is not determined so much by their concrete forms, as it is by the images and impressions that remain when the Queen has died or the camel has passed under the arch in Kensington Gardens. This lingering suggestion of things is what Virginia Woolf appreciates most in De Quincey's "impassioned prose":

. . . it is not the actual sight or sound itself that matters, but the reverberations that it makes as it travels through our minds. These are often to be found far away, strangely transformed; but it is only by gathering up and putting together these echoes and fragments that we arrive at the true nature of our experience. So thinking, he altered slightly the ordinary relationships. He shifted the values of familiar things. 24



The nature of experience, in this way, is made up of reverberations, echoes and fragments whose significance emerges in the very strangeness of their juxtaposition in the mind; so, to Walter Pater, an emotion or thing "is rarely content to die to thought precisely at the right moment, but will inevitably linger awhile, stirring a long 'brainwave' behind it of perhaps quite alien associations".<sup>25</sup> Therefore, the relationship between the Queen and the camel, (or between the sun and the fish, the whale and the cathedral, blue and green, or the various incidents that make up Monday and Tuesday), lives in the "reverberations" of the mind, whereby the incongruous releases its hold upon material points of reference and becomes suggestive through self-reference alone.

Thus, what is discordant in a dualism becomes even more constricting when lodged within a single idea. For example, Mrs. Swithin's fancy in Between the Acts, that "there were rhododendrons in the Strand; and mammoths in Piccadilly"<sup>26</sup>, on the one hand brings prehistoric England familiarly close, but on the other, almost simultaneously it makes the familiar become strange. The image immediately becomes self-conscious, for it cannot be resolved through knowledge of either present-day or prehistoric London. In the same way it is impossible for an idea such as Mallarmé's "silent scattering of thunder" to retain its meaning: words are not used according to expectation, nor do the images conform to experience which dictates that thunder cannot be silent. Therefore,

Mallarmé has already carried out the poet's task; even as he counsels against faithfulness to the "actual and palpable wood of trees", the affective quality of the forest--its distilled essence--is made present in the silent absence of literal thunder.<sup>27</sup> Thus, too, does each paragraph of Pater's "Conclusion" reduce experience to successively restricted possibilities, until it converges into the paradox by which "all that is actual" is "gone while we try to apprehend it"; the answer is to burn with a "hard, gemlike flame", yet, what does this really mean?<sup>28</sup> There is an inherent constricting discordance in the idea of a flame that is at the same time a jewel, but it is through precisely this flame-like self-consumption of literal truth, that the image becomes true in the sense of its "nameless spirit".

An operation of speech such as Mallarmé's "silent scattering of thunder" comes quickly to Virginia Woolf. Remarks such as that made with reference to a luncheon guest ("the lemon on steel acid vulgarity of the obvious"--an echo from "An Unwritten Novel": "the bitterness of her tone was like lemon on cold steel"<sup>29</sup>), are typical turns of phrase found throughout her letters and diaries, and they exhibit the same near-metonymic closeness of expression and meaning that is found in her sketches, and in descriptive passages in her novels; only, if metonymy substitutes an attribute for the actual

name of the thing, then in these instances the correlation that is the basis for the metonym, is severed and denied. Silence is no more an attribute of thunder than are lemon and steel of vulgarity; one thing is used to represent another when in reality there is no resemblance at all. These concepts go beyond metonymy, for while they structure themselves upon relevant analogy, there is no substance to the correspondence: thus, the surprise effect that comes at the end of such sketches as "The Mark on the Wall" is both condensed into a single image or impression, and augmented thereby in the intense simultaneity of presence and absence. For example, it is not an extended description of music by agglomerated similes that Virginia Woolf attempts in The Waves:

"Like" and "like" and "like"--but what is the thing that lies beneath the semblance of the thing? . . . There is a square; there is an oblong. The players take the square and place it upon the oblong. They place it very accurately; they make a perfect dwelling-place. Very little is left outside. The structure is now visible; what is inchoate is here stated; we are not so various or so mean; we have made oblongs and squares. This is our triumph; this our consolation. 30

Clearly, Virginia Woolf has need of more than metaphor in order to achieve in art a synthesis of something whose inherent meaning is not synonymous with its external manifestation. The music sequence in The Waves is not "like" a perfectly geometrical structure; rather, it is one as Virginia Woolf surveys the string quartet with something of Wallace Stevens' "hottest fire of sight . . . without evasion by a single metaphor".<sup>31</sup>

To an even greater extent, however, it is in the sketch that is entitled "The String Quartet" that Virginia Woolf examines the possibility of conveying musical quality--the music which the string quartet is not playing. In the same way that in The Waves there is a spirit in the music that "lies beneath the semblance of the thing", so in "The String Quartet" the "words are indistinguishable though the meaning is plain enough--love, laughter, flight, pursuit, celestial bliss".<sup>32</sup>

The sketch commences in a very matter-of-fact way and establishes itself with the emphatic "Well, here we are", but its confidence is quickly undermined by life's random disorder. There are reservations already at the end of the first paragraph--"Yet I begin to have my doubts"--and there follows a series of abortive attempts at facts and statements, each of which are overwhelmed by a multitudinousness and disparity that somehow still manages to gather itself together, however temporarily, into a concert hall. So it seems that Virginia Woolf is as much threatened by many-sidedness, as was De Quincey, for whom any subject could dissolve into "details infinite in number and infinite in littleness", which "break down and fritter away into fractions and petty minutae".<sup>33</sup> Indeed, it is a very De Quincey-like admission, that "it becomes every minute more difficult to see why, in spite of everything, I sit here believing I can't now say what, or even remember the last time it happened".<sup>34</sup>

The fragmented ideas and half-heard conversations that precede the concert and punctuate the brief intervals between movements, do convey a sense of the commotion of a restless audience but, at the same time, the entire sequence before the start of the music is carried forward not by a tide of thoughts and voices, but rather by the scepticism that is sustained throughout by the provisional "if" before each sentence. Every statement, in this way, is begun already in hypothesis, as the specificity of things such as the leak in the larder or the glove left in the train is immediately qualified by an "if". Even hard facts, then, are mutable; how much more so, therefore, is the abstraction of music. The progression of "ifs" finally runs up against the question-- "What chance is there?"--whether music can successfully elicit an imaginative and emotional response that goes beyond the confines of its own form, and transcends the circumstances of time and space.

Whatever chance there is, therefore, depends upon the imagination itself to sustain its flight in aesthetic consciousness; and, having no reference to any thing outside of itself, it can only be its own metaphor. Thus, "The String Quartet" is not an exercise in evocation through approximate description: as far as its aesthetic vision is concerned, the music is the pear tree on the mountain, a fluttering rose leaf, or whatever dream of "green garden, moonlit pool, lemons, lovers, and fish" the narrator finds herself in as she listens. For all its

myriad collection of images, impressions, emotions and thoughts, therefore, the sketch is not what it seems to be: the more it piles up its information, the less informative it becomes. "The String Quartet", in this way, works its way backwards into self-reference, for any emphasis upon a single tendency, paradoxically, only serves to increase multiplicity and suggestion. It is this sense exactly that is the influence of Pater's "relative spirit", which causes things to "pass into their opposites by accumulation of undefinable quantities";<sup>35</sup> and, finally, it is the movement into abstraction that is implied by Mallarmé: "To create is to conceive an object in its fleeting moment, in its absence".<sup>36</sup>

Such stories as Virginia Woolf weaves in "The String Quartet" around princes and lovers who seem dream-distorted versions of Hamlet or Romeo and Juliet, are no less true in their fancy than is, for example, the character Orlando in relation to Vita Sackville-West; it is important to remember that they do not stand as comments upon the music nor upon any aspect of life as a whole. Now, with reference to painting instead of music, Virginia Woolf writes in her diary, that "I like pictures; its as things that stir me to describe them; but then only certain pictures do this; & I insist (for the sake of my aesthetic soul) that I don't want to read stories or

emotions or anything of the kind into them; only pictures that appeal to my plastic sense of words make me want to have them for still life in my novel".<sup>37</sup> This comment is inspired by the attempts to describe her impressions of the National Gallery to her sister, yet when invited to write a Foreword to the catalogue of one of Vanessa Bell's exhibitions, Virginia Woolf seems none too faithful to the idea of significant form:

Let us leave it to the critics to pursue the exciting adventure which waits them in these rooms. . . . how blues and oranges trembled into life; how this mass mated itself with that; how the line grew taut or slack; how with an infinitude of varied touches the finished picture came into being. For us the experience has its excitement too. A meaning is given to familiar things that makes them strange. Not a word sounds and yet the room is full of conversations. What are the people saying who are not sitting on that sofa? What tune is the child playing on her silent violin? Nobody moves and yet the room is full of intimate relationships. 38

A similar response is elicited by the paintings of Walter Sickert: "it is difficult to look at them and not invent a plot, to hear what they are saying".<sup>39</sup> Thus, Virginia Woolf imagines her way into the dreary life of the publican and his fat wife, knows the story of the girl sitting half-dressed on the edge of the cheap iron bed, hears the naive confession of Rose to the worldly Marie--yet, just as she sits down to a bottle of wine with the innkeeper, over his shoulder she sees the "red-gold light dripping down into the green waters of the canal", and is suddenly aware of "a grey church looming over us and one pink cloud riding down the bosom of the

west".<sup>40</sup> And so, all stories come to an end in a silence that is composed of confounded language, in the way that, for Mallarmé, "at last it is clear that nothing lies beyond; now silence is genuine and just".<sup>41</sup>

At last . . . we have reached the edge  
where painting breaks off and takes her way  
into the silent land. We shall have to set  
foot there soon, and all our words will  
fold their wings and sit huddled like rooks  
on the tops of the trees in winter. 42

The pronounced Symbolist flavour of this observation is not gratuitous; Virginia Woolf echoes Mallarmé's sense as closely as she does Pater's proposal, that "it is the addition of strangeness to beauty, that constitutes the romantic character in art"<sup>43</sup>--so, too, "meaning is given to familiar things that makes them strange" in the paintings of Vanessa Bell.<sup>44</sup> The spirit of Virginia Woolf's aesthetic criticism, therefore, continues in the Mallarméan and Paterian tone that is present already in the early "Impressions at Bayreuth", where:

. . . sound melts into colour, and colour  
calls out for words, where, in short, we  
are lifted out of the ordinary world and  
allowed merely to breathe and see--it is  
here that we realize how thin are the walls  
between one emotion and another; and how  
fused our impressions are with elements  
which we may not attempt to separate. 45

What Virginia Woolf is inspired to write of music in 1909, still echoes in the Introduction to her sister's pictures in 1934:



Where does the man end and Buddha begin?  
 Character is colour, and colour is china,  
 and china is music. Greens, blues, reds  
 and purples are here seen making love and  
 war and joining in unexpected combinations  
 of married bliss. A plant bends its leaves  
 in the jar and we feel that we too have visited  
 the depths of the sea. 46

The fantasies that Virginia Woolf spins around arrangements in music and painting, therefore, are no ordinary stories; they exist for their own sake, allowing the work of art to continue in its unsentimental, significant form. Virginia Woolf is not compelled to invent such interpretations for reality as she does for the character of Minnie Marsh in "An Unwritten Novel", or for the music in "The String Quartet". It is evident that the primary impression does have a certain hold over her: "We had tea from bright blue cups under the pink light of the giant hollyhock. . . . why did my eye catch the trees? The look of things has a great power over me".<sup>47</sup> She believes that "the first of my senses to wake is the colour sense",<sup>48</sup> but then: "Thinking it over, I believe its getting the writing in rhythm that matters".<sup>49</sup> These remarks are introspective, made in letters and diaries, but Virginia Woolf is consistent and transposes them formally into her advice to a young poet:

All you need now is to stand at the window and let your rhythmical sense open and shut, open and shut, boldly and freely, until one thing melts in another, until the taxis are dancing with the daffodils, until a whole has been made from all these separate fragments. . . . summon all your courage, exert all your vigilance, invoke all the gifts that Nature has been induced

to bestow. Then let your rhythmical sense  
wind itself in and out among men and women,  
omnibuses and sparrows--whatever come along  
the street--until it has strung them together  
in one harmonious whole. 50

If, in this way, reality is to be approached through a "rhythmical sense" then, essentially, Virginia Woolf is counselling Aestheticism: rhythm becomes a conscious structure which is also the faculty for aesthetic perception. And, as the sketch becomes an aesthetic consciousness, so the pattern of its structure will be the pattern of the thing seen. Without such an artificial conscious structure, Virginia Woolf's advice to let the mind loose into diversity would tempt the young poet to the fate of De Quincey.

Therefore, when Virginia Woolf avows that she has no desire to read stories into pictures, and that the occasions for her prose fantasies are only those pictures that appeal to her "plastic sense of words",<sup>51</sup> then it is this plastic or rhythmical sense that grants her elaborations their aesthetic distance from the original thing. To imagine, for example, that Queen Elizabeth "breakfasts off beer and meat and handles the bones with fingers rough with rubies",<sup>52</sup> is of no biographical significance--but roll the consonants off the tongue and let them fall with their weight into the lilt of the sentence, and the impossible fantasy comes suggestively alive in its conscious aesthetic rhythm.

It is this sense of its own rhythmical structure that the fragment must possess in order to aspire to the aesthetic state of the sketch, but the discipline necessary

to work and maintain such consciousness in art, is practised as mistakenly in most examples of sketches, as it is recognized by most critics. If Brander Matthews declared himself the pioneering and definitive critic of short prose, then he was anticipated by Frederick Perkins, who recognized the sketch as distinct from the story, in that "the latter should contain some course of action or narrative of events . . . while 'sketch' may be applied to almost any account of persons or things or thoughts which has not that element of movement".<sup>53</sup> Such a definition really can mean no more than that the sketch is a short piece of description, and it is all too common in those writers who were influenced by Symbolist and Aesthetic tendencies, that their conscious efforts to circumvent conventional narrative are manifested in sketches and prose poems which are only brief affairs of descriptive style.

One of the most interesting prose experiments to have come out of the 'Nineties is Hubert Crackanthorpe's Vignettes: a gathering of some forty pieces, each not more than a few paragraphs long, and some no longer than one. They are given a heading that places a sketch either in France, Italy, Spain or England, and the particular occasion for each is dated chronologically, so that there is a kind of "diary" order to bind the various "vignettes" into one collection; indeed, Crackanthorpe gives it the sub-title, A Miniature Journal of Whim and Sentiment.<sup>54</sup> Each sketch describes a fleeting image or impression, such as the movement of light upon landscape, the bustle of a

market, or the quiet street of a french country town, and it is notable in all of them that Crackanthorpe is drawn to each scene by the colours, shapes and sounds of actual things and places. In their subject matter and in their mode of expression the sketches do not pretend to any importance, and that is perhaps their greatest charm. Nevertheless, Crackanthorpe does not pass them off as mere momentary inspirations; there is an attempt to remove them from their external reference with devices such as a conclusion that literally "tapers off" upon the page--that is, the last paragraph is set up so that each line of type becomes progressively narrower until the last words stand in the middle of the page as the apex of an inverted triangle that is the typographical form of the sketch. The arrangement is actually quite effective, for the stages of contraction accelerate as the sentences dwindle, and thus the effect of reading the vignette reproduces the slight and fleeting impression at the same time as it forms the visual conclusion for something which in reality has none.

This converging typography, however, also has the effect of containing the sketch upon the page, within a shape that presents it as a thing of artifice; and, what the sketch acquires in aesthetic interest, it must equal with aesthetic structure and expression. Here, Crackanthorpe's vignettes reveal their weakness, for straight description does not generate sufficient energy to sustain aesthetic significance, and eventually all of the sketches begin to seem the same. One of the most memorable images is the

description of a market-place, but notice how each word bears a specific weight; there is no general pile-up of superfluous adjectives: "the glossy vermilion of piled capsicums, the scarlet sparkle of bleeding pomegranates, and the hard flashing of scattered, silvery sardines".<sup>55</sup> The description pleases with its precision and clear outline, but inevitably it remains as a list of attributes-- compare it to a similar effort by Virginia Woolf, a complete extravagance that renders any desire for objectivity redundant:

As for the shop windows their curved bows of translucent glass globed mounds of butter, restrained torrents of tumbling eggs. Whole sides of beef, pink flanks of eviscerated pigs swung, sausages wreathed from hooks. 56

Virginia Woolf does not present a description in the real sense. No relations are made between the terms and those sensations belonging to time and space which they are supposed to represent; these are translated instead into an aesthetic dimension which alone determines how they are able to be modulated according to its own formal design. It is this sort of aesthetic self-sufficiency that is wanted in Crackanthorpe's sketches. His vignettes are self-referential to a degree where their slightness becomes a contrivance by which a particular impression is marked in significant isolation, and the sense of their independence in artifice is emphasized further by the way in which type is set up upon the page. Another typical feature is the absence of all active verbs, which in a sketch such as "In Normandy" leads the reader on in his

hopes for a physical energy to animate the given images. The images persist in being passive, however, and their refusal to be resolved in completed action is what remains to activate the sketch:

"In Normandy"

September 30

A mauve sky, all subtle; a discreet rusticity, daintily modern, femininely delicate; a whole finikin arrangement of trim trees, of rectangular orchards, of tiny, spruce houses, tall-roofed and pink-faced, with white shutters demurely closed. Here and there a prim farmyard; a squat church-spire; and bloused peasants jogging behind rotund white horses, along a straight and gleaming road. In all the landscape no trace of the slovenly profusion of the picturesque; but rather a distinguished reticence of detail, fresh, coquettish, almost dapper. 57

Because there is no principal verb to give the sketch an active direction, its perception of reality therefore must pattern itself upon structure: by turning in upon itself the sketch will acquire its creative power. But in Crackanthorpe's example such force is dissipated because he still patterns his artist's vision upon the appearance of things in nature, and thus the self-coherent structure of his sketch loses the strength necessary for stamping an impression with sufficient aesthetic significance to sustain the reader's interest. In the landscape, he discerns "no trace of the slovenly profusion of the picturesque", yet that is precisely the condition to which his sketch tends: details that are simultaneously dainty, modern, rustic, and feminine cannot keep an image like "bloused peasants jogging behind rotund white horses" from the picturesque. Ultimately, "In Normandy" and most

of Crackanthorpe's other vignettes are of much the same order as the word-painting that Roger Fry attempted, and then excused himself from in deference to the sketches of Virginia Woolf. <sup>58</sup>

Hubert Crackanthorpe prefers the brief fragmentary sketch for the sake of the impression it seeks to convey, and not because the capricious nature of his own vision determines that it cannot expand itself by conventional literary means into an extended work of art. Needless to say, an art form whose mode is its own perceptive faculty, exists in a rather rarified state, but the condition is necessary in order that the artist is able to transcend both the limitations of his own perspective as well as the impossibility of a common, objectified vision. Such is the only possible existence for a voice that is at once human and disembodied, which Valéry distinguishes as "the pure sensing self":

But man is man only through the will and power to preserve or restore what he chooses to remove from the process of natural decay. . . . He has sought and found means of fixing and reviving at will his finest and purest states, of reproducing, transmitting and preserving for centuries the formulas of his enthusiasm, his ecstasy, the particular vibrancy of his person; and, as a fortunate and amazing consequence, the invention of these methods of preservation has given him simultaneously the idea and the power to develop and enrich artificially the fragments of poetic life which his nature at times grants him. He has learned to extract from the flux of time, and to detach from circumstances, these marvellous, fortuitous forms and perceptions which would have been lost

for ever, had not the ingenious and shrewd  
 being come to the aid of the being of the moment  
 with its inventions for this pure sensing  
self. 59

It is the movement of this "sensing self", or  
 aesthetic perception, between assertion and denial--the  
 Mallarméan process of creation through absence--that brings  
 the elements of a work of art round upon themselves,  
 by which it then becomes possible for the work to exist  
 in the simultaneous condition of self-sufficiency and  
 self-defeat. The action of self-denial in any capacity  
 prevents its object from resting in a single state;  
 thus, grammar and syntax, the use of tense and of specific  
 images all exhibit this effect of affirmation and denial  
 in sketches like "A Haunted House" or "Monday or Tuesday",  
 where they are variously reworked, questioned, undermined,  
 and put into new relations.

Point of view, or perspective, comes under the  
 influence of this movement as well. Multiple perspective  
 in a work of art has the effect of stressing form over  
 content, for the traditional function of content is  
 the expression of single meanings, and the delineation  
 of specific characters. In the absence of one final  
 perspective, evocation expands as meanings multiply,  
 and in this sense Virginia Woolf's sketches become  
 studies of consciousness, exercises in ways of seeing.  
 Such a piece is "In the Orchard", which is concerned  
 primarily with the setting up of perspectives. The  
 sketch is tri-partite, each section a variation of a  
 single incident: the scene is an orchard where the



character Miranda is daydreaming or asleep, when suddenly she jumps up and exclaims, "Oh, I shall be late for tea!"<sup>60</sup>

Each section is separate, and starts the action over again; each is a single perspective and provides a view that the other cannot give. The first view is that of a traditional omniscient narrator who, with a combination of knowledge and imagination, can see everything from a sentence in the open book, to miles over the orchard. Still, this is a narrator who is interested in how perception orders its world, and so the movement of the sketch from Miranda to the sky, goes from one thing to another almost as a camera pulls back from the specific to the general. Certainly, there is a calculated progression in the stages that pause to describe the scene first at Miranda's level, then four feet over her head, then from the top of the apple tree thirty feet above the earth, to the church bells floating two hundred feet in the air, until they stop with the wind miles above everything. The panorama of this method that takes in both the effects of light on Miranda's rings, as well as Miranda "miles below, in a space as big as the eye of a needle" is, again, not a characterization, but an experiment in looking at the girl in relation to her exact position in her surroundings--an absorption with seeing very much like the fascination with perspective in children, squinting at the world upside down, or blocking out whole views with their thumbs. Virginia Woolf is not

unfamiliar with the game: even in her diary, her visual delight in the appearances of things combines with her awareness of perspective:

Proportions Changed

That in the evening, or on colourless days, the proportions of the landscape change suddenly. I saw people playing stoolball in the meadow: they appeared sunk far down on a flat board; & the downs raised high up, & mountains around them. Detail was smoothed out. This was an extremely beautiful effect; the colours of the womens dresses also showing very bright & pure in the almost untinted surroundings. I knew, also, that the proportions were abnormal--as if I were looking between my legs. 61

There is also a sense in which each stage of this expanding vision is in itself an enclosed perspective. The measured distance specified for each plane is incongruous enough to attract the reader's attention, and with this attention caught at the beginning of the paragraph, the reader holds the scene suspended until the end, when the measurement is repeated. The scene, therefore, is literally circumscribed, encompassed by precise measurements which limit the action to that specific paragraph, or visual level:

Four feet in the air over her head, the apples hung. Suddenly there was a shrill clamour. . . . But this clamour passed four feet above Miranda's head.

Then the very topmost leaves of the apple-tree, flat like little fish against the blue, thirty feet above the earth. . . . Miranda lay asleep thirty feet beneath.

The second variation of the scene repeats itself subjectively in Miranda's imagination. She lets her surroundings mingle with her thoughts and emotions, and interprets such things as have happened already in the first part (like the cry of the local drunk) according to her own mood: the "solitary cry--sad, human, brutal" is now "the shout of the drunken man . . . life itself crying out from a rough tongue in a scarlet mouth".

And finally, the scene is surveyed with as little emotion and interpretation as possible. The vision is precise and notices such detail as can be defined only by words of exact description: "Each apple-tree had sufficient space. The sky exactly fitted the leaves. When the breeze blew, the line of the boughs against the wall slanted slightly and then returned". Miranda is present, but only as an additional element to the two cows, three birds, and twenty-four apple trees.

The perspectives of these three variations not only insist upon their own visual singularity, but also imply that technique must conform to the perspectives set up by literary traditions of genre and style. Each section explores the possibilities of a different kind of narrator, whether omniscient, psychological and impressionistic, or disembodied and impersonal, and this narrator, in turn, brings out and emphasizes those aspects of the scene that form the purely visual angle.

Here, too, there is the Mallarméan sense of a situation conjured up and immediately effaced by virtue of another, differing perspective; and yet, the story also works as a whole. Those three sections are given an artificial existence, set out as spatial entities each following the other on paper, whereas temporally they are superimposed upon one another. In each part something happens--the wind changes, the weather-vane squeaks, or Miranda exclaims that she will be late for tea--to stand as touchstones by which the actions of the separate accounts line up vertically into one combined moment. Whatever progression there is in the story is one of technique; otherwise, it is an exercise that explores the simultaneous existence of a number of possible visual perspectives, each of which contributes to a larger understanding of what is happening in the orchard.

Such attention as Virginia Woolf gives to the creative powers of aesthetic perception, is closer in spirit to something like the Cubist movement, than it is to Crackanthorpe's experiments in the sketch form. The notion of a "Cubist writing" is not absent in literature contemporary with Cubist art; as early as 1914, poems that claimed to be Cubist (though not very convincingly) were being written by Max Weber.\*

\* Max Weber, Cubist Poems (London: Elkin Matthews, 1914). "The Eye Moment" seems to be his most unconventional effort and hence, one supposes, his most ambitious attempt at Cubist writing; the first few lines suffice to give an idea of the poem:

Cubes, cubes, cubes, cubes,  
High, low, and high, and higher, higher,  
Far, far out, out out, far,  
Planes, planes, planes. . .

A more successful and credible effort is Gertrude Stein's word-portrait of Picasso, done in 1909. Confusing it may be, and gibberish it may seem, but there is an intention underneath that, at least theoretically, justifies the effect:

This was one who was working. This one was one being one having something being coming out of him. This one was one going on having something come out of him. This one was one going on working. This one was one whom some were following. This one was one who was working. 62

The narrow range of words and repetition in varied grammatical and syntactical combinations purges the words of their expected literary behaviour and isolates them as separate counters of meaning. From between these words in their relationship to one another, and in the slow but accumulating development of thought as one word acts upon the next, some essential sense of the character of Picasso (if not of his art) begins to emerge. What Stein does with word-structures, in expressing herself not by straightforward ideas, but by language as a technique that perceives the idea through the consciousness of its structure, is comparable to the way in which Virginia Woolf handles image-complexes in a sketch such as "In the Orchard". Just as in Stein's "portrait", words pick up their meaning from one another in that Mallarméan "collision", so does the life of Virginia Woolf's sketch spring from the juxtaposition of various simultaneous visual perspectives.

Once the work of the French Post-Impressionists had been introduced belatedly to the English public by

Roger Fry, Cubist art followed with relative speed. Before Cubist paintings were hung in the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition of 1912, the first sample of Cubism to be reproduced in England had already appeared in the pages of The New Age, with favourable articles by Huntly Carter and John Middleton Murry, and a show of Cubist art was to be seen at the Stafford Gallery.<sup>63</sup> Roger Fry's exhibition late in 1912 included several Cubist works by Braque and Picasso, and although it is no proof of influence, it is, at least, certain that Virginia Woolf saw these pictures, and entirely probable that she discussed them with Fry.

One of the paintings Virginia Woolf saw at the Grafton Galleries was listed in the catalogue as Kubelik by Braque. Since then it has rested in private collections, but was seen recently in the Tate's Cubism show of 1983, and reproduced in the catalogue.\* The picture is Aesthetic in the purest sense: by the myriad perspectives it creates, it becomes a work of art made up entirely of perceptual structures. Its recognizably Cubist quality is apparent in the treatment of the violin whose form, no longer fixed and finite, is indicated in terms of planes and angles which place no external or internal limits.

\* I am almost certain that this is the same picture; possibly Braque painted other versions as there are, for example, of Picasso's Le Bouillon Kub, also exhibited by Fry, which was painted in Spring and again in the Summer of 1912. If, indeed, there are a number of different Kubelick's, then it is of not much consequence for my textual analysis; the Cubist work of both Braque and Picasso in the 1911-1912 period is remarkably homogenous. See Violin and Poster (Mozart/Kubelick), by Georges Braque, rep. in The Essential Cubism 1907-1920 (London: The Tate Gallery, 1983), p. 79. There is a rather poorer reproduction in Appendix F.

In turn, these planes and angles are themselves not secure in their context: they collide, run together, and overlap so that the violin is not discovered in an unoccupied space, but rather, exists only by virtue of forms which, like space, are determined by changing proportions and relations between their perspectival surfaces.

These planes function visually, therefore, as the interpretations of "The Mark on the Wall" or the variations of "In the Orchard" do in the literary sense. And, while the infinite possibilities for perspectives and planes do negate each other as do the words of Mallarmé's poetry, at the same time, no one angle can be chosen over another simply because the essential violin has no single interpretation. Cubist art, in this sense, must exist in its own multitudinousness. Braque's violin is as true as the planes of which it is composed; "In the Orchard" consists of three equally valid perspectives which imply the possibility of many more; "The Mark on the Wall" is a tremendous assertion of Virginia Woolf's conviction, that "the novelists in future will realize more the importance of these reflections, for of course there is not one reflection but an almost infinite number".<sup>64</sup> With the acceptance of such multitudinousness the artist, both literary and visual, must abandon specific and restricting interpretation in recognition of technique and perception only. Process is emphasized over fixed result, and aesthetic vision must tolerate and accommodate <sup>N</sup>mansidedness and contradiction. Virginia Woolf takes

this attitude in "Phases of Fiction" (with a nice echo of music as the ideal Aesthetic art form):

. . . we stand outside watching what has no power over us one way or the other. Then we see the mind at work; we are amused by its power to make patterns; by its power to bring out relations in things and disparities which are covered over when we are acting by habit or driven on by the ordinary impulses. It is a pleasure somewhat akin, perhaps, to the pleasure of mathematics or the pleasure of music. 65

The other important issue in Braque's painting is, of course, the question of music: dominant in heavy lettering is the name "Mozart", with a less prominent "Kubelick" beneath. In one sense this represents nothing but a poster advertising a musical concert, but the intellectual ease with which the mind reads this information immediately contrasts with the spatial disintegration of the violin it presides over. This deliberate juxtaposition of mental and visual constructs demands from the viewer something more than passive appreciation. In order for the viewer to confront his initial confusion upon seeing the picture, it is necessary to consider how it is possible that the abstraction of music can be represented at all. The word "Mozart" in the way that it stands in the picture or in the sense that people say "I like Mozart", is a metonym: it is not the man himself to whom people refer, but his work. So, in uttering the name "Mozart", one places the word to stand for the entirety of his music, and its position in the painting conjures up that music, through its absence, into an abstract silence. Thus, the music is "on" the



poster as in another sense it is upon the canvas, and it is the collision between these ways of meaning and seeing that becomes the occasion for the painting.

Therefore, the single words "Mozart" and "Kubelick" in the corner of Braque's picture set up questions about abstraction and representation that are as relevant to the idea of music as are Virginia Woolf's imaginative flights in "The String Quartet". With the mind in this way able to exercise and survey the functions of its own perception, it is also able to accept that Braque's violin or the account of the orchard can exist only in the relations between surface planes, space, and mental attitudes; thus, perception is the primary Aesthetic condition, and not simply the establishing of a style or point of view.

Cubism, therefore, continues the concerns of Western art with how an object exists in its surrounding space, but it goes one step further towards a more complete truthfulness by attempting to convey the relativity of both its spatial and visual existence. In a letter to Ethel Smyth, Virginia Woolf explains her perception in a way which can only be likened to this Cubist spirit:

You and Nessa say I am so frightfully stupid because I dont see that fly on the floor: but I see the walls, the pictures and the Venus against the pear tree, so that the position and surroundings of the fly are accurately known to me. Say that you are a fly: what you actually do and say I may misinterpret; but your standing in the world being known to me, I never get you out of perspective as a whole. 66

Miranda's position in this sense is established by her relation to the life around her in the orchard; she is not a character inserted into a set landscape. And furthermore, this relation changes depending on the visual and literary perspective. Whether she is seen in terms of various measured distances, or that the landscape is part of her drowsy subjectivity, or whether her existence merely depends on "the corner of the orchard where the blue-green was slit by a purple streak" (the colour of her dress--a technique foreshadowing the purple triangle of Mrs. Ramsay), Miranda and the setting are known only in their relation to one another. This interdependence of space, object, and perspective is a crucial matter for the artist to attend to, for it allows him to exercise his aesthetic perception to the fullest; and because of the unavoidable subjectivity of what Pater calls the "thick wall of personality",<sup>67</sup> it is for the artist to recognize that his is the art of perceiving and creating single perspectives, assisted by the power to make patterns. Each plane of Kubelick is an individual visual angle, and together they make up the pattern of the painting; each section of "In the Orchard" is a single perspective, and the combination of the three becomes the conscious structure for the sketch as a work of art.

Although the perceiving mind may exist in some state of isolation, those very conditions that determine its

isolation--connotations, associations and attitudes--also determine that the object of perception itself cannot exist in isolation: it is always understood by mental and visual constructs. Notice, for example, the movement traced by the narrator's mind in "The Lady in the Looking-Glass" as it takes in new visual information:

A large black form loomed into the looking-glass; blotted out everything, strewed the table with a packet of marble tablets veined with pink and grey, and was gone. But the picture was entirely altered. For the moment it was unrecognizable and irrational and entirely out of focus. One could not relate these tablets to any human purpose. And then by degrees some logical process set to work on them and bringing them into the fold of common experience. One realized at last that they were merely letters. The man had brought the post.

There they lay on the marble-topped table, all dripping with light and colour at first and crude and unabsorbed. And then it was strange to see how they were drawn in and arranged and composed and made part of the picture. 68

This is not the story of one Isabella Tyson; it is of a lady as she is seen in a looking-glass. What Virginia Woolf presents is literally a mirror: a reflection of her imagination in the process of creating, as well as a frame that enforces angles and spaces and, thus, imposes a certain perspective. In the way that the "marble tablets" become letters through combinations of arrangement and composition, so there is no existence for an object known apart from its relations to other objects, and it is this that Virginia Woolf's sketches have in common with Cubist art. Instead of leading towards

solipsism, therefore, the necessary relative spirit and a healthy measure of subjectivity allow for a proportioned co-existence of perceiver and object; if one lacks the ability of establishing perspectives or seeing relations, one is overwhelmed by a world of no meaning and significance--or, perhaps, of too much meaning and significance, as was De Quincey's misfortune. This condition is explored in one of Virginia Woolf's more disconcerting short pieces, "Solid Objects".

Briefly, the story follows John's fascination with a lump of beach glass, which leads him on an obsessive life-long search for similar objects, randomly formed and arbitrarily found. He haunts rubbish heaps and slum areas for bits of broken china, and other "solid objects" whose use and origin have long been obliterated by chance: "he was often astonished, as he came to go into the question more deeply, by the immense variety of shapes to be found in London alone, and there was still more cause for wonder and speculation in the differences of qualities and designs".<sup>69</sup> Any hopes John had for a successful political career are ruined, and in the end, his relation to society becomes as rootless and without context as the objects he so compulsively collects.

The story is disconcerting because there is a very strong sense of pure delight in the "solid object" in Virginia Woolf's work. In a way, the view that can simplify a character to a purple streak or triangle, encourages the disassociation of meaning and sight--and this is Richard Le Gallienne's intention exactly in

illustrating the "Decadent attitude" with Whistler's "merely prismatic" portrait of his mother.<sup>70</sup> Yet, there is something to linger over and savour in the thought of letters as "marble tablets veined with pink and grey", or in the description of a table set with "rounds of white china and silver streaks beside each plate".<sup>71</sup> Such images are attractive because they alter "slightly the ordinary relationships" and shift "the values of familiar things"--observations that Virginia Woolf makes in praise of De Quincey.<sup>72</sup> These images deploy words and their meanings so that they have to settle into definition; but eventually, the streak and the triangle do become elements of a larger composition. The marble tablets are soon absorbed by the understanding of how they fit into place, and even the narrator of "Solid Objects" who, playing with perspective, begins the story from a distance with a black dot on four legs, brings the object into focus as two men on a beach.

It does not matter if objects have a simultaneous multiple existence; it is enough that there be relations and perspectives. The multiplicity, whether of a painting by Braque or a sketch by Virginia Woolf, is bounded at one end by the fact that at the centre of the most shattered representations of planes and space, there endures the sense of an object (a worn down cube is still a cube for the spirit); and it is contained at the other end by the fact that a pattern of relations has been discerned and formally arranged: between the essential object and the aesthetic object lies an incalculable

number of meanings, and it is the artist's perception that spans the two in the work of art. John's fragments exist in a limbo: they possess neither an independent aesthetic structure, nor do they refer to any external condition or quality, and so they disintegrate in the general irony of their "solidity" as objects.

Sympathy is felt for John in his preoccupation with shapes, because the sensitivity to "significant form" is rarely found in a philistine public. When the companion, Charles, notices a piece of glass too, but scornfully discards it as not flat enough to serve for a skipping stone, the reader instinctively sides with John who sees more in the world than supply-and-demand. Yet, John's obsession eventually renders the form insignificant; he loses sight of the fact, that what makes the form "significant" in the first place, is the imposition of perspective and the structuring force of an aesthetic spirit:

The contrast between the china so vivid, and the glass so mute and contemplative, fascinated him, and wondering and dazed he asked himself how the two came to exist in the same world, let alone to stand upon the same narrow strip of marble in the same room. The question remained unanswered. 73

It is the relation between china and glass, world and mantelpiece--welcome collisions--that John is unable to see, let alone to describe. He is the decadent of the Yellow 'Nineties, who courts the object for the sake of the object alone, who sees its accidental shape as another character very close to him in spirit, Arthur Symonds'

Christian Trevalga, sees the music he plays arise from the piano in a solid, palpable form. Like John's appreciation of objects, Christian Trevalga's strange talent is, to a certain extent, a logical progression from the theories of Mallarmé. His reaction, for example, on hearing a Siamese band on board the King of Siam's yacht, anticipates precisely the direction Schoenberg was to develop, of a music whose aesthetic structure is dependent entirely upon the conscious relations between notes in a self-referential twelve-tone system:

And how far behind these Eastern musicians are we, who cannot even understand their music when it is played to us! Some day some one will dig down to the roots, and turn up music as it was before it is tamed to the scale. 74

Yet, for all his sensitivity to abstract musical emotion, Christian Trevalga is unable to place and appreciate it within the context of the relative spirit:

I can see no reason . . . why I am here rather than there, why these atoms which know one another so little, or have lost some recognition of themselves, should coalesce in this particular body, standing still where all is in movement. 75

So, like John in "Solid Objects", Christian Trevalga becomes separate from the world; in losing their power to make relations, both Christian Trevalga and John lose the perspective granted through communication and love. Their Decadent conception of art, therefore, elevates its function to artifice, but it remains for movements such as Cubism to give significance to that artifice as a

deliberate aesthetic structure which puts responsibility upon perception.

The point here is being made rather strongly for the reason that Virginia Woolf had cause to exhort the practice of the theory: in her diary she recounts a conversation with Mark Gertler:

Form obsesses him. He sees a lamp as an imminent dominant mass of matter. Ever since he was a child the solidity & the shapes of objects have tortured him. I advised him, for art's sake, to keep sane; to grasp, & not exaggerate, & put sheets of glass between him and his matter. This, so he said, is now his private wish. But he can think pianola music equal to hand made, since it shows the form, & the touch & the expression are nothing. 76

This meeting took place in 1918, and "Solid Objects" was published in 1920, in the Athenaeum; except for a very early juvenile effort, it was for some reason the only one of her stories not to be collected in the 1921 Monday or Tuesday.<sup>77</sup> The somewhat unusual situation of the story--and perhaps even its rather moral tone--suggests that Virginia Woolf could have derived some inspiration from Mark Gertler's engrossment in pure form; but this is only hypothesis.

"Perception", then, is a key word: it is what lies behind Virginia Woolf's critical philosophy and methods, and its process is the making of relations that is the condition for the Aesthetic spirit. For Virginia Woolf's



criticism, the personality and the mental disposition of the artist are ways into the more important consideration of the mind examining its own methods of perception and creation, and in the writing of her own prose fiction she continues to work out her interest in such matters. It is undeniable that those sketches that do not involve such aesthetic concerns, are her worst. Where she produces a conventional anecdote with a surprise ending ("The Duchess and the Jeweller", "The Legacy", even "Lappin and Lapinova"), the story is not much different from other pieces of magazine prose which have long since sunk into obscurity in the pages of The London Mercury or Harper's Bazaar.

One method of analyzing Virginia Woolf's aesthetic attitude is not to look at those sketches in which she realizes it successfully, but rather to consider some of her more mediocre productions. Both "Old Mrs. Grey" and "Three Pictures" are sketches so melodramatic as to be predictable in their mawkishness; understandably, they were published posthumously.<sup>78</sup> The former concerns an old woman who wants to die but lingers on; "Three Pictures" is about a sailor home from the sea, happy with his wife and expecting their first-born, and who then dies of a foreign fever.

The first sketch has little merit. It is an unfortunate combination of sentimentality and moralising: Mrs. Grey is left in a conclusion rather like Bennett's The Old Wives' Tale, "with a bottle of medicine, a cup of tea, a dying fire, like a rook on a barn door; but a

rook that still lives, even with a nail through it". On the other hand, "Three Pictures" has a little more to its credit. Like "Old Mrs. Grey" its subject is a set piece, but the narrator is conscious of the sentimentality by the fact that she divides the sketch into three parts which she calls "pictures", and that the picture is treated deliberately as genre-work with the label "The Sailor's Homecoming". By distancing herself through an imposed convention, the narrator renounces her omniscience: what the sketch ends up doing, is following her expectations of what she imagines is a stock scene, and in the end the rug is pulled out from underneath her picture-making, when the sailor dies. Granted that this change of events is but another melodramatic device-- the sketch is not one of Virginia Woolf's masterpieces-- still, such discrepancy as there is between the narrator and the subject elevates the reader's consciousness to the level where the issue becomes the way of seeing, and not what is seen. The sketch is neither long nor particularly serious; but, it hints at further considerations along the lines of how perception is conditioned by taste, expectation, genre, and the like. It is the consciousness of its structure, again, that provides the sketch with interest, and which puts it above the rank of "Old Mrs. Grey".

Therefore, in the exercise of the aesthetic consciousness, the multitudinousness and contradiction of

Cubist planes or the perspectives of a sketch coexist, and suggest a completion--a Mallarméan synthesis--which is otherwise denied by angles and refractions, by the "glimpse of a nose, a shoulder, something turning away, always in movement". It is in this sense that Arthur Symons looks back to Pater's "imaginary portrait" as "the study of a soul, or rather of a consciousness"; and it is also the sense in which Symons looks forward to the achievements of Cubism: "such a study as might be made by simply looking within, and projecting now this now that side of oneself on an exterior plane".<sup>79</sup>

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

CHAPTER FIVE

<sup>1</sup> See the MSS. numbered B 10 e: 1, 3,4,5, and B 10 f, pp. 11, 14: in the Monk's House Papers deposited in the Library of the University of Sussex. These are described also by J. W. Graham in "The Drafts of Virginia Woolf's 'The Searchlight'," Twentieth Century Literature, 22, No. 4 (1976), 379-393.

<sup>2</sup> University of Sussex, Monk's House Papers B 10 e, No. 1, p. 4; Typescript entitled "A Scene for the Past".

<sup>3</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé, quoted in "Symbolism, Decadence and Impressionism," by Clive Scott, Modernism 1890-1930, eds. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), p. 209.

<sup>4</sup> Virginia Woolf, "Street Haunting; A London Adventure," Yale Review, 16 October, 1927; rpt. in The Death of a Moth, p. 24.

<sup>5</sup> Virginia Woolf, "A Haunted House," in A Haunted House, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> Leonard Woolf, Beginning Again (London: The Hogarth Press, 1964), p. 57.

<sup>7</sup> Virginia Woolf, Pointz Hall Typescript, pp. 57-58 (July 3, 1938); quoted in Virginia Woolf: The Inward Voyage by Harvena Richter (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 138.

<sup>8</sup> Virginia Woolf, Between the Acts, p. 47.

<sup>9</sup> See, respectively, Arthur Symons' "Maeterlinck as Mystic," The Symbolist Movement in Literature (London: William Heinemann, 1899), p. 154, for the first two terms; "a disembodied voice, and yet the voice of a human soul" is his Decadent ideal in "The Decadent Movement in Literature," Harper's New Monthly Magazine, November, 1893.

<sup>10</sup> See Charles Mauron, The Nature of Beauty in Art and Literature, trans. and Preface by Roger Fry (London: The Hogarth Press, 1927), p. 25.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Arthur Symons, "The Painting of the Nineteenth Century," Studies in Seven Arts (London: Archibald Constable, 1906), p. 52.

<sup>13</sup> See Virginia Woolf, "Two Parsons," in The Common Reader: Second Series, p. 96.

<sup>14</sup> -----, "A Haunted House," p. 10.

<sup>15</sup> -----, "Monday or Tuesday," A Haunted House, p. 12.

<sup>16</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé, "Crisis in Poetry," in Mallarmé: Selected Prose Poems, Essays and Letters, Intro. and trans. Bradford Cook (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1956), p. 41.

<sup>17</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé, "Mystery in Literature," Ibid., pp. 33-34.

<sup>18</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé, "Crisis in Poetry," p. 40.

<sup>19</sup> T. E. Hulme, quoted in: Natan Zach, "Imagism and Vorticism," Modernism, q.v., p. 235.

<sup>20</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé, "Crisis in Poetry," pp. 40-41.

<sup>21</sup> Virginia Woolf, "A Letter to a Young Poet," The Death of the Moth, p. 141.

- <sup>22</sup> Virginia Woolf, "The Sun and the Fish," Time and Tide, 3 February, 1928; rpt. in The Captain's Death Bed, p. 193.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>24</sup> -----, "Impassioned Prose," Granite and Rainbow, p.40.
- <sup>25</sup> Walter Pater, "Style," Appreciations (London: Macmillan and Co., 1890), p. 15.
- <sup>26</sup> Virginia Woolf, Between the Acts, p. 38.
- <sup>27</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé, "Crisis in Poetry," p. 40.
- <sup>28</sup> Walter Pater, "Conclusion," The Renaissance (London: Macmillan and Co., 1917), pp. 235-236.
- <sup>29</sup> Virginia Woolf, Diary V, p. 265. (Thursday, 8 February, 1940.) See also "An Unwritten Novel," A Haunted House, p. 15.
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- <sup>31</sup> Wallace Stevens, "Credences of Summer," The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), p. 373.
- <sup>32</sup> Virginia Woolf, "The String Quartet," A Haunted House, p. 31.
- <sup>33</sup> Thomas De Quincey, "A Brief Appraisal of the Greek Literature," The Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey, ed. David Masson, Vol. X (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1890), p. 340.
- <sup>34</sup> Virginia Woolf, "The String Quartet," p. 28.
- <sup>35</sup> Walter Pater, "Coleridge," Appreciations, p. 65.
- <sup>36</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé, "Crisis in Verse," in Symbolism: An Anthology, ed. and trans. T. G. West (London: Methuen, 1980), p. 5.

- 37 Virginia Woolf, Diary I, p. 168. (Tuesday, 16 July, 1918.)
- 38 -----, Foreword to the Catalogue of Recent Paintings by Vanessa Bell (London: The Lefevre Galleries, 1934).
- 39 Virginia Woolf, Walter Sickert: A Conversation (London: The Hogarth Press, 1934), p. 13.
- 40 Ibid., p. 19.
- 41 Stéphane Mallarmé, "Mystery in Literature," q.v., p. 34.
- 42 Virginia Woolf, Walter Sickert: A Conversation, pp. 21-22.
- 43 Walter Pater, "Postscript," Appreciations, p. 258.
- 44 Virginia Woolf, Foreword, Catalogue of Recent Paintings by Vanessa Bell.
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- 46 -----, Foreword, Catalogue of Recent Paintings by Vanessa Bell.
- 47 -----, Diary III, pp. 190-191. (12 August, 1928.)
- 48 -----, Letters V, p. 437. (To Julian Bell, 25 October, 1935.)
- 49 -----, Diary II, p. 322. (18 November, 1922.)
- 50 -----, "Letter to a Young Poet," The Death of the Moth, pp. 140-141.
- 51 -----, Foreword, Catalogue of Recent Paintings by Vanessa Bell.
- 52 -----, "Reading," The Captain's Death Bed, p. 146.
- 53 Frederick B. Perkins, "A Chat By Way of Preface," Devil-Puzzlers and Other Studies (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1877), xiii. Brander Matthews' definition came

seven years later: "Perhaps the difference between a Short-story and a Sketch can best be indicated by saying that, while a Sketch may be still-life, in a Short-story something always happens. A Sketch may be an outline of character, or even a picture of a mood of mind, but in a Short-story there must be something done, there must be an action." In The Philosophy of the Short Story (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1901), p. 35; this first appeared as "Short Stories" in The Saturday Review, 5 July, 1884, pp. 32-34, and as "The Philosophy of the Short Story" in Lippincott's Magazine, October 1885, pp. 366-374.

<sup>54</sup> Hubert Crackanthorpe, Vignettes. A Miniature Journal of Whim and Sentiment (London: The Bodley Head, 1896).

<sup>55</sup> -----, "In the Strada del Porto," in Vignettes, p. 40.

<sup>56</sup> Virginia Woolf, see MS. entitled "A Scene from the Past," B 10 e, No. 1 of the Monk's House Papers at the University of Sussex.

<sup>57</sup> Hubert Crackanthorpe, "In Normandy," Vignettes, p. 28.

<sup>58</sup> "The Town": referred to in Chapter Two, p. 56; see Appendix C.

<sup>59</sup> Paul Valéry, "Remarks on Poetry," in Symbolism: An Anthology, q.v., p. 45. First given as a lecture at the Université des Annales in 1927.)

<sup>60</sup> Virginia Woolf, "In the Orchard," The Criterion, April 1923; rpt. in Books and Portraits, pp. 3-5.

<sup>61</sup> -----, Diary III, p. 103. (No date: approximately July 1926.)



<sup>62</sup> Gertrude Stein, "Picasso," quoted by Edward Fry in Cubism (London: Thames and Hudson, 1966), pp. 55-56.

<sup>63</sup> See: Murry's "The Art of Pablo Picasso," in The New Age of 30 November, 1911, p. 115, and Carter's article of a week earlier, "The Plato-Picasso Idea," in the issue for 23 November, 1911, p. 88. There was a Cubism show at the Stafford Gallery in London in 1912, before Roger Fry's Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition at the end of that year.

<sup>64</sup> Virginia Woolf, "The Mark on the Wall," A Haunted House, p. 43.

<sup>65</sup> -----, "Phases of Fiction," The Bookman, April, May and June, 1929; rpt. in Granite and Rainbow, p. 122.

<sup>66</sup> Virginia Woolf, Letters IV, p. 199. (To Ethel Smyth, 15 August, 1930.)

<sup>67</sup> Walter Pater, "Conclusion," The Renaissance, p. 235.

<sup>68</sup> Virginia Woolf, "The Lady in the Looking-Glass," A Haunted House, pp. 88-89.

<sup>69</sup> -----, "Solid Objects," Athenaeum, 22 October, 1920, 543-545; rpt. in A Haunted House, p. 83.

<sup>70</sup> Richard Le Gallienne, "Considerations Suggested by Mr. Churchton Collins' 'Illuminations of Tennyson'," The Hobby-Horse, No. 27 (July, 1892), p. 81.

<sup>71</sup> Virginia Woolf, The Waves, p. 8.

<sup>72</sup> -----, "Impassioned Prose," Granite and Rainbow, p. 40.

<sup>73</sup> -----, "Solid Objects," p. 83.

- 74 Arthur Symons, "Christian Trevalga," Spiritual Adventures (London: Archibald Constable and Co., 1905), p. 113.
- 75 Ibid., p. 107.
- 76 Virginia Woolf, Diary I, p. 176. (29 July, 1918.)
- 77 The early story is "On a Faithful Friend," The Guardian, January 18, 1905; rpt. in Books and Portraits.
- 78 Virginia Woolf, "Three Pictures" and "Old Mrs. Grey," The Death of the Moth, pp. 14-17, 17-18.
- 79 Arthur Symons, "Walter Pater," Studies in Prose and Verse (London: J. M. Dent and Co., 1904), p. 67.

CHAPTER SIX"THE NAMELESS SPIRIT":THE PURE PERCEPTION OF THE AESTHETIC CONSCIOUSNESS

Cubism, therefore, is a celebration of vision: it brings together the richness of perspective and demands the viewer's active participation in considering the painting from the angles it sets up--"projecting now this now that side of oneself on an exterior plane". Of all Virginia Woolf's sketches, it is "Kew Gardens" that in this sense most fully projects its various "selves" through consciously structured points of view.

The story opens with a description of a flower-bed in Kew Gardens. As in the last section of "In the Orchard" where all objects and actions are seen in terms of shapes and colours in spatial interrelation, so is this description notable as unstressed impersonal vision. Those words that define the surface quality of the scene and which, through absence of temperament, create the almost canvas-like surface of narrative, are too numerous to single out: even the qualifiers in the first sentence are so dominant, that the reader is overwhelmed by precise visual perspective, much as Post-Impressionist painting strikes one first with its pure colour;

From the oval-shaped flower-bed there rose perhaps a hundred stalks half-way up and unfurling at the tip red or blue or yellow petals marked with spots of colour raised upon the surface; and from the red, blue, or yellow gloom of the throat emerged a straight bar rough with gold dust and slightly clubbed at the end. 1

Except for that single "perhaps", here is the un sentimental disembodied voice acting as perception itself. The only sense of a persona, or of a moving spirit, is the light as it shifts from pebble to raindrop to leaf, and yet it is as dependant upon the objects as they depend upon it: it is an operation of the forms themselves, and not a separate, external source of illumination. Similarly, when the focus of the paragraph expands with the last words to include "the men and women who walk in Kew Gardens in July", these people do not enter as actors upon a set stage, but rather, they simply fall into perspective with the flowers. Moreover, in the sense that the flower-bed remains as the stationary point of reference to which the action comes, it not only establishes proportionate relations between itself and the passers-by, but it also determines the reader's distance from the entrance of each new figure. As with the walls, pictures, and the Venus against the pear tree by which Virginia Woolf charts her position in "perspective as a whole",<sup>2</sup> it is by the flower-bed that the position and surroundings of the characters are consciously known.

There is a very rigid sense of structure to "Kew Gardens" which makes a pattern that transcends the simple symmetry of coming and going. For all that it

resembles the Cubist refraction of a single point of view in space and time, the sketch is still a contrivance of perspectives which exhibit their own formal arrangement. From the vantage of the flower-bed, each entrance is preceded by an interlude in which the approach is a visual anticipation before it comes into full narrative range in front of the flowers. But, insofar as the procession of characters forms the action of the sketch, their movement is not a matter of their own volition, but is dependant entirely upon the aesthetic condition of being perceived, and it is this perception that wills them to draw near and recede in visual perspective.

The first characters to come into focus are a married couple and their two children: Simon and Eleanor, Hubert and Caroline. First, Simon: he is recalling a marriage proposal he made to Lily fifteen years earlier, and immediately apparent is the odd precision of his memory; he remembers clearly a circling dragon fly and the square silver buckle on the toe of Lily's shoe. In his mind, the dragonfly and the shoe have collided in association, combined "incongruously, morganatically" (The Queen and the Camel, again), and so kept the memory alive these past fifteen years. The visual has become allied with the mental in Simon's mind to both anchor the memory in specific detail, and to give order to the original event as it was taking place:

All the time I spoke I saw her shoe and when it moved impatiently I knew without looking up what she was going to say: the whole of her seemed to be in her shoe. And my love, my desire, were in the dragonfly; for some reason I thought that if it settled there, on that

leaf, the broad one with the red flower in the middle of it, if the dragonfly settled on the leaf she would say "Yes" at once. 3

Simon's perspective on the garden, therefore, is almost one of ritual: he uses it to give sense to his experience, and as an index by which to combine disparate objects and events into a unified personal context. Eleanor's perspective, too, is bound up with reverberations of the past in her memory, the benevolent kiss from the old lady lending significance to the red water-lilies she was painting at the time. But the couple passes on into the larger composition of the garden, and themselves become shapes "half-transparent as the sunlight and shade swam over their backs in large trembling irregular patches". They dissolve into the returning interlude of impersonal vision.

If Simon's and Eleanor's perspectives are associative, the next character has no known mental or imaginative life: a snail. Yet, he too must have a position in the flower-bed, and the narrator is distanced from over-anthropomorphism by such cautious expletives as "It appeared to have a goal", and "trembling as if in deliberation".<sup>4</sup> Because of the snail's absolute mystery, the issue must fall back upon proportion only--but the perspective which is created by alien description is no more false than any other:

Brown cliffs with deep green lakes in the hollows, flat, blade-like trees that waved from root to tip, round boulders of grey stone, vast crumpled surfaces of a thin texture--all these objects lay across the snail's progress between one stalk and another to his goal. 5

Like perspective, proportion is a condition of the relative spirit. It establishes itself as one knowledge in relation to another, and so, is created through the appeal to proportion alone: in other words, only by familiar proportions can Virginia Woolf invoke another unfamiliar reality. Those "white blocks of marble" that fall "down the slopes of the Andes . . . bounding and hurtling, crushing to death a whole troop of Spanish muleteers" are eggshells in the lap of Minnie Marsh eating her egg,<sup>6</sup> and what would seem to be an ordinary flower-bed, is a private world to the child Bernard in The Waves, where "everything is strange. Things are huge and very small. The stalks of flowers are thick as oak trees. Leaves are high as the domes of vast cathedrals. We are giants, lying here, who can make forests quiver".<sup>7</sup> So to the snail in the other flower-bed in Kew Gardens, a pebble is a boulder and a leaf, a vast crumpled surface every bit as physically real as the flower-bed world is to Bernard's childhood imagination. In this way, even the intuitive physical sense of the world is proved to be another kind of perspective, which for the snail is a material fact of his existence. The flowers do not remind him of past lovers; they are real obstacles that lie across the path to his goal.

The snail is left to his labour, and in the interlude there approach two men. Far away at first, it is the action of talk that is discerned and not the speech; meaning is divorced from content, as it is in the beginning of "Solid Objects", where the distant movements of

near-indistinguishable bodies seem to indicate without sound, that there is "some violent argument issuing from the tiny mouths of the little round heads".<sup>8</sup> So, too, in Jacob's Room, is a scene known by its visual detail: positions, gesticulations are noted down, and yet the omniscient narrator deliberately restricts herself by visual perspective:

There was a sofa, chairs, a square table, and the window being open, one could see how they sat--legs issuing here, one there crumpled in a corner of the sofa; and, presumably, for you could not see him, somebody stood by the fender, talking. 9

The narrator's position, looking in upon the scene from outside of the College window, is as restricted as the view literally "rooted" in the flower-bed in "Kew Gardens". Thus, while the narrative depends upon such facts as are gleaned by precise observation, at the same time its truth lies only in surmision: for all the information given, the reader mistrusts the statement, and is never really sure of what is going on. Arguments are summed up, yet their substance is denied as, for example, between Jacob and Timmy Durrant in the sailboat:

"Now . . ." said Jacob.  
It is a tremendous argument.  
. . . . .  
"That's about as near as I can get to it,"  
Durrant wound up.  
The next minute is quiet as the grave.  
"It follows . . ." said Jacob.  
Only half a sentence followed; but these  
half-sentences are like flags set on tops of  
buildings to the observer of external sights  
down below. . . .  
"It follows . . ." said Jacob.  
"Yes," said Timmy, after reflection.  
"That is so." 10



A few moments later, this apparently intense discussion dissolves into the silliness over Masham's aunt, the words of which are no clearer to the reader than are those of the "tremendous argument". There are no real words with which to read these conversations: these arguments are not so much about talking itself, as they are about making sense. The "spirit" is understood--the flags set on tops of buildings--though the words be trivial, meaningless or non-existent. Thus, the discussion that takes place in the College rooms is already assigned to absence in its immediate sense, and what remains is as abstract as the "forgetfulness" to which Mallarmé's voice consigns all actual floral forms upon uttering the word "flower";<sup>11</sup> it is nothing but a shape, made "whether by argument or not, the spiritual shape, hard yet ephemeral, as of glass compared with the dark stone of the Chapel".<sup>12</sup> The narrator's visual perspective is as restrictive as words are approximate, and so, when Jacob begins to talk "the sharp tap of a pipe on the mantelpiece cancelled the words", and as words become inaudible there arises instead "the intimacy, a sort of spiritual suppleness, when mind prints upon mind indelibly".<sup>13</sup>

The reader's sense of the argument, therefore, is conveyed by the narrator not through the establishing of hard facts, but rather, by throwing them into question. It is only in this way that it is possible for an omniscient narrator to be simultaneously self-reflexive

and conscious of perspectival limits. Thus, of the two new men to come upon the flower-bed in Kew Gardens, the younger wears an expression of "perhaps unnatural calm", and in conversation, "he looked on the ground again and sometimes opened his lips only after a long pause and sometimes did not open them at all".<sup>14</sup> When they draw nearer, these men distinguish themselves as William and his charge--an early Septimus Smith. Here, as if to emphasize the fact that there is no one true perspective, is a man who has lost all sense of proportion that could be recognized by any conventional standards. His understanding of the park scene is his own, and seeing a purple-black dress in the distance, he takes off his hat, places his hand over his heart, and rushes towards the woman, "muttering and gesticulating feverishly"; William, in an effort to control him, draws his attention away to the flower-bed. Whereas for Simon, a flower is invested with significance and acts as a cynosure for the moment's events, it sends the old man only further into his private world. The flower talks to him, and he replies with a rhapsodic soliloquy about roses, mermaids, and the forests of Uruguay. But what he says sounds suspiciously like simply another description of the flower-bed, perhaps more fantastic, although certainly no stranger to the imaginative sense than the snail's is to the physical, and the forests of Uruguay are only as fanciful as are eggshell blocks of marble toppling down Andean slopes. For that matter, even the narrator in Jacob's Room is prone to such foreign digression, slipping from a group of students

in Cambridge, to "the bare hills of Turkey--sharp lines, dry earth, coloured flowers, and colour on the shoulders of the women, standing naked-legged in the stream to beat linen on the stones".<sup>15</sup> There is no more connection between Cambridge and Turkey than there is between Kew Gardens and Uruguay: the difference is, that in one instance such disparity is used to draw self-conscious attention to the way in which thoughts and images marry "incongruously and organically" in the mind, whereas to the old man the flower-bed and the forests of Uruguay are one--to him, a purple dress is something to gesticulate at, and not to place as a purple triangle into the general composition of an aesthetic structure. He brings to the sketch an exotic perspective upon the flower-bed, but he himself, like John of "Solid Objects", is an aesthetic misfit: a man unconscious of his own perception.

The strange behaviour of William and the old man attracts the attention of two women following them, though at a distance too far to be sure "whether the gestures were merely eccentric or genuinely mad".<sup>16</sup> The sketch immediately swings its perspective to the women's point of view, who continue their conversation:

"Nell, Bert, Lot, Cess, Phil, Pa, he says,  
I says, she says, I says, I says--"  
"My Bert, Sis, Bill, Grandad, the old  
man, sugar,  
Sugar, flour, kippers, greens,  
Sugar, sugar, sugar. 17

These words are as obscure to the reader as are Jacob's discussions, but their sense is still conveyed in spite of fragmentation, and acquires an aesthetic

solidity through rhythm rather than information. The women are observed through the perspective of verbal pattern, even as they themselves stare "through the pattern of falling words at the flowers standing cool, firm, and upright in the earth, with a curious expression", like the nurses trundling perambulators on the terrace in Between the Acts:

. . . rolling words, like sweets on their tongues; which, as they thinned to transparency, gave off pink, green, and sweetness. This morning that sweetness was: "How cook had told 'im off about the asparagus; how when she rang I said: how it was a sweet costume with blouse to match." 18

These nurses and women are so caught up in their words that they are quite unaware of their surroundings. There may be something here of Virginia Woolf's innate snobbery ("Like most people of their station . . ."), but of all the characters in the sketch, the perceptual response of these women to their surroundings is the least active. Like "sleepwalkers", they stand and stare uncomprehendingly without registering the flowers, until they are reminded of their tea, and go off.

Briefly, the narrative returns to the snail, who is still contemplating the vast leaf before him. With this interlude, the perspectives of the story shift again: not only are there visual planes, but there is a temporal aspect as well. From the last time the snail was noticed, two pairs of characters have come and gone and occupied the time with their exchanges, and yet the snail is still

at the same moment of his progression, ever thwarted by the parade of passing feet.

Lastly, there come two young lovers, whose love makes them susceptible to vast significances behind the flowers, behind having tea and paying with a two shilling piece. In addition to all else, the flower-bed holds tremendously symbolic possibilities and magic; if the gardens can be a forest to a madman and a snail, "who knows . . . what precipices aren't concealed in them, or what slopes of ice don't shine in the sun on the other side", if they are affirmed through a perception structured upon emotion.<sup>19</sup>

For all that the flower-bed has been the occasion for the most varied and individual perspectives, the final paragraph of the sketch pulls back and becomes as levelling a vision and impersonal a voice as the first:

Thus one couple after another with much the same irregular and aimless movement passed the flower-bed and were enveloped in layer after layer of green blue vapour, in which at first their bodies had substance and a dash of colour, but later both substance and colour dissolved in the green-blue atmosphere. 20

As the perspective of the sketch pulls back, the characters take their place with the flowers as colours and shapes, and dissolve into abstraction. Even the substance of their conversation is no longer made up of specific words:

Yellow and black, pink and snow white, shapes of all these colours, men, women, and children were spotted for a second upon the horizon . . . dissolving like drops of water in the yellow and green atmosphere, staining it faintly with red and blue. . . . but their voices went wavering from them as if they were flames lolling from the thick waxen bodies of candles. Voices. Yes, voices. Wordless voices. 21

Here is the disembodied voice, the sound without perspective as music is the aesthetic abstract Ideal; "wordless voices" which linger and become more evocative as meanings disappear. People have come together briefly in definition against the backdrop of Kew Gardens, and as they disperse into general sound and colour, so they remain to populate the gardens as "nameless spirits", lolling like flames from thick wax candles, whose presence seems to show, that

This at least flamelike our life has, that it is but the concurrence, renewed from moment to moment, of forces parting sooner or later on their ways. 22

Therefore, in the way that a Cubist painting is a composition of surfaces and space form multiple points of view, so is "Kew Gardens" an exercise of aesthetic perception as a creator of structural perspectives. Under the all-controlling power of the narrator's vision, and around the flower-bed as constant, held in arrangement are: five different perspectives upon the flowers; five perspectives upon the characters from the narrator's angle at the flower-bed; five perspectives of the characters upon each other; the wider perspective of flowers and people together; and then, by implication, the perspectives of all the people who are also in Kew,

but who are not singled out in the story. Furthermore, there are the perspectives that are other than visual: there are planes of time and sound; there are perspectives created by style and genre, for the sketch has simultaneous qualities of, for example, the theatre, comedy and painting. Just as the viewer has to cope with the separate existence of each angle of Kubelick, and himself come to terms with them in an understanding which accepts that reality can consist of numerous ways of seeing, so does the reader of "Kew Gardens" have more to do with his own juggling of the various angles and planes of proportion and perspective, than with the manner of a traditional over-all appreciation. All these perspectives collide and contradict, and in their conflict give rise to a transcendent perspective that is present in all art, but which becomes more relevant in self-reflexive consciousness: the perspective of the interpretive process itself that is the Aesthetic condition of "Kew Gardens" as a formal sketch.

In its way, "Kew Gardens" is the apotheosis of an art form that was argued for by Arthur Symons, in an analysis that is really nothing less than an invitation for art to become more sketch-like:

We have no longer the mental attitude of those to whom a story was but a story, and all stories good; we have realised, since it was proved to us by Poe, not merely that the age of epics is past, but that no long poem was ever written;

the finest long poem in the world being but a series of short poems linked together by prose. And, naturally, we can no longer write what we can no longer accept. Symbolism, implicit in all literature from the beginning, as it is implicit in the very words we use, comes to us now, at last quite conscious of itself [*my italics*] . . . . We find a new, an older sense in the so worn out forms of things; the world, which we can no longer believe in as the satisfying material object it was to our grandparents, becomes transfigured with a new light; words, which long usage had darkened almost out of recognition, take fresh lustre. And it is on the lines of that spiritualising of the word, that perfecting of form in its capacity for allusion and suggestion, that confidence in the eternal correspondences between the visible and the invisible universe, which Mallarmé taught, and too intermittently practised, that literature must now move, if it is in any sense to move forward. 23

Here, for the first time, is something of a manifesto, although Symons does not name the form; it is clear, however, that what he has in mind is neither poem nor story, but simply a renewed aesthetic expression that is suggestive and succinct. The claim is not made for the unit of fragmentation itself, therefore--be it the moment, emotion, impression or image. This is not Diderot's call for "more life and less defined forms",<sup>24</sup> and neither is it the sort of effect that the Impressionists courted with their observation of the quick play of light; rather, it is an intimation that a sketch such as "Kew Gardens" can be a formal aesthetic structure for the process by which something is recognized in a fragmented state. Thus, Symons gives no palpable form to the new art that he declares for his age: it is only Symbolism, "at last quite conscious of itself", that is to be the inspiring power of all the arts. It is in this sense, therefore,



of "Kew Gardens" as a purely Aesthetic form, that the Mallarméan Symbolist consciousness heralded by Symons, finds its most natural and successful expression.

"Consciousness" in art is no new topic to modern literary theory familiar with the "stream of consciousness" of William James and the ideas of Henri Bergson on his theory of duration. It is entirely appropriate, therefore, that one of the few critics to give much thought to Virginia Woolf's short stories and sketches, should read them with reference to precisely this issue of aesthetic consciousness. S. P. Rosenbaum includes G. E. Moore with James and Bergson in a triumvirate of modern philosophers x of consciousness, and with the invocation of this guiding spirit of Bloomsbury, it is not unreasonable to include Virginia Woolf in his sphere of influence.<sup>25</sup>

Rosenbaum's analysis is based upon the system and method of philosophical thought that Moore advanced in 1903 with the Principia Ethica and the essay "The Refutation of Idealism".<sup>26</sup> In these works Moore proposes that the process of perception actually is made up of two things, and this was to be the principle upon which he based his early philosophy: that the act of seeing is related to, but clearly distinct from the object that is seen. In other words there is consciousness of a thing, and there is the thing itself. It is this epistemological dualism, the distinction of fact from knowing, that Rosenbaum claims is the "basic philosophical presupposition of Virginia Woolf's criticism and fiction". Furthermore, he writes, "the significance of G. E. Moore's epistemology

for Virginia Woolf's fiction can be seen most clearly to begin with in the experimental stories and sketches published in Monday or Tuesday." <sup>27</sup>

Rosenbaum, indeed, has a point, for in "The Refutation of Idealism" Moore examines the nature of perception in terms that are immediately reminiscent of the sketch "Blue and Green": "The term 'blue' is easy enough to distinguish, but the other element which I have called 'consciousness'--that which sensation of blue has in common with sensation of green--is extremely difficult to fix".<sup>28</sup> Therefore, it seems reasonable to interpret Virginia Woolf's sketch as a practical application of Moore's theory or, in Rosenbaum's words, as "exercises in the rendering of consciousness". With the juxtaposition of "blue" and "green" she creates a state of consciousness through what the two sets of impressions have in common.

The reference to Moore's example is felicitously made by Rosenbaum, but on second thought it is not so clear how Virginia Woolf has established that simultaneous consciousness of both blue and green which Moore found so "extremely difficult to fix". As far as reason can make out, there is not very much in common at all between such images as Virginia Woolf describes in the two sketches; indeed, it is difficult to reconcile within a single consciousness, the disparate images of one sketch alone. In spite of the unifying title, there are no internal, associative connections between the two paragraphs of "green" and "blue", and each sketch

is built up out of collisions of meaning between such oppositions as glass and feathers, light and water, parakeets, frogs, and camels, or rushy ponds and desert sands. "Blue" is more immediately comprehensible, yet the final juxtaposition of whale and cathedral also leaves the reason in a state of confusion. By these oppositions, the image does not mould itself to the meanings of the other fragments among which it stands, and is isolated just as each angle of a Cubist object is kept separate by the impossible physical existence of the whole. The action of "Blue and Green" is not so much a convergence towards what the concepts have in common, but rather, it is a divergence that keeps them apart. "Blue" and "Green" repel each other, and if they truly have anything in common, it is the basic fact that they are both deliberately arranged on a page to appear as works of art--only the consciousness that there must be an aesthetic reason for yoking together glass lustres, parakeets, whales and cathedrals, keeps "Blue and Green" from subsiding into incoherence. This consciousness must arise from within the work itself, in the way that Symons expects a painting by Whistler to "support itself by its own consciousness".

As a "rendering of consciousness", therefore, "Blue and Green" is subtly different in crucial ways from the epistemological exercise described by Rosenbaum with reference to G. E. Moore. The sketch defies any attempts to make sense of its image-complexes, and it is unlikely that the final effect of this should be what

blue has in common with green (which Moore himself could not realize). Contemplated, the sketch becomes opaque, and its effect is more like that feeling of nullity described by Virginia Woolf in another sketch:

And over them both came instantly that paralysing blankness of feeling, when nothing bursts from the mind, when its walls appear like slate; when vacancy almost hurts, and the eyes petrified and fixed see the same spot-- a pattern, a coal scuttle--with an exactness which is terrifying, since no emotion, no idea, no impression of any kind comes to change it, to modify it, to embellish it, since the fountains of feeling seem sealed. 29

The sketch, aptly entitled "Together and Apart", brings together in a formal social context Miss Anning and Mr. Searle, who share between them only the occasion itself--or, more precisely, the town of Canterbury. Their consciousness of the party and of what they have in common, is soon overwhelmed by the greater consciousness of the inadequacy of communication, and so they both face a "paralysing blankness of feeling" until they are released by a trivial interruption, and so are able to separate. This "together and apart" action that is repeated at the end of "The String Quartet" ("You go this way?" "Alas. I go that."), and the end of "Monday or Tuesday" ("the sky veils her stars; then bares them") owes more to Pater than to G. E. Moore; the deliberate patterns of social and aesthetic structures are but temporary stays against fragmentation:

That clear, perpetual outline of face and limb is but an image of ours, under which we group them--a design in a web, the actual threads of which pass out beyond it. 30

Like Mr. Searle and Miss Anning in "Together and Apart", therefore, and like Pater's forces "parting sooner or later on their ways", so do "Blue and Green" part and go their divergent ways.<sup>31</sup> It is only through its own aesthetic consciousness, then, that the sketch can establish itself as a moment made memorable by art, and it is this concept that is lacking in Rosenbaum's application of Moore's philosophical beliefs.

Rosenbaum's idea of uncovering the common element shared by blue and green differs crucially from the sense of Mallarmé's goal, "to establish a precise relationship between two images and to draw out from them a third quality which the imagination easily grasps and assimilates".<sup>32</sup> In "Blue and Green", for example, the establishing of relationships is immediately qualified by the present tense. The past tense grants a certain security--something has happened and is made significant by its retelling; here, however, there is no sense that the reader is guided into any sort of an intended direction. Time is suspended, location is displaced, and it falls upon the reader to establish a continuity between images, to furnish his own context for a pattern and a meaning. But, the obscurity of the images is such, that the reader must keep on returning to the sketch to re-locate them in the text, and therefore, what these two paragraphs are "about", is how things are perceived and interpreted. They are the workings of aesthetic perception, in whose consciousness of perspectival structures such opposed images as "blue" and "green" combine to form a

third quality of endless suggestion, by which the sketch is able to contain thoughts and emotions as "complete" as those presented in the extended linear narrative of a novel.

The idea that a work of art can be fined down to the point where its form becomes pure aesthetic consciousness, underlies such an analysis as Arthur Symons on the form of Pater's "imaginary portrait", described in words that recall precisely the Monday or Tuesday sketches.<sup>33</sup> The sense of Symons' definition of the imaginary portrait as the "study of consciousness" is of an order equal to the "exercise in the rendering of consciousness" that Rosenbaum claims is the particular feature of G. E. Moore's epistemology. There is, in fact, a markedly strong precedent in Pater for Moore's early philosophy which, in turn, establishes an important context in which to read Virginia Woolf's sketches as operations of aesthetic consciousness.<sup>34</sup>

G. E. Moore's premise that the object of consciousness is distinct from the act of consciousness, is as much a base for his own epistemological speculation, as it is a principle of Pater's aesthetic theory and criticism. Creative power increases as Pater's artist grows less dependent upon external circumstance, so that his art is "an expression no longer of fact but of his sense of it, his peculiar intuition of a world" [my italics] :

For just in proportion as the writer's aim, consciously or unconsciously, comes to be the transcribing, not of the world, not of mere fact, but of his sense of it, he becomes an artist, his work fine art. 35

To Pater, then, the "mere fact" would be something like the colour blue, or a blue object; the "sense of it" is the consciousness or perception itself, apart from the object. Such a division of the act of perception from its object is no different from the view that Rosenbaum identifies as Moore's epistemological dualism, just as his readings of Virginia Woolf's sketches according to Moore's philosophy, more properly belong in their fuller Aesthetic context. "Monday or Tuesday are studies of the way consciousness combines with what it perceives to produce those states of mind that Virginia Woolf felt fiction should be about", writes Rosenbaum.<sup>36</sup> Yet, in his conditions for good art, Pater implies just the same, that "the ideal examples of poetry and painting being those in which the constituent elements of the composition are so welded together, that the material or subject no longer strikes the intellect only [that is, the faculty of consciousness]; nor the form, the eye or the ear only [the object of perception]; but form and matter, in their union or identity [Rosenbaum's sense of the combination], present one single effect to the 'imaginative reason'".<sup>37</sup>

Pater's concept of the "imaginative reason" is just that: reason which has become self-reflexive through the creative power of its own liberal imagination. This,

then, is also the sense of his observation, that art is "always striving to be independent of the mere intelligence, to become a matter of pure perception"<sup>38</sup>--the work of art that is conscious of its own imaginative structure is in this way an operation of pure aesthetic perception. And, it is this that gives a truer sense than G. E. Moore to Rosenbaum's conclusions regarding "Blue and Green": as an "exercise in the rendering of consciousness" it produces such "states of mind" as can best be interpreted by the Symbolist and Aesthetic theories of Mallarmé and Pater. Therefore, it is a transcendence and not simply a combination of blue and green that transforms that sketch into a conscious aesthetic form; in their inherent mutual contradiction, blue and green are self-consuming rather than self-compounding, and as they cancel each other into material absence, they rarify themselves into the Mallarméan Ideal, of pure technique functioning as the pure sensing self.

With so much emphasis upon consciousness itself, it is only a logical step to Symbolism; the art that places its weight upon subjective perception and personal relations, is completed by the art that is accepted as the only possible manifestation of order--the theory that reality can be known and created only by artifice. Certainly, Virginia Woolf is sensitive to the power of language for generating its own reality through a crucial



word or image. So, for example, even in her diary she is aesthetically satisfied by finding the right words with which to describe a recent airplane wreck: "Having solidified the vision of the flying Princess into words, I have, strangely enough, laid a phantom which has been very prominent before my eyes".<sup>39</sup> Even mundane matters become more significant in an aesthetic order: "Haddock and sausage meat. I think it is true that one gains a certain hold on sausage and haddock by writing them down".<sup>40</sup>

However, Virginia Woolf is aware, too, of the extremes of paying attention to the personal and impressionistic: "up to a point there is nothing more real than the effect of things upon one's mind. The difficulty is to resist the temptation of conjuring up sensations for the pleasure of feeling them".<sup>41</sup> In terms of the popular reputation of the decadent 'Nineties, therefore, Virginia Woolf does not continue in the revelling in sensation for its own sake, and neither is she a practitioner of literary impressionism, critical or creative.

Nevertheless, it is not by chance that the title "Blue and Green" should imply such relations between mood and colour as preoccupied the literary and visual arts in the decades around the turn of the century. Already in the 1860's, with titles like "Symphony in White" or "Nocturne in Blue and Gold", Whistler was attempting to create the kind of synesthesia that Virginia Woolf experienced upon hearing Parsifal at Bayreuth, where

"sound melts into colour, and colour calls out for words".<sup>42</sup>  
 Whistler's titles were to reappear fifty years later in poems written by the American John Gould Fletcher in 1914-1915--the "Symphonies" of Blue, Green, Violet, White, and other colours ranging over the whole spectrum--to whom mood was as colour; and he explained retrospectively, that "my assignment of a colour to each 'Symphony' was no more than indication of my main intention".<sup>43</sup>

Fletcher is also the poet to have ascribed the term "polyphonic prose" to the work of his fellow American Amy Lowell,<sup>44</sup> whose combinations of vers libre with aesthetic qualities of cadence and rhythm result in prose poems that seem remarkably close in spirit and tone to the sketches of Virginia Woolf.

A piece by Amy Lowell such as "Spring Day", for example, seems immediately comparable to "Monday or Tuesday".\* Both are concerned with conveying a sense of the daily noise and activity of a great city, and build up their effects through conglomerations of imagistic statements. There seems little enigma, however, to Lowell's paragraph: it is suggestive, but the colours and sounds that begin in an unknown place and time work themselves into an almost tangible sense of the city streets, and this headiness of actual sensation is precisely Lowell's intended effect. The sketch (for it can be considered as such) ends in a blaze of fiery activity, but the strength of the final image derives

\* "Spring Day": an extract from this is found in Appendix D.

from the precision of its reference, which reflects back upon the whole work and re-animates its indiscriminate title ("Spring Day--Midday and Afternoon") with the intense and specific life of its component images:

"The blue sky pales to lemon, and great tongues of gold blind the shop-windows putting out their contents in a flood of flame".<sup>45</sup>

"Monday or Tuesday", on the other hand, remains to the end as variable as its title indicates: the diverse images resolve neither into one nor the other. Here there is no sense of vibrant light to flare and eddy through the streets, and bind them with luminous colour; in its indifferent movement the light seems to absorb itself, and provides no significant illumination for any particular thing:

White and distant, absorbed in itself,  
endlessly the sky covers and uncovers, moves  
and remains. A lake? Blot the shores of it  
out! A mountain? Oh, perfect--the sun gold  
on its slopes. Down that falls. Ferns then, or  
white feathers, for ever and ever-- 46

There is in "Monday or Tuesday" no sense of being taken up with the movement of the sketch--as, for example, the reader is rushed along with the crowd in Lowell's "Spring Day". The course of reading is interrupted by parentheses, suspended in dashes, made difficult through irregular syntax, so that the sketch reveals its "meaning" as randomly and haphazardly as the endless sky covers and uncovers its images, now in light, now in shadow. Neither do the images acquire solidity, therefore: the sketch bestows equal attention to lakes and

mountains, offices and shops, minarets and Indian seas, to the effect that their simultaneous presence in so short an aesthetic time and space determines that no image is insulated by its description. The suggestive life of each image by itself is frustrated in conjunction with an image of opposing reference, and in this way, while Lowell's sketch gives form to the qualities of a spring day in the city with words whose emotional and visual connotations are mutually enhancing, Virginia Woolf denies any sense of objectivity to her images, and leaves the reader with simply the condition of perception itself.

In this state of self-reference, "Monday or Tuesday" or "Blue and Green" are more akin to English Aestheticist sketches, than to the prose extensions of American Imagist poetry. There is, for example, an intrinsic difference in the handling of colour in Lowell's "Spring Day", and that of Virginia Woolf in "Blue and Green": colour is identified with an object in "Spring Day"--the sky has the quality of being "metal blue", and even the "great tongues of gold" upon the shop-windows work as an image because the effect is recognized as the flash of sun upon glass. In "Blue and Green", on the other hand, the objects are a function of the colour: it is the condition of green in itself that provides a narrative for the diverse imagery of the sketch, just as in "Blue" it is the colour that is described as a whale, and not the whale described with adjectives of blue--in which case it would not be a very good description

of the whale at all. All such objects as glass lustres, pools, whales and madonnas, therefore, are of secondary importance to the sketch, even though it seems to be composed of nothing but these things. Rosenbaum's prescription to compare "Blue" and "Green" to discover what they have in common, can go no further than the colour itself as a self-conscious aesthetic device.

The function of colour, in this sense, establishes a stronger connection between the sketches of Virginia Woolf and those of Ernest Dowson, than between her work and the "polyphonic prose" of Amy Lowell. It is for reasons other than descriptive quality that Ernest Dowson's "Absinthia Taetra"\* both begins and ends with: "Green changed to white, emerald to an opal: nothing was changed".<sup>47</sup> The sentence is itself a paradox, for while colour changes and pales, it is countered by the statement that nothing has changed. The second sentence is a similar contradiction, where the opposing parallels can co-exist only if they are read as two different planes of reality: so, as the green clouds up, the mist that is in the man's mind clears; there is correlation in the two actions, but one is objective and the other is not. The rest of the brief sketch follows a triform movement, each sequence punctuated by a slightly varying impersonal observation: "Then he drank opaline"; "But he drank opaline"; "He drank opaline". Between these statements the man first experiences a hallucination of his "memories and terrors" chasing him through the darkness like a

\*Reproduced in Appendix E.

panther or tiger; then there is an interlude of calm and peace before the tiger returns again to terrify the man. The sketch, thus, is structured upon an A-B-A pattern of the man's state of mind, while the opaline colour is constant throughout; and this tripartite movement is contained within the repeating "Green changed to white, emerald to an opal: nothing was changed".

The action of the colour, therefore, is a function itself apart from the subjective experience of the absinthe drinker. The changing colour is as indifferent to its connotations as is the light that covers and uncovers in "Monday or Tuesday". It establishes itself as the identity of Dowson's sketch, and retains its opaline hold; so that while green changes to white, yet nothing is changed, and it is in this condemned opaline present that the man's imaginary horrors of the past and future become terribly real.

This consciousness of its existence in a condition of colour, and the fact that it becomes significant by structural means, keeps "Absinthia Taetra" from the Decadent excesses of sensation or from melodramatic excesses of sentiment. It is in this sense, therefore, that it is an "Aesthetic" sketch and belongs to the tradition of sketch writing which includes also the sketches of Virginia Woolf.

It is apparent that something as abstract as colour-- unable to provide for itself a material existence based on

its own essential qualities--can exist in a certain degree of aesthetic self-reference, in the way that the content, perspective or structure becomes self-conscious in sketches like "A Haunted House", "The Mark on the Wall" or "Kew Gardens". In this sense, "Blue and Green" is a particularly Aesthetic sketch for its attention to the possibility of a state of pure colour-consciousness such as Arthur Symons admires in the painting of Monticelli:

The painting itself is like the way of seeing, hurried, fierce, prodigal. . . . At the proper distance the colours clash together in that irreconcilable way which Monticelli meant, crude tone against crude tone: their conflict is the picture.

. . . All his painting tends towards the effect of music, with almost the same endeavour to escape from the bondage of matter. . . . He tries to purify vision to the point of getting disembodied colour. 48

It is through their conflict and collision that Monticelli's colours become "disembodied", and this is the sense exactly of that collision of perspective and elements of narrative, that generates the aesthetic consciousness of the nameless spirit in the sketches of Virginia Woolf.

"Character" seems as disembodied in Virginia Woolf's work as colour is in Symons' appreciation of Monticelli. Minnie Marsh in "An Unwritten Novel" is not a character, but an exercise in character perception such as Virginia Woolf describes in Jacob's Room: "Nobody sees anyone as he is, let alone an elderly lady sitting opposite a strange young man in a railway carriage."

They see a whole--they see all sorts of things--they see themselves".<sup>49</sup> Thus in "An Unwritten Novel", for all that the narrator is fascinated by what the five people in the carriage are like, peculiarly enough she does not notice what really goes on: "But with my eyes upon life I did not see that the other travellers had left, one by one, till, save for the man who read, we were alone together".<sup>50</sup> Stranger still, if she is so interested in the woman sitting opposite, when that passanger actually begins to talk, and the opportunity to attempt her characterization presents itself, the narrator records it summarily with "stations and holidays, of brothers at Eastbourne, and the time of year"--which last detail she has already forgotten. The woman is directly quoted only twice, with incoherent exclamations about a sister-in-law and a cow, and that is as much as the narrator describes her, except that the next ten pages give the psychological history of a Minnie Marsh based on nothing but these stray, fragmented comments. Here again, the sketch is about the way in which people are perceived, while the portrait of Minnie Marsh remains entirely imaginary.

Thus character, too, is subject to its own simultaneous assertion and denial. A device as peculiar to Virginia Woolf as her "surprise ending" is the marked presence of cameo characters, given the fictional weight of full names, yet lacking all context which traditionally accompanies such identification. On the streets and in



the parks in Mrs. Dalloway, for example, who are Sarah Bletchley, Emily Coates and Mr. Bowley, or Mr. Bentley, Mrs. Dempster and Maisie Johnson?<sup>51</sup> For all that these figures are named, their anonymous specificity dissolves character into an almost universal abstraction, to the effect that one Emily Coates can stand metonymically for the entire crowd in front of Buckingham Palace. So in Walter Pater's relative spirit, "things pass into their opposites by accumulation of undefinable quantities";<sup>52</sup> individuality passes into opposite generality and otherness through a process of compression, in which the reader's expectations for the substance normally promised by the literary use of the proper name are thwarted by denying the character any unique personality in the work of art.

Yet another form of denial of character typical in Virginia Woolf's work is her imaginative use of known historical figures. Here, the context for the personality is familiar to the reader but, paradoxically, it is used to the same effect as characterized anonymity. Both conditions bring out the reader's awareness, not of the personal history behind each character, but of how character functions in fictional artifice; thus, whatever claims the character makes for the self are counteracted immediately by self-consciousness, and emphasis shifts from what is known intrinsically, to how it is known according to the aesthetic relations of the work of art. Queen Elizabeth comes to mind again, in Orlando where she stands alongside Addison, Pope, Swift and other literary

figures; and even more in Between the Acts, where she is simultaneously invoked as a character in the pageant, and denied by her true persona as Eliza Clark, licensed to sell tobacco in the village shop. Such bathos only serves to heighten the fact that this is not the great Queen, but rather a representation of her--and, a humorous one at that, standing on a soapbox, draped with sixpenny brooches. The very circumstance of Queen Elizabeth as Mrs. Clark makes apparent how little a person or thing can be known and contained by conventions of art. Therefore, the pageant scene is not important for its depiction of Queen Elizabeth (which is, primarily, why the actress is wearing her costume at all), but rather, it acquires its meaning only when the reader realizes its denial of Mrs. Clark's seeming affirmation of her role. This paste and make-up Queen renders absent her character, as the village pageant suspends all sense of historical fact; but, more important than the celebration of history is its life in the present--the knowledge of the past informed by the awareness of how events and figures become imaginatively significant--and it is in the history which in this way lives on in the imagination of the village, that the character of Queen Elizabeth animates the pageant, and survives in her spirit.

The manuscript drafts of "The Searchlight" reveal similar concerns with characterization, which are subsumed in the published version of the story.<sup>53</sup> In its final state, the woman who narrates the tower story is herself the great-granddaughter of the boy in the tower. The

development of the character of this boy is much more interesting in manuscript, however. In the piece which Virginia Woolf herself dates 1930 (Monk's House B 9 k) his name is rather irrelevant--"whose name perhaps was Henry"--and his identity remains unconfirmed to the end:

Henry crammed his hat on his head, rushed down stairs onto the road, out into the world--and so became in time--was it Sir Henry Taylor of the colonial office? It may have been--at any rate his name was Henry.

The lot of fragments which make up B 10 f is found, in parts, on the back of a draft for the "Ellen Terry" essay; as this was published in January 1941, it may be an indication of the date of this version. The boy is named Henry, but is placed only in the last sentence:

He dashed down the crazy winding steps of the tower; he ran and ran down the grass path out to the high road, and in the course of many years reached the Colonial Office and became Sir Henry Taylor.

The remaining significant variant of the Henry Taylor story is lot B 10 e (some of which is on the backs of drafts of Between the Acts, hence 1940-41), which is the one most similar to the situation in the play Freshwater. He is identified obliquely during the course of his narrative by a reference to a stature in Whitehall-- (his)--but the complete revelation comes with the girl's final exclamation, "Dear Sir Henry!" which is followed by a post-script, latter-day account of the life of Taylor, Sir Henry according to the Dictionary of National Biography, together with the qualifying information that

the book and album that were the source of the story, "were destroyed only the other day" by air-raid bombs.

All three versions of this situation demonstrate different methods of revealing the character's artifice, to the same effect with which Queen Elizabeth is portrayed in Between the Acts. The offhand, almost dismissing manner of the first (B 9 k); the cursory, summary-that-does-not-summarize of the second (B 10 f); and the literal destruction of the third (B 10 e) deny the importance of knowing anything palpable about the character of Sir Henry Taylor. At the same time, the very invocation of this real historical figure demands that he must have a reality about him which the story, even by denial, cannot help but acknowledge. It is the simultaneous presence and absence of Sir Henry Taylor, and the reader's awareness of the story's affirmation and denial of his character, that makes the sketch as self-consuming as the fictive bomb which figuratively destroys the basis of its truth. Though these drafts are fragmentary and incomplete, the implications are here for yet another sketch by Virginia Woolf, subtly different from the final version of "The Searchlight". Late in her career, Virginia Woolf is still working out ideas for a self-reflective, self-consuming artifact such as her earliest sketch, "The Mark on the Wall": how to grant a separate surface reality to the work of art, which depends exclusively upon neither its own internal form nor the external nature of its subject matter, but on the collision between the two through the self-consciousness

of aesthetic vision.

Therefore, as the insistence of character recedes, be it fictional or historical, the demands for personality grow correspondingly weaker; this condition of near-anonymity, together with a lack of emphasis upon any specific time, place or perspective, is perhaps the extent to which literature can become abstract without losing its essential appeal to coherence through words. Mallarmé alludes to this aesthetic condition with his idea of the "pure" poem, in which the voice of the poet has become silent as the poem is activated by the words themselves meeting in unequal collision.<sup>54</sup> Such a disappearance of the poet is precisely the sense of Virginia Woolf's complaint over the "damned egotistical self" which, significantly, she makes in reference to the possibility of a new literary form inspired by her early sketches "Kew Gardens", "The Mark on the Wall" and "An Unwritten Novel".<sup>55</sup> Analysis shows that it is more than words that collide in these sketches: conflict becomes their very fabric in the complex oppositions that are set up between the expectations for, and the actual handling of such inherent compositional elements as structure, content, characterization, syntax and point of view. "But how describe the world seen without a self?" is the question asked by Bernard in The Waves;

"Blue, red--even they distract, even they hide with thickness instead of letting the light through".<sup>56</sup>

The form that is the nearest answer to Bernard's question in the work of Virginia Woolf, is not the novel, but the sketch. For all that the speaking personalities of the six characters in The Waves are levelled by the self-scrutiny of an expository and undifferentiated single language, and even though the meanings in Between the Acts literally are lost upon the wind, as the breeze carries away words and leaves only the disembodied sound of "stray voices, voices without bodies, symbolical voices",<sup>57</sup> nevertheless, it is the brief and fragmented sketch that most successfully describes the "world seen without a self" and comes closest to Pater's notion of art "always striving to be independent of the mere intelligence, to become a matter of pure perception".<sup>58</sup> This sense of the "pure perception", then, is the "nameless spirit",

who is not "we" nor "I," nor the novelist either, For the novelist all agree must tell a story; and there are no stories for this spirit; this spirit is not concerned to follow lovers to the altar, nor to cut chapter from chapter; and then write as novelists do The end with a flourish; since there is no end. 59

It is because a novel, no matter how impersonal and abstract, must tell something of a story and come to some kind of a significant end, that it cannot be possessed of this nameless spirit, just as abstraction cannot tolerate the dominance of time, place and personality

in the conventional short story. It is a problem for Bernard, again, who has invented thousands of stories and filled innumerable notebooks with phrases, "to be used when I have found the true story, the one story to which all these phrases refer. But I have never yet found that story. And I begin to ask, Are there stories?".<sup>60</sup>

To concentrate the attention upon Virginia Woolf's novels, therefore, and to read her sketches against the novels, is to miss this "nameless spirit" which makes its brief appearance in her sketches alone. They are indeed very few, very short, and rather obscure, but in them survives a sense of the pure perceiving consciousness or spirit that inspired both Mallarmé and Pater in their aesthetic criticism and theory, and for this reason alone her sketches more than deserve their place as an independent literary form in themselves. The sketches of Virginia Woolf may be insubstantial, but they have their own peculiar Aesthetic sensitivity of vision, in which are captured such qualities of reality whose very beauty lies in fragility and transience.

A sudden light transfigures some trivial thing, a weather-vane, a wind-mill, a winnowing fan, the dust in the barn door. A moment--and the thing has vanished, because it was pure effect; but it leaves a relish behind it, a longing that the accident may happen again. 61

NOTES AND REFERENCES:CHAPTER SIX

- <sup>1</sup> Virginia Woolf, "Kew Gardens," A Haunted House, p. 32.
- <sup>2</sup> -----, Letters IV, p. 199. (To Ethel Smyth,  
15 August, 1930.)
- <sup>3</sup> -----, "Kew Gardens," p. 33.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 34;
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>6</sup> -----, "An Unwritten Novel," A Haunted House, p. 21.
- <sup>7</sup> -----, The Waves, p. 16.
- <sup>8</sup> -----, "Solid Objects," A Haunted House, p. 79.
- <sup>9</sup> -----, Jacob's Room, p. 42. My italics.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 48.
- <sup>11</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé, "Crisis in Poetry," Mallarmé: Selected Prose Poems, Essays and Letters, Intro. and trans. Bradford Cook (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1956), p. 42.
- <sup>12</sup> Virginia Woolf, Jacob's Room, p. 43.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 44.
- <sup>14</sup> -----, "Kew Gardens," p. 34.
- <sup>15</sup> -----, Jacob's Room, p. 43.
- <sup>16</sup> -----, "Kew Gardens," p. 36.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>18</sup> -----, Between the Acts, p. 15.
- <sup>19</sup> -----, "Kew Gardens," p. 37.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 38.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 39.
- <sup>22</sup> Walter Pater, "Conclusion," The Renaissance (London: Macmillan and Co., 1917), pp. 137-138.



<sup>23</sup> Arthur Symons, "Stéphane Mallarmé," The Symbolist Movement in Literature (London: William Heinemann, 1899), pp. 137-138.

<sup>24</sup> Denis Diderot, "Extracts from 'Le Salon,' 1767," Diderot's Thoughts on Art and Style, trans. Beatrix L. Tollemache (London: Remington and Co., 1893), p. 83. Diderot's attitudes towards the sketch are discussed at the beginning of Chapter Three.

<sup>25</sup> S. P. Rosenbaum, "The Philosophical Realism of Virginia Woolf," English Literature and British Philosophy, ed. S. P. Rosenbaum (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 321.

<sup>26</sup> G. E. Moore, Principia Ethica (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903).

-----, "The Refutation of Idealism," (1903), collected in his Philosophical Studies (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1922).

<sup>27</sup> Rosenbaum, pp. 321, 323.

<sup>28</sup> G. E. Moore, "The Refutation of Idealism," op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>29</sup> Virginia Woolf, "Together and Apart," A Haunted House, p. 136.

<sup>30</sup> Walter Pater, "Conclusion," The Renaissance, p. 234.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé, "Crisis in Verse," Symbolism: An Anthology, ed. and trans. T. G. West (London: Methuen, 1980), p. 7.

<sup>33</sup> Arthur Symons, "Walter Pater," Studies in Prose and Verse (London: J. M. Dent and Co., 1904), p. 67.

<sup>34</sup> To understand this connection with Pater's Aestheticism, is to provide for Virginia Woolf's sketches a place in a tradition other than that which did have a great effect upon English short story writing in the twentieth century--i.e. the Russian influence of Chekov and Turgenev. The stories of these authors are significantly greater influences upon the work of, for example, Katherine Mansfield, and although there are some comparisons to be made between her short stories and those of Virginia Woolf, the similarities between these two women are not so relevant as is supposed popularly.

<sup>35</sup> Walter Pater, "Style," Appreciations (London: Macmillan and Co., 1890), pp. 5-6.

<sup>36</sup> Rosenbaum, q.v., p. 323.

<sup>37</sup> Walter Pater, "The School of Giorgione," The Renaissance, p. 138.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Virginia Woolf, Diary III, p. 155. (5 September, 1927.)

<sup>40</sup> -----, Diary V, p. 358. (8 March, 1941.)

The phrase "Sausage and Haddock" is used as a way into a short study of Virginia Woolf's Symbolist use of language by Warren Ramsay, "The Claims of Language: Virginia Woolf as Symbolist," English Fiction in Transition, 4, No. 1 (1961), pp. 12-17.

<sup>41</sup> Virginia Woolf, "Romance," rev. of Romance: Two Lectures, by Sir Walter Raleigh, Times Literary Supplement, 18 January, 1917, p. 31.

<sup>42</sup> -----, "Impressions at Bayreuth," The Times, 21 August, 1909; rpt. in Books and Portraits, p. 22.

- 43 John Gould Fletcher, Preface, Preludes and Symphonies (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1930), xii.
- 44 -----, "Miss Lowell's Discovery," Poetry, April 1915, p. 35.
- 45 Amy Lowell, "Spring Day" (extract) in Imagist Poetry, ed. Peter Jones (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 88.
- 46 Virginia Woolf, "Monday or Tuesday," p. 12.
- 47 Ernest Dowson, "Absinthia Taetra," Decorations: In Verse and Prose (London: Leonard Smithers, 1899), p. 46.
- 48 Arthur Symons, "The Painting of the Nineteenth Century," Studies in Seven Arts (London: Archibald Constable, 1906), p. 64.
- 49 Virginia Woolf, Jacob's Room, pp. 28-29.
- 50 -----, "An Unwritten Novel," p. 15.
- 51 -----, Mrs. Dalloway, pp. 31-33, 41-44.
- 52 Walter Pater, "Coleridge," Appreciations, p. 65.
- 53 The analysis of "The Searchlight" drafts is based entirely upon MSS. B 9 j, B 9 k, B 10 e, B 10 f in the Monk's House Papers at the University of Sussex Library. See also the short summary of the development of the story into its final version, in Chapter One, pp. 35-36. These manuscripts are described as well by J. W. Graham, "The Drafts of Virginia Woolf's 'The Searchlight'," Twentieth Century Literature, 22, No. 4 (1976), 379-393.
- 54 Stéphane Mallarmé, "Crisis in Poetry," Mallarmé; Selected Prose Poems, Essays and Letters, q.v., pp. 40-41.

- 55 Virginia Woolf, Diary II, p. 14. (26 January, 1920.)
- 56 -----, The Waves, p. 204.
- c 57 -----, Between the Acts, p. 177.
- 58 Walter Pater, "The School of Giorgione,"  
The Renaissance, p. 138.
- 59 Virginia Woolf, Pointz Hall Typescript, pp. 57-58  
(July 3, 1938), in the Berg Collection of the New York  
Public Library; quoted by Harvena Richter, in The Inward  
Voyage (Princeton: The Princeton University Press, 1978),  
p, 138.
- 60 Virginia Woolf, The Waves, p. 133.
- 61 Walter Pater, "Joachim du Bellay," The Renaissance,  
p. 176.

APPENDIX AI: COLLECTED SHORT STORIES AND SKETCHES.

<u>ALPHABETICALLY:</u>	<u>FIRST IN:</u>	<u>MONDAY OR TUESDAY :</u>	<u>A HAUNTED HOUSE :</u>
Blue and Green		X	
The Duchess and the Jeweller	1938: <u>Harper's Bazaar.</u>		X
A Haunted House		X	X
Kew Gardens	1919: Hogarth Press.	X	X
The Lady in the Looking-Glass	1929: <u>Harper's Magazine.</u>		X
Lappin and Lapinova	1939: <u>Harper's Bazaar.</u>		X
The Legacy			X
The Man Who Loved His Kind			X
The Mark on the Wall	1917: Hogarth Press.	X	X
Moments of Being	1928: <u>Forum.</u>		X
Monday or Tuesday		X	X
The New Dress	1927: <u>Forum.</u>		X
The Searchlight			X
The Shooting Party	1938: <u>Harper's Bazaar.</u>		X
A Society		X	
Solid Objects	1920: <u>Athenaeum.</u>		X
The String Quartet		X	X
A Summing Up			X
Together and Apart			X
An Unwritten Novel	1920: <u>London Mercury.</u>	X	X

APPENDIX AII: SHORT STORIES AND SKETCHES PUBLISHED IN OTHER COLLECTIONS.

(Chronologically;)

On a Faithful Friend	1905: <u>The Guardian</u>	1977: <u>Books and Portraits</u>
In the Orchard	1923: <u>The Criterion</u>	1977: <u>Books and Portraits</u>
A Women's College From Outside	1926: <u>Atalanta's Garland</u>	1977: <u>Books and Portraits</u>
Street Haunting	1927: <u>Yale Review</u>	1942: <u>The Death of the Moth</u>
The Sun and the Fish	1928: <u>Time and Tide</u>	1950: <u>Captain's Death Bed</u>
The Death of the Moth		1942: <u>The Death of the Moth</u>
Evening Over Sussex		"
Old Mrs. Grey		"
Three Pictures		"
The Moment: Summer's Night		1947: <u>The Moment</u>
Flying Over London		1950: <u>Captain's Death Bed</u>

IN MRS. DALLOWAY'S PARTY, ED. STELLA MCNICHOL (LONDON: THE HOGARTH PRESS, 1973):

Mrs. Dalloway in Bond Street  
 The Man Who Loved his Kind  
 The Introduction  
 Ancestors  
 Together and Apart  
 The New Dress  
 A Summing Up

APPENDIX A

IN THE LONDON SCENE (LONDON: THE HOGARTH PRESS: 1982):

The Docks of London

Oxford Street Tide

Great Men's Houses

Abbeys and Cathedrals

"This is the House of Commons"

Virginia Woolf, "Blue and Green," Monday or Tuesday  
(London: The Hogarth Press, 1921), pp. 66-67.

*Blue & Green.*

BLUE.

The snub-nosed monster rises to the surface and spouts through his blunt nostrils two columns of water, which, fiery-white in the centre, spray off into a fringe of blue beads. Strokes of blue line the black tarpaulin of his hide. Slushing the water through mouth and nostrils he sinks, heavy with water, and the blue closes over him dowsing the polished pebbles of his eyes. Thrown upon the beach he lies, blunt, obtuse, shedding dry blue scales. Their metallic blue stains the rusty iron on the beach. Blue are the ribs of the wrecked rowing boat. A wave rolls beneath the blue bells. But the cathedral's different, cold, incense laden, faint blue with the veils of madonnas.

67

BLUE & GREEN.

GREEN.

The pointed fingers of glass hang downwards. The light slides down the glass, and drops a pool of green. All day long the ten fingers of the lustre drop green upon the marble. The feathers of parakeets—their harsh cries—sharp blades of palm trees—green too; green needles glittering in the sun. But the hard glass drips on to the marble; the pools hover above the desert sand; the camels lurch through them; the pools settle on the marble; rushes edge them; weeds clog them; here and there a white blossom; the frog flops over; at night the stars are set there unbroken. Evening comes, and the shadow sweeps the green over the mantelpiece; the ruffled surface of ocean. No ships come; the aimless waves away beneath the empty sky. It's night; the needles drip blotches of blue. The green's out.

66



APPENDIX C

From: Roger Fry's review, "Modern French Art at the Mansard Gallery," in The Athenaeum, 8 August, 1919, pp. 723-724:

The Town

Houses, always houses, yellow fronts and pink fronts jostle one another, push one another this way and that way, crowd into every corner and climb into the sky; but however close they get together the leaves of trees push into their interstices, and mar the drilled decorum of their ranks; hard green leaves, delicate green leaves, veined all over with black lines, touched with rust between the veins, always more and more minutely articulated, more fragile and more irresistible. But the houses do not despair, they continue to line up, precise and prim, flat and textureless; always they have windows all over them and insides, bannisters, cornices, friezes; always in their proper places; they try to deny the leaves, but the leaves are harder than the houses and more persistent. Between houses and leaves there move the shapes of men; more transient than either, they scarcely leave a mark; their shadows stain the walls for a moment; they do not even rustle the leaves.

APPENDIX D

Extract of "Spring Day" by Amy Lowell; reproduced from  
Imagist Poetry, ed. Peter Jones (Harmondsworth, Penguin), p. 88.

*Spring Day*  
 (extract)  
 (S.I.P. 1916)

*Midday and Afternoon*

Swirl of crowded streets. Shock and recoil of traffic. The stock-still brick façade of an old church, against which the waves of people lurch and withdraw. Flare of sunshine down side-streets. Eddies of light in the windows of chemists' shops, with their blue, gold, purple jars, darting colours far into the crowd. Loud bangs and tremors, murmurings out of high windows, whirling of machine belts, blurring of horses and motors. A quick spin and shudder of brakes on an electric car, and the jar of a church bell knocking against the metal blue of the sky. I am a piece of the town, a bit of blown dust, thrust along with the crowd. Proud to feel the pavement under me, reeling with feet. Feet tripping, skipping, lagging, dragging, plodding doggedly, or springing up and advancing on firm elastic insteps. A boy is selling papers, I smell them clean and new from the press. They are fresh like the air, and pungent as tulips and narcissus.

The blue sky pales to lemon, and great tongues of gold blind the shop-windows putting out their contents in a flood of flame.

APPENDIX E

"Absinthia Taetra" by Ernest Dowson; reproduced from Writing of the 'Nineties from Wilde to Beerbohm, ed. Derek Stanford (London: Everyman's Library, 1971), p. 203.

ERNEST DOWSON

Absinthia Taetra

GREEN changed to white, emerald to an opal: nothing was changed.

The man let the water trickle gently into his glass, and as the green clouded, a mist fell away from his mind.

Then he drank opaline.

Memories and terrors beset him. The past tore after him like a panther and through the blackness of the present he saw the luminous tiger eyes of the things to be.

But he drank opaline.

And that obscure night of the soul, and the valley of humiliation, through which he stumbled were forgotten. He saw blue vistas of undiscovered countries, high prospects and a quiet, caressing sea. The past shed its perfume over him, to-day held his hand as it were a little child, and to-morrow shone like a white star: nothing was changed.

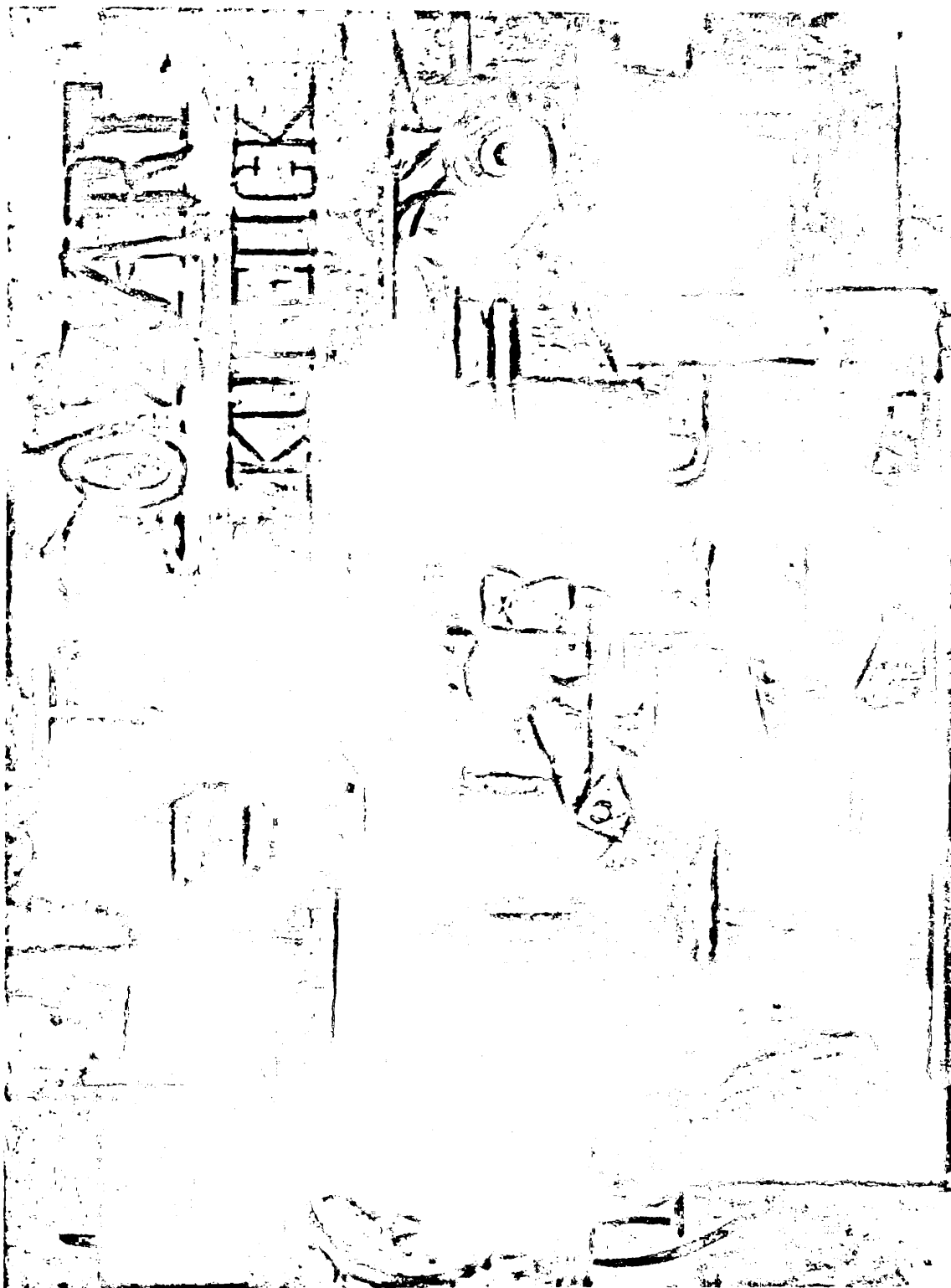
He drank opaline.

The man had known the obscure night of the soul, and lay even now in the valley of humiliation; and the tiger menace of the things to be was red in the skies. But for a little while he had forgotten.

Green changed to white, emerald to an opal: nothing was changed.

APPENDIX F

Violin and Poster (Mozart/Kubelick) by Georges Braque, (1912).



Reproduced from The Essential Cubism by Douglas Cooper and Gary Tinterow; catalogue for the Cubism exhibition at the Tate Gallery, (London: The Tate Gallery, 1983), p. 79.

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- A 23 b Untitled sketch of London streets and scenes on the Thames. Three pages in manuscript.
- A 23 c 22nd May. Three pages in manuscript.
- A 23 d Down the River to Greenwich. One page in manuscript; July 6, 1906 or 1908.
- A 23 e A London Square. Three pages in manuscript; 21 March, 1906.
- A 23 f Untitled: two versions of the "Rosamond and Phyllis" story. In manuscript, 16 and 14 pages; Wednesday June 20-23, 1906.
- A 23 g The Mysterious Case of Miss V. Three pages in manuscript.
- A 23 h The Opera. Three pages in manuscript; July 7, 1906.
- A 23 i A Vision of Greece. Three pages in manuscript; July 7, 1906.
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- A 24 c A Dialogue on a Hill. Two pages typed; 1908 (?).
- A 24 d Sympathy. Seven pages typed.
- A 24 e The Symbol. Five pages typed; March 1, 1941.
- A 28 The Watering Place. Three pages; first two typed, the last in manuscript.
- B 9 a Two items:  
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Memoirs of a Novelist. Typed, 17 pages; 1909.  
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- B 9 b Happiness. Seven pages, typed.
- B 9 c [The Fascination of] The Pool. Four pages, typed; May 29, 1929.
- B 9 d Scenes from the Life of a British Naval Officer.  
Five pages, typed.
- B 9 e Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. Ten pages, typed.
- B 9 f Ode written partly in prose on seeing the name Cutbush above a butcher's shop in Pentonville.  
Six pages, typed; October 28, 1934.
- B 9 g Miss Pryme. Three pages, typed.
- B 9 h Gipsy, the Mongrel. Typed, 30 pages.
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- B 10 a The Works of Mrs. Hemans. Five pages in manuscript.
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