CHAPTER VII: CHARACTER AND CHARACTERIZATION
The modern writer's chief concern is to find out exactly what people are like, and to record his discoveries. The modern novelist's purpose is psychological research. He wants to get at all that there is in an individual. Modern psychology teaches that a human being is more like a river than a bundle of qualities and that man presents a different surface at every moment.

The problem of character depiction is central to stream of consciousness fiction. Robert Humphrey states that the great advantage and consequently the best justification of stream of consciousness novel, rests on its potentialities for presenting character more accurately and more realistically. The stream of consciousness novelists were like the naturalists, trying to depict life accurately, but unlike the naturalists, the life they were concerned with was the individual's psychic life. In modern times, partly as a result of increased speculation into the nature of the state of consciousness writers have become dissatisfied with traditional methods. They have realized that a psychologically accurate account of what a man is at any given moment can be given neither in terms of a static description of his character nor in terms of a group of
chronologically arranged reactions to a series of circumstances. They have become interested in those aspects of consciousness which cannot be viewed as a progression of individual and self-existing moments, which are essentially dynamic in nature.

So far as the characterization of James Joyce as a stream of consciousness novelist, is concerned, he started with large and fluid concepts which he particularizes by concrete, detailed illustration. The reader’s experience is inductive and only after building up a character bit by bit, can he perceive the pattern of the whole. Working from the preliminary versions, Joyce begins at a stage that is inductive for both the author and reader, the author introducing details and the reader following the author, both building toward the whole. Painstakingly, Joyce linked together the innumerable atoms that finally emerge as Stephen Dedalus, Leopold Bloom, Molly Bloom and minor characters.

The task before Joyce in dealing with his characters was one of continuation rather than creation. Many passages in *Ulysses* recall directly the Stephen of *The Portrait*. It calls itself a portrait of the artist as a young man. Its theme is the development of the artist from his early childhood when he first became
conscious of the world's attempt to assert dominance over his life to the last day of his young manhood. Many of its incidents closely parallel incidents in Joyce's life. Joyce's school fellows at Clongowes Wood under their real names. People still walking Dublin's streets also walked through The Portrait bearing their own names. Numerous well-known Dublin figures, including Joyce's mother and father and some of his university friends were immediately recognizable beneath their pseudonyms.

Joyce is the raw material from which Stephen Dedalus is created; his experience is the raw material for Stephen's life. But both the life and the experience must be refined and their imperfections removed before they can take their proper place in a work of art. In this book, therefore Joyce uses his own life as a framework for the novel but feels perfectly free to revise his biography for the purposes of art or to import into it any details or incidents which will help him to reveal the evolution of the Artist as a Young Man. 1

In writing The Portrait Joyce plunged back into his own past. It is only in brief snatches that Joyce attempts to suggest the unselected stream of Stephen's consciousness.

"Did anyone ever hear such drivel? Lord Almighty! who ever heard of ivy whining on a wall?" 2 More often, Joyce uses the traditional third person summary account: "The names of articles of dress worn by women or of certain soft and delicate stuffs used in their making brought always to his mind a delicate and sinful perfume. As a boy he had imagined..." 3 But in much of the book Joyce uses a combination of the two:

Eleven! Then he was late for that lecture too. What day of the week was it? He stopped at a newsagent's to read the headline of a placard. Thursday. Ten to eleven, English; eleven to twelve, French; twelve to one, physics. He fancied to himself the English lecture and felt, even at that distance, restless and helpless. 4 He saw the heads of his classmates....

F. Parvin Sharpless points out that in The Portrait everything that occurs is presented through 'the exclusive subjectivity of the protagonist, a subjectivity, moreover, which itself is in motion through time in a way that requires it to reflect even its subjectivity differently from one moment to the next'. 5 To achieve this end

3 Ibid., p. 155.
4 Ibid., p. 177.
5 F. Parvin Sharpless in Twentieth Century Interpretations of 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man', p. 97.
Joyce uses an infinite variety of subtle stylistic variations. The elementary vocabulary, lack of punctuation and simple, associative sentences of the first section reflect the mode of apprehension characteristic of a small but sensitive child: "When you wet the bed first it is warm then it gets cold. His mother put on the oilsheet. That had the queer smell. His mother had a nicer smell than his father. She played on the piano the sailor's hornpipe for him to dance." 6 This is in contrast to the fragmented diary entries of the last pages when the young artist is to take flight and leave behind him the nets in which his world has tried and failed to hold his spirit.

Stephen has been a spiritual exile from his social surroundings since early childhood. The description of him in the football game at Clongowes, might be a metaphor for all his participation in the life of his fellows. When he is accused of heresy in an essay, he sees himself proud and sensitive battling against the squalor of his life and the riot of his mind. At the university, the students distrust his 'intellectual crankery'. He feels equally isolated from the church and knows that he could never train for the priesthood.

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6 James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, p. 7.
The Portrait is the story of the nets and the escape from them to freedom and the name of the hero is full of symbolic significance. Stephen is the name of the first Christian martyr. The synagogue said that he spoke blasphemy and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the surname Dedalus is far more important, since the symbolism surrounding that encloses the whole story. It has a double significance for Joyce. The mythical Dedalus was imprisoned in a labyrinth on the island of Crete, and escaped by inventing wings. He is a symbol not only of the rebel who breaks out of his prison, but also of the inventor who creates the instrument of his escape. He is both man and artist. Etymologically the name means 'the cunning one'.

Stephen having decided against entering the priesthood, in spite of the temptation to power it provides, goes out on the seashore and has a vision of his true vocation. He watches the clouds drifting westward, bound for Europe, and seems to hear a confused music within him as of memories and names which he was almost conscious of but fails to capture for an instant. The music recedes and he hears some of his schoolmates calling 'Hello, Stephanos!' and 'here come The Dedalus'. The boys are bantering him, giving him the title 'Stephanos' which
means one crowned with wreaths. He recognizes their mockery, but it flatters him.

His heart trembled; his breath came faster and a wild spirit passed over his limbs as though he were soaring sunward. His heart trembled in an ecstasy of fear and his soul was in flight. His soul was soaring in an air beyond the world and the body he knew was purified in a breath and delivered of incertitude and made radiant and commingled with the element of the spirit. An ecstasy of flight made radiant his eyes and wild his breath and tremulous and wild and radiant his windswept limbs. 7

Stephen's self-isolation is heroic but suited as Stanislaus Joyce says, to his character as Irish Faust.

T.E. Apter has drawn a comparison between young Stephen Dedalus with James Ramsay in To The Lighthouse, with regard to their childhood awareness. Stephen's method of gathering information about the life around him is totally different from James's immediate, involuntary involvement. Stephen's illness provides an isolation that encourages an intensified awareness of thoughts, and sensations as in Virginia Woolf's works a fascination with an image and its association directs the train of thought.

That was the infirmary. He was sick then. Had they written home to tell his mother and father? But it would

7 Ibid., p. 169.
be quicker for one of the priests to go himself to tell them. Or he would write a letter for the priest to bring.

Dear Mother,
I am sick. I want to go home. Please come and take me home. I am in the infirmary.

Your fond son, Stephen. 8

As soon as the prefect leaves, Stephen no longer thinks of him, and the image which was brought to mind by the prefect's hand on his forehead becomes an independent train of thought. It leads him to various similar sensations of rat. Then he continues to think about the rat - but all this has nothing to do with his response to the prefect himself. It can be compared to James Ramsay's sensation when his father tickles his leg with a sprig, meaning to play with him. The boy associates his activity with what his father is doing at the time. His father is intruding upon the good and simple relations with his mother. He is demanding his mother's attention, his demand is an attack and it devours all her energy. The image of something tickling his leg becomes associated with his father as an aggressor. Both Stephen and James Ramsay with a child's powerlessness, hope that certain events will be seen by adults as reasons for fulfilling their respective wishes.

8 James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, p. 22.
James hopes that his pointing to a word on the page will recall his mother's attention to him and make his father move on. Stephen believes that his illness will be a reason for being sent home.

At the time the eighth episode of *Ulysses* was appearing in serial form Joyce said to Budgen: "I have just got a letter asking me why I don't give Bloom a rest. The writer of it wants more Stephen. But Stephen no longer interests me to the same extent. He has a shape that can't be changed." 9 The problem of Stephen Dedalus is one of the most curious and interesting in modern letters.

The shy, antisocial Stephen of the *Portrait* also appears in *Ulysses*, though outwardly different he appears to be. The shyness and aloofness are deep-rooted. One of Stephen's earliest memories in the *Portrait* is of hiding under the table when the Vance's visit. And later he is reluctant to give his hand in salutation to Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses*.

The profound influence of the church upon him is reflected in both works not only in his theological preoccupations but also in the sacerdotal images by which

his mind is objectified. The church, even after he has rejected it, dominates his thoughts. His friend Cranly says that his mind is supersaturated with the religion in which he disbelieves. At the opening of Ulysses Mulligan addresses Stephen as a 'fearful Jesuit'. In the brothel scene, one of the whores is sure that Stephen is a spoiled priest or a monk.

Stephen Dedalus is seen as a poet and aesthete. The composition of the poem is presented to the reader along with Stephen's thoughts which centre on the girl, on other women who called out to him in the street, and on the mysterious country woman who had invited the gentle Davin into her cottage. All of them merge into a composite symbol of Irish womanhood - batlike souls waking to consciousness in darkness and secrecy. Between them and him lies the shadow of the Irish priesthood. To the priest the girl (Emma Clery) would unveil her soul's shy nakedness, to a priest of the eternal imagination transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everlasting life. Despite his bitterness Stephen comes through the composition of the poem, to an understanding of her innocence, an equilibrium, a stasis in which his new understanding and pity balances his old desire and bitterness. He turns finally, from the thoughts of the
girl to a vision of the temptress of his villanelle, a personification of a feminine ideal something like a white goddess. The temptress of his dream suggests his service to art.

With the appearance of Bloom, Joyce is obliged to beat a stylistic retreat. Joyce has to provide a great deal of new information about Bloom whereas the reader is assumed to know something of Stephen from *The Portrait*. The reader can know nothing about Bloom. A minor but informative theme is played in the first paragraph.

Leopold Bloom ate with relish the inner organs of beasts and fowls. He liked thick giblet soup, nutty gizzards, a stuffed roast heart, liver slices fried with crustrumbs, fried haddock's roes. Most of all he liked grilled mutton kidneys which gave to his palate a fine tang of faintly scented urine. 10

Throughout the fifteen pages of the first section (Bloom at home) and the sixteen pages of the second section (Bloom in the streets), the kidney makes its symbolic reappearance. The above quoted paragraph is really an analogy of the character of Bloom. Bloom is an imaginative man but an earthy one who takes a sly, half shamefaced pleasure in seamy sides.

The author does not do much more than introduce us

to Bloom in the setting of his home at breakfast time. Almost at once the interior monologue begins, and it is Bloom himself who gives us all the important information about his general situation. But Bloom's interior monologue is a different thing from Stephen's; the difference is not only in degree, but in characters. They are different in kind and different in purpose. It could be said that Stephen reflects in poetry and Bloom in prose. Stephen's monologue is meant to be something more than a mere literal account of his stream of consciousness. Bloom's is severely realistic. Stephen's mind works in symbols which have a strict relevance to the whole purpose of the book. Bloom's monologue is discursive and many of the thoughts which pass through his mind are purely ephemeral. Bloom's monologue has no relevance beyond the immediate and photographic. The symbolic themes in Bloom's monologue are, his romantic feeling for the East, the death of his son, and the humiliation of his race.

Joyce has to present the inner nature of Bloom and distinguish absolutely the reality behind Bloom from the reality behind Stephen.

Martin Cunningham, first, poked his silk-hatted head into the creaking carriage and, entering deftly, seated himself. Mr Power stepped in after him,
curving his height with care.
- Come on, Simon.
- After you, Mr Bloom said.
Mr Dedalus covered himself quickly
and got in, saying: - Yes, yes.
- Are we all here now? Martin Cunningham
asked. Come along, Bloom. 11

These opening lines present Bloom in his role of Outsider. He is here addressed by his surname. This is to be his relationship with his companions throughout the funeral - he is a Jew among Gentiles.

Mr Bloom at gaze saw a lithe young man,
clad in mourning, a wide hat.
- There's a friend of yours gone by,
Dedalus, he said.
- Who is that?
- Your son and heir. 12

This is the first time in the book that the paths of Stephen and Bloom cross. Bloom is a sonless father and Stephen a fatherless son. Dedalus having spurned his mother and renounced his father, is in search of a father-figure, spiritual father. And Bloom, whose only son has died in infancy, is looking for a son, and in a shadowy way Dedalus and Bloom find what they want in each other.

Leopold Bloom is an amiable and pottering introvert.

He is a middle-aged man, attached to his comforts, l'homme moyen sensuel, unsuccessful, and unprovided with any

11 Ibid., p. 87.
12 Ibid., p. 88.
practicable scheme for attaining success, but drifting along from one sensation to another, expanding and contracting, putting out and drawing in feelers, like so much jellyfish. He has no strong objective, no organizing principle for his energies. He has no ruling passion even, unless it be the wish to think well of himself; and that he takes out almost altogether in day-dreams. 13

Something of the same is true of Stephen Dedalus, though he is a more complicated character and harder to define. He is a young man, profoundly disillusioned. He is a poet and goes about his poet's business as stated at the end of The Portrait - to encounter the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of his soul the uncreated conscience of his race. But this guiding principle is lost in the hullabaloo of his own thoughts and the general hullabaloo of Dublin life in which he is so deeply immersed.

Joyce was able to endow his mosaic with incredible human fulness in the portraits of Bloom, Stephen and Molly Bloom. "But they remain pieces of the mosaic, somehow lost and unauthoritative amid the bustle of thoughts and sensations they are transmitting." 14 Not only is interaction absent, but the characters are

astonishingly egocentric. The stream of consciousness presentation itself carries a considerable dosage of narcissism with it. But Stephen is taxed for self-indulgence and alienation while Bloom and Molly are celebrated for their openness to life. Bloom's incessant, quasiprogressive chatter is genuinely alert and bubbly, but it is in every sense, small talk. His almost mechanical responses to all random stimuli show that the system is working, that it entertains countless minute speculations and queries of the 'wonder what?' and 'interesting' variety. The bulk of his thoughts about Molly and Milly are undifferentiated from his musing about advertising and public transit. His sporadic moments of deep feeling and courage are buried under the flow of his ordinary, one-dimensional ruminations.

To look at Bloom as he really is, he is a man who gives and cares very little. He brings Molly's breakfast, buys her books, and returns to her bed in the evening; his thoughts concerning marriage and his life are about as personal as a shopping list. It is questionable how much fulfilment Bloom derives from Molly. "If Bloom is self-contained, Molly is self-adoring. The surge of life is admittedly there, and she is a tribute to the protean vitality of the flesh. But she denies relation even more staunchly than she affirms life." 15 The beautiful

series of 'yes I said yes I will Yes' which closes the book is significantly a memory of someone other than Bloom. Molly, like her husband, is faithful to her appetites, and the outside world is somewhat indiscriminately and insignificantly a source of pleasure.

This husband and wife are stupendously successful literary creations, but the level of their consciousness which Joyce has tapped is so random and unengaged that they both appear uninvolved, like dazed spectators who strayed within the precincts of Joyce's book and did duty for him. Bloom's thin curiosity and Molly's plump sexuality lead neither to knowledge nor to relation; they are 'there' as few characters in fiction are, but they are not in any meaningful way 'there together'.

The Stephen, Bloom, and Molly sections of the book are like ships veering in different directions, each circumscribed by its own waters, charting its own course, displaying its own styles. These characters are actually related in subtle and intricate ways, that various motifs are interwoven for the attention of the careful reader. There is plenty of life in Ulysses.

Bloom might have seen in Stephen more than possible Italian lessons, in Molly more than a warm bed; Stephen might have felt more than fatigue in his association with Bloom; Molly might have claimed more

16 Ibid.
than 'spunk' for Poldy. Joyce might, without changing his view of human nature, have let them respond more to each other. 17

The three main characters, the reader knows almost wholly from the inside. But Joyce's way of rendering their inner lives differs for each. The characters in Virginia Woolf's novels tend to think and experience the moment as Virginia Woolf herself does. Her characters share her sensibility and her mode of apprehension. Joyce himself is refined out of existence in Ulysses. He is outside his creation, almost. Bloom, Marion Bloom, and Stephen Dedalus think, feel and speak in utterly different ways. Joyce gives a separate style for each of them. "In his rendering of Marion Bloom, Joyce creates an image of femaleness that can be compared only with Chaucer's Wife of Bath. Marion Bloom has the fullness, the rankness, the sensuality, the whole-hearted acceptance of life of a Magna Mater, an earth goddess." 18 With Bloom, Joyce suggests rather than fully records the stream of consciousness. As Bloom walks through Dublin, stray thoughts flicker through his mind like fishes, thoughts suggested by whatever business he is about, by things that

17 Ibid., p. 177.
catch his eye in the streets, by smells that assail his nostrils; and all the time, coming sometimes to consciousness through association with these sense impressions. Below the surface froth of thoughts are his certain permanent preoccupations: the void in his life because of his child's death, his father's suicide, his humiliation as a cuckold, his feeling of being, as a Jew, an outsider. One knows Bloom better than any other character in modern fiction.

Stephen Dedalus is Joyce's Hamlet. He is a projection of Joyce himself as a young man, arrogant, tortured by a vast ambition not yet realized. He is struck with remorse for his behaviour towards his mother, the repudiator of his family, his religion and his country. Stephen's mode of thought is absolutely distinct from Bloom's. Stephen thinks in highly intellectual terms, in learned, latinate words, the language of the schoolmen.

One of the astonishing qualities of Ulysses is the variety of ways in which Joyce renders his characters and his scene. This extreme variety of methods is one reason for the difficulty of seeing Ulysses as a whole. But it makes for continuous interest in the work.

Virginia Woolf's characters are always in search of a pattern in the flux that shall give meaning to the whole.
Virginia Woolf herself is, as it were, seeking a pattern of meaning through them. And one feels all the time in her work an intuition. A close study of her novel *Mrs. Dalloway* reveals that the theme of the novel is the life of one personality, Mrs. Dalloway, affecting and affected by others who come in contact with her. Within the narrow framework of time, by means of the contact she makes and the memories they evoke in her and in others, her life-story from her girlhood to her present age of fifty is gradually unfurled. Through her stream of consciousness and that of others intimately connected with her, one sees her at the critical moments in her life, and in this way, is built up a vivid, and rounded personality. Attention is increasingly focussed on her love-experiences. She loved Peter Walsh, still loves him, but she married Richard, her present husband. Peter was too possessive, too demanding and assertive, one who would not have allowed her any privacy of soul, any spiritual independence, while Richard respects her soul, allows her, her attic room.

Virginia Woolf brings order out of the mind's chaos for the reader who traces the total pattern. Possibly less exciting than Joyce's exploitation of Bloom's mind, or of Molly's and Stephen's, the stream that Virginia Woolf uses in *Mrs. Dalloway* is simpler and infinitely more poetic and melodious. "Every stream is verbalized through the
author's tongue or mind - all characters are Virginia Woolf - in speech and rhythm of thought as articulate and poetic as their brilliant creator." 19 Unlike Joyce's, one stream, one manner of speech flows on without break, imposing a steady rhythm which even the change over from one character's point of view to another's fails to interrupt. In Ulysses, Stephen's stream is hard, tough, uneuphonious, and intellectual. Bloom's is routine and bumbling. Molly's stream is flabby, mainly unpunctuated and fluid. The personality of each character is underlined by the pattern of his distinctive speech and thought. With Virginia Woolf, though her characterizations are sharp and individual, the prose devoted to the thought and speech of each is the author's pattern, consistent and unwavering. Thus Mrs Dalloway - cool, snobbish, upperclass, may be represented in the same quiet accents as Peter Walsh, a failure - passionate, broken, insecure as the following passage testify:

He had escaped I was utterly free - as happens in the downfall of habit when the mind, like an unguarded flame, bows and bends and seems about to blow from its holding. I haven't felt so young for years! thought Peter, escaping (only of course for an hour or so) from being precisely what he was, and feeling like a child who runs out of doors, and

sees, as he runs, his old nurse waving at the wrong window. But she's extraordinarily attractive, he thought, as walking across Trafalgar Square in the direction of the Haymarket, came a young woman who, as she passed Gordon's statue, seemed, Peter Walsh thought (susceptible as he was), to shed veil after veil, until she became the very woman he had always had in mind; young, but stately, merry, but discreet; black, but enchanting. 20

The process of verbalization is aided by Virginia Woolf's unerring ability to provide both a past and a future for her characters as part of their immediate interior monologue. The added dimension afforded by allowing the characters of the novel to move back and forth in time to encompass an entire life in a few seconds of thought, enriches not only the personality of the characters but in greater measure, the philosophical depth of the book. This device of the flashback or the glimpse into the future is nothing new, but what is noteworthy is Virginia Woolf's smooth manipulation of time so that the transition seem effortless and inevitable. Part of the effectiveness of Virginia Woolf's manipulation of time as it affects the lives of her characters comes from her frequent confrontation of 'real' clock time with the 'unreal' sense of past and future - infinitely stretchable, now so far away in fancy,

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now so close when the mood demands. So Peter Walsh speaks to himself rhythmically, in time with the flow of the sound, the direct downright sound of Big Ben striking the half-hour. Upon each major character, clock time impinges menacingly while the time that counts, above and beyond mere chronological measurement, takes possession of his being.

Virginia Woolf creates a 'small world' in which the actors on the stage are all related by seeing and hearing the same sights and sounds. On the other hand, the oneness of the human beings, involved, in terms of their simultaneous response to common stimuli, acts to expand the one-day, one-place, one-cast of character's arrangement to cover all people at all times in all places. This is what James Joyce does in Ulysses and Finnegans Wake. His Dublin is all place and everywhere. Bloom is the common man for all places and time.

Of all the main characters in Mrs Dalloway, only Septimus Smith dead by his own hand, is missing from a party to which he would not in life have been invited. His absence would seem significant, for he alone has had vision of Evans, a Christ-like figure killed in the war. He alone has verbalized the message of 'universal love'. The Holmases and the Bradshaws, who have sought first to suppress his
message and his person in a lunatic asylum and then have driven him frantic, to suicide. Virginia Woolf grimly identifies Smith's persecutors as human nature.

Septimus is, however very much present at the party, for he is Clarissa's other self: the irrational, withdrawn, tormented side of the serene, outgoing heroine. Septimus's character is in all essentials Clarissa's but taken to a deadly extreme. Clarissa too feels in one sense terribly isolated from the people around her. Both spend the day wandering like Joyce's Bloom and Dedalus in Ulysses. Septimus is moving to his death. Both Clarissa and Septimus react vigorously to the world around them, but Septimus in dire anguish. Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Smith are first seen rambling through London, killing time before an important later appointment - Clarissa's party and Septimus's consultation with a specialist. Both events will seal their respective fates. Clarissa is alone and yet in the presence of the myriad facets she encounters in objects, people, the life around her, London. She sensed that something awful was about to happen. She even felt that it was very dangerous to live even one day. Thus all her senses partake to a high degree. Both Clarissa and Septimus mean to shape their lives. They succeed - Clarissa with a workable compromise and Septimus by defying his compellers.
A young man had killed himself. And they talked of it at her party— the Bradshaws talked of death. He had killed himself—but how? Always her body went through it, when she was told, first, suddenly, of an accident; her dress flamed, her body burnt. He had thrown himself from a window. Up had flashed the ground; through him, blundering, bruising, went the rusty spikes. There he lay with a thud, thud, thud in his brain, and then a suffocation of blackness. So she saw it. But why had he done it? And the Bradshaws talked of it at her party!

She had once thrown a shilling into the Serpentine, never anything more. But he had flung it away. They went on living (she would have to go back; the rooms were still crowded; people kept on coming). They (all day she had been thinking of Bourton, of Peter, of Sally), they would grow old. A thing there was that mattered; a thing, wreathed about with chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, left drop every day in corruption, lies, chatter. This he had preserved. Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate, people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded; one was alone. There was an embrace in death. 21

What Clarissa perceives with shattering clarity is his courage, his defiance, the utter integrity of his commitment against human agencies that would 'force the soul' and that have, in part forced hers. It is the purity and strength of his act that move her so. She too has her private vision of death.

In To The Lighthouse Virginia Woolf has created another

21 Ibid., pp. 203-204.
Mrs Dalloway in the character of Mrs Ramsay but with a difference. Beautiful and absolute mistress of her domestic environment, a symbol of motherhood surrounded by her eight children, Mrs Ramsay dominates every character in the novel. Mrs Ramsay is more concerned with intuition than with intellect. She reads little. Like Clarissa, her aim in life is to gather people together, marry them off. Even her main hobby, knitting, allows her to create, to join threads and to form a pattern with skilful fingers, while doing so, her mind roams free. Nor does her influence end with death. After death, she is vividly alive in the mind of her husband and in the mind of Lily Briscoe. Her spirit is the controlling factor in the last section of the novel.

The problem for Virginia Woolf is to separate the human being from the sea of flux - to capture the essence of individuality in an intuitive moment. The senses are not always reliable in ferreting out that essence. To one’s eyes on a certain day, the image Mr and Mrs Ramsay watching their child at play is nothing more than that; at another moment the image fraught with significance, becomes deeply symbolic. Lily Briscoe’s ears hear arrogance in the harsh accents of Charles Tansley’s voice while in reality he shrinks inwardly with an acute inferiority complex.
Mrs Ramsay pervades the whole book. She is above all the creator of fertile human relationships, symbolized by her love of match-making and her ubiquitous knitting, and of her warm comfort, symbolized by her green shawl. She is extraordinarily beautiful but modest and not arrogant about her beauty. She cares for material possessions, but gains great pleasure from ordinary, everyday experiences with her family, particularly her children. Her spiritual beauty far surpasses her physical beauty. Mother like - a kind of great earth-mother figure, as well as, with her muse or grace, her concern includes everyone - family, friends, the poor in general.

Mr and Mrs Ramsay represent for Virginia Woolf two opposing approaches to life and reality. He is the cynical realist; she has intuitive wisdom and warmth. Mr Ramsay is a frustrated somewhat boorish philosopher who considers life hostile. His disciple, Charles Tansley, echoes his hostility, his narrowness, his dry academic approach to life and his lack of feeling for human values. Mr Ramsay's way of helping his children is to make them realistically face the fact that life is harsh and difficult. Consequently, Mr Ramsay's poverty of spirit is reflected in his lack of warmth. His love, unlike his wife's is overpowering - he is a tyrannical father and his love for Mrs Ramsay is one which tries to consume her. He constantly needs her reassurance to
sustain his philosophical flights. The antagonism between the domineering father and the son who worships his mother, is not without Freudian overtones. Mr Ramsay whose name counts in the history of contemporary philosophical characters, may frighten his children, but he himself a child before his wife's intuitive knowledge of his psychic needs. The scholarly chats in which Charles Tansley engage, are tolerated by Mrs Ramsay because she has the wisdom to see that they are merely a species of baby talk when measured against the sum total of meaningful experience.

Artistic temperament is presented in the character of Lily Briscoe. Her creativity with ideas and images is constantly compared to Mrs Ramsay's creativity with people and with life. Both of them seek to bring order from the chaos of existence. Lily's art is eternal and Mrs Ramsay's influence is eternal. Life seems to be in constant flux while the art is a way of fixing the flux, the chaotic flux itself holds certain perfect moments of stability. Lily Briscoe is the visionary, who through her painting brings, Mrs Ramsay, the inspirer of paintings, the muse, the mother back to life.

When James Joyce saw the creative literary possibilities in the new psychological visions and invented the stream of consciousness as a literary technique, it had a double movement, horizontal and vertical. The inescapable
forward movement of temporal progression is counterpointed against the inward and downward exploration of the psychic time of memory, introspection, association, sensation daydream, where hours or years can be collapsed to moments, events from past and present, or far apart in place, can be telescoped and folded into one another. In the first chapters of *Ulysses*, during a few morning hours marked by a small scattering of external happenings, the characters and circumstances of Stephen Dedalus and Bloom are revealed to the reader entirely by the revelation of the multiple contents of their two minds as they live from moment to moment. The characters in *To The Lighthouse* reveal themselves in the same way, but Virginia Woolf's method differs from that of Joyce. She imposes the same limitations of mathematical time. The action such as it is, taken place in a few hours of two days, ten years apart. She does not however put the reader directly into the minds of her people. While she seldom slips in comments of her own, she, the controlling intelligence, is always present. She speaks in the third person, she is the narrator, telling what is going on in the various minds. But these minds unlike Joyce's characters — all speak in the same language, the prose of Virginia Woolf, her vision is more metaphysical than that of
James Joyce in *The Portrait*. Joyce's imagination is centred in the image of the artist escaping from bondage. But Virginia Woolf had an almost mystic assurance of a 'reality' behind and within the facade of the temporal. Her aim in *To the Lighthouse* is to present what she feels as a central truth about human experience through the form of her art and in the contents of the individual minds that it creates.

From the first to the last novel, Virginia Woolf displays a persistent concern with the nature of human being and thus with characterization. Certain themes, tightly tied to her complex conception of character, dominate Virginia Woolf's novels: the individual's sense of identity, the possibility and difficulty of human communication, the relation of man to his society and to the natural world surrounding him. In *The Waves*, Virginia Woolf presents to the reader six formal and distinct identities — characters whose changing fortunes she will set down during the course of the novel. They are Bernard, Neville, Louis, Susan, Rhode, and Jinny. All six characters emerge as clearly delineated personalities with easily remembered, distinguishable traits. Bernard is lonely. He thinks in terms of literary phrases and seeks the answers to questions of life and death, probably acts as a partial surrogate for the author. The shy poet Neville needing acceptance but courting rejection, is
sympathetic in his attempts to relate to others. To Louis, life means material success in a shipping firm, and identity is a matter of signing letters which he has dictated. Each of the six attempts to achieve identity in his own way. Louis's method is the simplest.

'I have signed my name,' said Louis, 'already twenty times. I, and again I, and again I. Clear, firm, unequivocal, there it stands, my name. Clear-cut and unequivocal am I too. Yet a vast inheritance of experience is packed in me. I have lived thousands of years. I am like a worm that has eaten its way through the wood of a very old oak beam. But now I am compact; now I am gathered together this fine morning.' 22

Louis fails to achieve total integration of his personality. The affluence and business success do not bring him satisfaction.

Neville seeks identity through poetry, but in personal relationships he is less successful. Even after his fame has spread he carries credentials in his pocket as if he must prove his special qualifications by an identification card.

For Susan, Jinny and Rhoda life is meaningful to them only in as much as their relationship with the men around them is significant. Susan connects with the earth and produces crops and children. Jinny encourages barren sexual promiscuity. Rhoda finds release in loving Percival, and after his death in being mistress to Louis.

Unlike Neville, Susan and Jinny seek existential order through two different sorts of physical fulfilment — maternity and sensuality. As children they envy and compete with each other and Jinny is always the aggressive one. Neville attempts to find existential order through the intellect, whereas Susan attempts to find it through domesticity and motherhood, and Jinny attempts blindly to do so through sexual experience.

Both Rhoda and Louis are mentally abnormal — Rhoda particularly, whose neurosis borders on madness and ends, we are led to infer, in suicide Virginia Woolf has 'magnified the difficulties involved in the introspective mind's encounter with reality, and has used the philosophical problem of how the mind knows the external world in order to portray a type of mental aberration which springs from an inability to come to terms with reality'.

Percival is the only one character who does not speak in the novel. But he is revealed through the stream of consciousness of the six characters. Through the eyes of his six friends, Percival is seen as a potential hero, a man of action, allied with the classic hero. Susan Gorsky points out that even though Percival's name is repeatedly

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hailed as a hero, he is also mocked. Bernard provides the first hint of the mock-heroic in the characterization of Percival. 'Percival rides a fleabitten mare, and wears a sun-helmet' but 'he rides on; the multitude cluster around him, regarding him as if he were - what indeed he is - a God'. Percival dies not a heroic death in the battle but in an accident - his horse stumbles - Percival falls and dies. Yet at the first dinner party it is Percival who is the necessary centre. He supplies the catalyst which creates an epiphany, a moment of exalted unity and successful communication for the other six; at the second party, Percival's absence creates a void perhaps most felt by Neville but obvious to all. "The six achieve another form of unity through cosmic communication, but at last one source of their potential unity is Percival, and his loss ensures their failure to achieve integration as a whole, single person." 25

Bernard has the last and the longest speech in the novel. In one sense he is like the other characters. He is at times self-conscious like Louis and Rhoda, at times consumed by sensual experience like Jinny. During middle age he is


content with his wife and family like Susan with her family. Sometimes Bernard is like Neville, preoccupied with an intellectual search for order. But he is also unlike them in a much more significant sense. He changes. Throughout his early life Bernard tries to become a novelist, but he is never able to put events into a sequence, as Neville observes — he lacks the ability to impose artistic order. What is significant about Bernard is, he alone realizes the central truth of the novel that life is ceaseless flux. He alone realizing the reality of death, honestly faces the meaning of his relationship with Percival who is killed in India.

Thus Virginia Woolf’s characters are highly articulate and quite abnormally self-aware watching their thoughts and feelings the whole time as Joyce’s characters Leopold Bloom and Molly Bloom never do. But no work of art has rivalled Virginia Woolf’s The Waves in probing the human consciousness of six people, representing one generation. James Joyce confines himself to one or two main characters at the most.