TREATMENT OF TIME IN VIRGINIA WOOLF'S NOVELS

CHAPTER THREE

TREATMENT OF TIME IN VIRGINIA WOOLF’S NOVELS

This I say is the present moment... This is part of the merging monster to whom we are attached...

—Rhoda in Virginia Woolf’s The Waves.

As a member of the Bloomsbury Group of intellectuals and artists, Virginia Woolf could not escape the new awareness of reality and of time. G E Moore’s Principia Ethica, which was the Bible of the Group, contained suggestions of a reality, an “Absolute Good”, which existed outside time and space (Moore 110). E M Forster, another member of Bloomsbury, makes a similar distinction when he says, “there is something else in life besides time, something which may conveniently be called value” (Forster 36). These had their share in shaping Virginia Woolf’s concepts of man’s relation to time and reality, which, though they do not form a systematized philosophy, have been presented through her novels. The thematic and technical approaches of her novels to time cannot be divorced from each other. While we shall examine the “how” of her novels in terms of time, we
may also relate this technical aspect to the total concept of the time-scheme, the "what" of the novels. John Maynard Keynes, the noted economist and member of the Bloomsbury Group, spoke of how Moore valued "timeless, passionate states of contemplation and communion", the greatest of which were "certain states of consciousness, which may be roughly described as the pleasures of human intercourse and the enjoyment of beautiful objects" (Keynes 252). Moore was no idealist because he asserted the separate reality of material objects (Rosenbaum 327). To him, consciousness is "diaphanous", and "transparent"; nevertheless, Moore is, along with James and Bergson, a philosopher of consciousness. In her collection of stories, *Monday or Tuesday*, Virginia Woolf seems to have been guided by Moore's views. "Most of the stories in *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" (Rosenbaum 323).

Critical appraisal of Virginia Woolf's works has tended to focus on feminist concerns. Although some commentators have noted that Woolf's high modernist style lends itself to a number of readings with respect to sense of self and the passage of time, philosophical discussions have generally not played a significant role in Woolf scholarship. There has nevertheless been some critical
acknowledgement of the seriousness with which Virginia Woolf treated the theme of time in some of her novels like *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*. Critics like Shiv K Kumar have noted her concern for time, reality and a sense of interior life-as-lived that is overtly philosophical in its construction.

Virginia Woolf’s primary concern as a novelist is the exploration of character. In a paper read at Cambridge in 1924 ("Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown") she said, “I believe that all novels ... deal with character, and that it is to express character that the form of the novel has been evolved” (*Collected Essays* I 324).

The life of any man or woman, the life of consciousness, is missing in the “materialist” novels of writers who are slaves to convention (*Collected Essays* II 290). In her critical essays, Virginia Woolf denounced such writers; and she consistently praised the awareness of this real life in some novelists from Sterne to Joyce. What she disliked most in the Edwardian novelists Wells, Bennett and Galsworthy was the “railway-line” narrative which excluded and falsified the psychic life and its experience of time. Her own novels, up to *To the Lighthouse*, may be seen to evolve through stages of progressive awareness of the various aspects of psychic time.
In Erich Auerbach's influential essay, "The Brown Stocking," Virginia Woolf's distinguishing technical features of stream of consciousness are examined in relation to devices used by many contemporary writers. Auerbach states that terms such as stream of consciousness and interior monologue reflect the "author's attitude toward the reality of the world he represents." (Beja 45) Woolf's uniqueness begins with an "attempt to render the flow and the play of consciousness adrift in the current of changing impressions." Auerbach contends that Woolf's technique is achieved through "[t]he design of a close approach to objective reality by means of numerous subjective impressions received by various individuals (and at various times) is important in the modern technique." Woolf's use of the "multipersonal representation of consciousness" is unique through its combination with "treatment of time." This relation is not new to modern literature; however, narration is not devoted to an external occurrence, rather internal processes. "In Virginia Woolf's case the external events have lost their hegemony, they serve to release and interpret inner events, whereas before her time... inner movements preponderantly function to prepare and motivate significant external happenings." Although there is no temporal relation between external framing and internal impressions, each share a common element. The important aspect to remember regarding the uniqueness of Woolf's representation of
consciousness is that “insignificant external occurrence releases ideas and chains of ideas which cut loose from the present of the external occurrence and range freely through the depths of time” (Beja 45-50).

Virginia Woolf’s technique appears consistent with modern writings in psychology. Bergson explains that the conscious is never in a “state.” Instead, the consciousness is constantly changing due to present impressions integrating with past experiences (Bergson, *Time and Free Will* 68-71). Woolf’s characters seem to be constantly reminded of the past through their present experiences. For example, the passage, which Auerbach examines in *To the Lighthouse*, discusses the impression that the worn furniture has on Mrs Ramsay as her eyes fall onto it (See Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* 26). Therefore, the term stream of consciousness may be too general when describing Woolf’s work.

Woolf’s probing into the human consciousness in *To the Lighthouse* is not so simplistic that it can be attributed to any particular narrative technique. What really distinguishes her novel is the aesthetic effect of her exploration of the minds of her characters. Only an artist of Woolf’s stature can present the mental worlds of her characters with an unprecedented depth and intensity. By virtue of her depth and
intensity, Woolf creates a novel both with an unconventional “plot”, and an unconventional prose. In fact, the imaginative power of her language tunneling the minds of her characters translates her novel to the level of poetry. Therefore, To the Lighthouse emerges not as a typical prosaic presentation of events. The subtle suggestiveness in the novel has the charisma of poetry. An anonymous critic writing in 1927 sees To the Lighthouse from this perspective:

From the point of view of time, stream of consciousness novels start on a note of dissatisfaction with conventional writings, but end up tiring themselves out and leaning back on conventions. This is perhaps why stream of consciousness novels have not been seen as a serious genre worthy of consideration, in the second half of the twentieth century. Virginia Woolf typically represents this class of writers both in her fervid loyalty to the stream of consciousness form but also in the weariness she seems to feel about extreme experimentation. Just as the sudden spurt of stream of consciousness novels got gradually swallowed up in the current of conventionality, so does Virginia Woolf’s novels too start in conventions, move on to rigorous experimentation, and end up on a note of compromise. Her novels trace this evolution not merely of her own work, but of stream of consciousness novels in general. Time the monster is not tamed; it has
only convinced her that it is no use trying. She seems to give up her struggle in favour of art. Art creates, it sustains, and it endures.

Virginia Woolf's eight novels mark eight stages in her attitude to time. The first two, The Voyage Out and Night and Day, present time as linear in the usual mode. The third, Jacob's Room, marks out states of consciousness that could be called "states of being". Time is a "process" of "becoming", and it does not offer us any "product" in the form of a "being". So the search for real self has to go on. Virginia Woolf's next novel, Mrs Dalloway, is her first serious attempt to find an answer to the challenge of time. Time is the great unifier, but it is also a destroyer. The fifth and perhaps best novel, To the Lighthouse, presents the balanced consciousness conquering time—though not in actuality. Orlando, more a fantasy than a novel, stretches the obsession with time to ridiculous extremes, as though it is only in fantasy that one could get to terms with time. However, in presenting this, time relapses into its spatial—and linear—character. The next novel, The Waves, gives up all pretensions to understand the enigma of time, and tries to take shelter in "moments" of being. The Years shows a relapse into clock-time, almost a surrender. And the last one, Between the Acts, seeks the aid of art in conquering time more in a figurative manner than in actuality.
The Voyage Out and Night and Day -- "railway-line narrative":  
Virginia Woolf’s first novel, The Voyage Out (1915), is conventional. If at all it suggests anything of the mature novelist in her, it is to be found in the emphasis on the mental life of the characters as much as on external actions. Though there are situations here, the novel is primarily one of character. Virginia Woolf’s tendency to isolate her characters and locale is also discernible in her first novel. Rachel Vinrace, an over-inhibited girl of twenty-four, sets upon a voyage out which is as much symbolic as actual; she is initiated into sexual awareness by the Dalloways and her aunt Mrs Ambrose. She falls in love, is engaged, but suddenly dies though not before she has had a mystical realisation of her own self. As J K Johnstone points out, Helen Ambrose’s embroidery depicts in advance certain events in the novel, thus merging the present with the future (Johnstone 325).

However, for all its emphasis on the inner man, the novel does not deprecate the external man. In 1929, in an essay called simply “Phases of Fiction”, Woolf wrote that the novelist should “give that full record of life, not the climax and the crisis but the growth and development of feelings...” (Collected Essays II 99). But her first novel does not choose between the two: while it does attempt to record the development of Rachel’s mind, it also moves towards a well-defined climax in chronological sequence. Thus in The Voyage Out the clock assumes its traditional role and has no deeper significance than announcing hours and suggesting conventional analogies. Though certain casual references to hours of the day
climax in chronological sequence. Thus in *The Voyage Out* the clock
assumes its traditional role and has no deeper significance than
announcing hours and suggesting conventional analogies. Though
certain casual references such as, for instance, “the clock still ticking in
the midst of universal silence” (357) help to give a sense of the
pervasiveness and the authoritative presence of time, the subjective
aspect of time is not explored.

*Night and Day* (1919) continues the traditional method of
presenting life chronologically. Quentin Bell in Vol. II of his *Virginia
Woolf: A Biography* points out that Virginia Woolf called this the
“railway-line” narrative (Bell 106). Her first novel is a good example
of this unidirectional, linear narrative. Katharine Hilbery, grand-
daughter of a famous poet, meets Ralph Denham who is much poorer,
and, though at first misled by circumstances, they at last decide to get
married. Once again the clock performs the docile function of
announcing hours of transition from one phase of consciousness to
another. The clocks are very much a presence, but as in *The Voyage
Out* it is only clock-time that is suggested here. We hear the clock’s
“mellow strokes”: “As the last of them died away, there was a firm
knocking on her door, and she rose and opened it” (44). Shiv Kumar
rightly says, “the clock does not break in upon an unprepared consciousness, but strikes only at a convenient moment” (Kumar 72).

**Jacob’s Room** -- “states of being”: Virginia Woolf’s third novel, *Jacob’s Room* (1922) came after a collection of short “sketches” entitled *Monday or Tuesday* (1921) which first revealed her tendency for experimentation.

In *Jacob’s Room* Virginia Woolf explicitly recognises the limitations of the clock which divides time into shreds. Clock-time is an arbitrary artificiality superimposed on the essentially indivisible totality of our experience of time. Nature is indifferent to these man-made clock-divisions: “The church clock struck ten. Did the strokes reach the furze bush, or did the thorn tree hear them?” (125) Again: “Motionless and broad-backed the moors received the statement ‘It is fifteen minutes past the hour,’ but made no answer, unless a bramble stirred” (126).

Shiv Kumar observes how the hour of five o’clock is selected in the novel to demonstrate “the arbitrariness of any particular moment singled out of the stream of *la dureé*” (Kumar 74). Life which is essentially dynamic is artificially stilled and frozen; the characters,
“arrested in their life-flow, pause, as it were, for a moment before the camera, and break into movement again” (73). Here a single picture is presented instead of a rapid succession of snapshots on a cinematographic film.

What we are shown, then, is the frozen moment as against the continuum of psychic time. The artificial stillness evokes as much as it counterpoints the essential progression. Paradoxically, the stasis, by its sheer artificiality, vindicates the reality of psychic flux. This antithesis between the arbitrary moment and the real flux is thematically reinforced by the subtle counterpointing, noted by Bernard Blackstone, of movement and stillness throughout the novel (Blackstone 67). At the very outset, Betty sits still, reading, while Archer wanders past calling Jacob; Jacob clambers over rocks; and the waves beat incessantly. To cite yet another of the innumerable examples, at the beginning of Chapter 10 we are shown alternate glimpses of Jacob sitting by the window and Fanny Elmer passing beneath (108).

Whereas Virginia Woolf’s first two novels take the time-sequence for granted and observe the chronological development of plot, Jacob’s Room reduces the story interest to the minimum by recording experience “not in its public or social aspect, but as the
outward manifestations of states of being” (Moody 16). Jacob, born into the ugly, unreal world of the adult, always tries to keep up his “sense of freedom”. He is repulsed by the schematised world of “elderly people” and attracted to the world of nature and things. He flits from place to place, to London, France, Italy, Greece; now almost loving Clara, now having an affair with Florinda; now in close affinity with the world of things and now far away. At last he is killed in war leaving his room in confusion.

Jacob’s room is shown by projecting a series of momentary flashes. We see particular areas of space limited by the range, as it were, of the camera or of a character’s vision, as well as particular portions of time. In Chapter 3, we see the landscape through the eyes of Jacob who is resting in the company of Timmie Durrant:

Now there was a shiver of wind—instantly an edge of the sky; and as Durrant ate cherries he dropped the stunted yellow cherries through the green wedge of leaves, their stalks twinkling as they wriggled in and out, and sometimes one half-bitten cherry would go down red into the green. The meadow was on a level with Jacob’s eyes as he lay back; gilt with buttercups, but the grass did not run like the thin green water of the graveyard grass about to overflow the tombstones, but stood juicy and
Looking up, backwards, he saw the legs of children deep in the grass, and the legs of cows. (34)

Thus, a particular scene is not generally described in full by an all-seeing author perched at some vantage point high above; rather, it is shown to the reader subjectively, through the character’s eyes. Just so, we do not get direct from the author a chronological account of incidents or situations; instead, as we partake of a character’s consciousness, we move up and down the stream of time, though, as earlier suggested, we do not witness its flow but its artificial stasis at moments. It is as though its flow, arrested by an oar for a split-second, is photographed for us. Like the river on which Timmy and Jacob sail, this stream “too runs past, not at flood, not swiftly, but cloying the oar that dips in it and drops white drops from the blade” (33). We flit from one random moment to another. When Mrs Flanders is sitting on the pier at the Dod’s Hill aquarium, a young man observes her skirt: “It changes; drapes her ankles—the nineties; then it amplifies—the seventies; now it’s burnished red and stretched above a crinoline—the sixties” (16).

The reader jumps through the decades back and forth, almost ascribing to Mrs Flanders a process of ageing slower than others’.
Indeed, Mr Andrew Floyd who presently proposes to her is eight years younger. Mrs Flanders rejects his proposal and now we leap suddenly across a broad gap of time to a future years away: “But the letter which Mr Floyd found on the table when he got up early next morning ... was such a motherly, respectful letter that he kept it for many years ... when he looked for it the other day he could not find it ... Meeting Jacob in Piccadilly lately, he recognised him after three seconds. But Jacob had grown such a fine young man that Mr Floyd did not like to stop him in the street” (19).

Meanwhile, present time flows on, and is measured by the church clock which strikes the hours and the quarter-hours. The clock, though, is a poor guide. The novelist often hints at the relative value of clock-time. While the luncheon party is waiting for Jacob who “had mistaken his time”, we are told mockingly of “a cloud choosing that moment to cross the sun” (31). Even our perceptions which transcend time, our visions of eternity, have to happen at some particular moments in linear time.

Thus we see Jacob, with Timmy, lying in the Scilly Isles, surrounded by the sea which symbolises eternity. Jacob singing,
Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee,

sees the sky as another manifestation of eternity: cloudless at midday, "it was like something permanently displayed with the cover off" (49). Even this vision of permanence has to happen at an arbitrary moment, "at midday". Now Virginia Woolf goes on to hammer home its arbitrariness and insignificance in an almost mock-epic strain:

By six o'clock a breeze blew in off an ice field; and by seven the water was more purple than blue; at half-past seven there was a patch of rough gold-beater's skin round the Scilly Isles, and Durrant's face, as he sat steering, was of the colour of a red lacquer box polished for generations. By nine all the fire and confusion had gone out of the sky, leaving wedges of apple-green and plates of pale yellow; and by ten the lanterns on the boat were making twisted colours upon the waves ... (49)

This dilemma of our inability to escape temporal limitations thus takes on a thematic significance. This dilemma is a novelist's too. For while she presents scene after scene of what we have called "states of being", she has to impose an overall pattern to her message intelligible. As J K Johnstone puts it, "paradoxically enough, it appears that, in order to escape from the time-sequence, she must first record present time
clearly” (Johnstone 332). Time may be ridiculed, but the novelist cannot help temporality.

Whereas in her first novels Virginia Woolf took chronological sequence for granted, in Jacob’s Room she revolts against it. But, as E M Forster was to declare five years later in Aspects of the Novel, the “story” has to be told in relation to time in order to be intelligible. “But it is never possible for a novelist,” he confesses, “to deny time inside the fabric of his novel: he must cling, however lightly, to the thread of his story, [...] otherwise he becomes unintelligible” (Forster 37). In her subsequent novels, Virginia Woolf tried other methods like space-time montage and symbolism to hold her novels together. But the very fact that they communicate in intelligible terms the essentially incommunicable psychic experience of time makes them conform to the Forsterian compromise. Defy time as she might, Virginia Woolf has to surrender to it; she has to fight the antagonist on his own terms.

Her picture of the non-symmetrical “semi-transparent envelope”, therefore, has in terms of the overall structure to be arranged symmetrically. We seem to see, to quote her perhaps a little out of context, “something girding it about like the firm road of Defoe’s story telling; or we see it shaped and symmetrical with dome and column
complete" Which proves, says Virginia Woolf in her essay "Phases of Fiction", "that the novel is by its nature doomed to compromise, wedded to mediocrity." Nonetheless, "the purpose of discovery goes on perpetually" (Collected Essays II 101).

It does, especially in her own case. She does not propose to deal with the 'exterior life' bounded in time, but with the life of consciousness. Thematically, Virginia Woolf gives the lie to time; but so far as the outer framework of the 'story' is concerned, all she can do is to emphasise its insignificance, never to escape it. Sandra in Jacob's Room hears the clock tick, and "time accumulating". If we may take this as the opposition of spatial time against the perception of psychic time, her desperate question is an echo of the author's: "What for? What for?" (153)

The room is an image central to the novel, as its title suggests. In fact, critics have pointed out that Jacob's 'room' is "more vividly realised than Jacob" (Brewster 106). J K Johnstone says that "this is a serious weakness in the novel: For its centre, the character who might unite all the various scenes is—not there." (Johnstone 334). For it is not only a particular character whose actions in the temporal world are explored here, but the abstract concept of human personality in its relation to
time. And as an image the room symbolises human consciousness in its temporal context, “selfhood formed in time” as John Graham calls it (Graham 29). It is one’s private world which is limited spatially and temporally, and in his rebellion against the world of elderly people, against the schematised society, Jacob’s only refuge is his own room, or rather his many rooms in Cambridge, London, Patras.

S P Rosenbaum, studying the direct relevance of G E Moore’s philosophy of dualistic realism—asserting the non-material reality of consciousness as against materialists and asserting the separate reality of material objects as against idealists—to Virginia Woolf’s aesthetics, observes that while Jacob’s room represents his immediate environment, the objects of his perception, it is also “symbolic of his consciousness itself.” “Jacob’s rooms are symbols of the acts and the objects, the form and the content, of consciousness” (Rosenbaum 329). The rooms may be emptied of Jacob’s person, but the objects like the boots remain.

Mrs Dalloway—“fear no more...” : Mrs Dalloway (1925), at first titled The Hours, carries Virginia Woolf’s experimentation with time a step further. While Jacob’s Room, innovative as it was in its method, nevertheless observed the usual time-span of a novel, this one covers
the passage of a single day, as Joyce's *Ulysses* had done three years earlier. The time-scheme of the novel's exterior structure may be analysed thus: On a Wednesday morning in June, Mrs Clarissa Dalloway leaves her house to buy flowers for her party. At eleven o'clock she is in the street, joining all others looking up at an aeroplane advertising toffees; at half-past eleven Peter Walsh leaves Clarissa's house; at a quarter to twelve he passes Septimus; at twelve Clarissa lays her dress on the bed, and Septimus reaches Sir William Bradshaw's clinic; at half-past one Richard Dalloway attends Lady Bruton's lunch party in Brook Street; at three Mrs Dalloway reads Mrs Marsham's letter, and at half-past three sees the old lady across her window; at six Septimus Smith commits suicide.

*Jacob's Room*, we saw, tried to show what consciousness-time is not rather than what it is; thus it ended up as a depiction of "states of being" which do not form Virginia Woolf's final word about the nature of consciousness. In *Mrs Dalloway* she is trying to present her concept of psychic time: rather than presenting "states of being", it shows the "process of becoming", the "dynamic continuity" (Kumar 76). The entire novel, not divided into chapters, is a rendering of consciousness in its perpetual flux.
Mrs Dalloway begins where Jacob’s Room left off, in the sense that it tries at first to reiterate the essential difference between clock-time and mind-time. The former has us at its command while psychic time is subject to consciousness. Big Ben, when it strikes, sounds like an inscrutable judge passing an irrevocable judgment: “There! Out it boomed. First a warning, musical; then the hour, irrevocable” (6). On the other hand, a little later, Clarissa muses over her relations with Peter Walsh in the past: “For they might be parted for hundreds of years, she and Porter ... some days, some sights bringing him back to her calmly, without the old bitterness” (9).

The time-scheme that we noted earlier is limited to the structure of the novel—the clocks slicing the day into bits are part of the external phenomena. The inner time yields to no such arbitrary divisions. In fact, here Virginia Woolf converts clock-time into a subjective experience. Describing the chimes of the Big Ben as “leaden circles” dissolving in the air, she presents how Peter Walsh’s consciousness assimilates them: “It is half-past eleven, she says, and the sound of St Margaret’s glides into the recesses of the heart and buries itself in ring after ring of sound, like something alive which wants to confide itself, to disperse itself, to be, with a tremor of delight, at rest—like Clarissa herself, thought Peter Walsh, coming downstairs on the stroke of the
hour" (56). S P Rosenbaum, while disputing the point that time here can be dichotomised into clock-time and duration, also points out that the novel presents time "as something that is experienced by consciousness, something that is outside themselves and that they share in the perception of" (Rosenbaum 337). Time here is something that is at once outside the consciousness and conditioned by it. The interval between eleven and half-past eleven is richer in intensity, unfolding the many past years of Clarissa at Bourton, than the longer interval between half-past three and six. Only external time can be counted and calculated.

Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Smith who is writing an "Ode to Time" uphold the superiority of psychic time. Septimus lives as much in the past as in the present, through his recollections of his dead friend Evans. He is not attached to the present; and since inner time is an intensely individual perception he is an "outcast" from society and from human nature in general. Being "quite alone, condemned, deserted, as those who are about to die are alone, there was a luxury in it, an isolation full of sublimity; a freedom which the attached can never know" (103). When Rezia once asks him the time, "I will tell you the time," said Septimus, very drowsily, smiling mysteriously at the dead man in the grey suit" (79).
Smith's suicide itself is a defiance of the tyranny of clock-time as represented by Sir William Bradshaw. Sir William is a clock because he is the apostle of proportion, and because he tries to regulate life's endless stream. In a fit of intense dislike for Sir William, Rezia rages at his kind:

Shredding and slicing, dividing and subdividing, the clocks of Harley Street nibbled at the June day, counselled submission, upheld authority, and pointed out in chorus the supreme advantages of a sense of proportion, until the mound of time was so far diminished that a commercial clock, suspended above a shop in Oxford Street, announced, genially and fraternally, as if it were a pleasure to Messrs Rigby and Lowndes to give the information gratis, that it was half-past one (113).

Sir William, Dr Holmes and the clocks of Harley Street uphold the tyranny of external time. The situation leading to Smith's suicide is the obvious creation of Dr Holmes, whiles the suicide itself is conceived as Smith's triumph. But Dr Holmes who cannot understand Smith's vision sees his act as cowardice; and, himself the cause of it, he cannot know
it because he is unsympathetic and is blinded by his narrow time-sense: “who could have foretold it?” he asks (165).

Smith’s mystical vision of some part of us that might survive time is shared by Clarissa also. Peter Walsh observes that “she felt herself everywhere”, that she has a “transcendental theory” that the unseen part of us might survive, though our bodies, “our apparitions, the part of us which appears, are so momentary compared with the other” (168-9).

Clarissa feels herself part of Smith in his defiance (204). Now she has a moment of happiness, and then: “The clock began striking. The young man had killed himself; but she did not pity him; with the clock striking the hour, one, two, three, she did not pity him, with all this going on”. (205)

Sir William Bradshaw and Dr Holmes are devotees of the clocks which divide and subdivide, while Mrs Dalloway and Septimus Smith know that they only touch the surface of our existence in time, the waves on the surface of the sea. The sense of proportion and the divisive temperament are characteristics of clock-time, and Smith and Clarissa recognise their inferior role in our life. The only occasion in the novel when Smith speaks “as he used to do” is when he says about the hat his
wife has made: “It’s too small for Mrs Peters” (159), that is, when he shows a sense of proportion. Sir William divides men into sane and insane with his yardstick of proportion. A third characteristic these antagonists have in common with clock-time is the authority they arbitrarily exercise over the others. In the crucial situation leading to his death, Septimus sees “Holmes and Bradshaw, men who ... talked of proportion; who differed in their verdicts (for Holmes said one thing, Bradshaw another) yet judges they were; who mixed the vision and the sideboard; saw nothing clear, yet ruled, yet inflicted” (164).

Clock-time, then, divides; but at the same time, by its sheer authority and tyranny, it imposes a unity, a hierarchical order based on proportion, so that only those people are visibly united who meet in time as much as in space, as people who experience a common feeling, who together look at a pageant. It is true that the people of London get united in viewing the royal car or the aeroplane. The traffic, in the novel, may thus symbolise the group of persons united in spatial time. Peter Walsh, stepping out of Clarissa's room, is “overwhelmed by the traffic and the sound of all the clocks striking” (54). it is only during the thirty seconds when the car stops, when “all heads were inclined the same way” (21), that Clarissa and Septimus may be said to come close in spatial terms at all. Time, symbolised by the passing car, unites

176
them: “Everyone looked at the motor car. Septimus looked. Boys on bicycles sprang off. Traffic accumulated. And there the motor car stood, [...] and this gradual drawing together of everything to one centre before his eyes, as if some horror had come almost to the surface and was about to burst into flames, terrified him” (18). The motorcar, like the snail in the short story “Kew Gardens”, represents linear time. Carrying “the voice of authority”, it sets the traffic to a standstill, and gives out the scorching awareness of persons imprisoned by it: “Everything had come to a standstill ... The sun became extraordinarily hot because the motorcar had stopped outside Mulberry’s shop window” (17).

The personage inside the car is mysterious but certainly great. It may be the consciousness which now lives in time but because of its androgynous nature (“Even the sex was in dispute” 19) can transcend it. The person is at once an individual bounded in time and the institution of monarchy that is comparatively more enduring. It is “the majesty of England, ... the enduring symbol of the state which will be known to curious antiquaries, sifting the ruins of time, when London is a grass-grown path and all those hurrying along the pavement this Wednesday morning are but bones...” (19).
Standing close to the car, meanwhile, Septimus Waaren Smith is suddenly apprehensive: "The world has raised its whip; where will it descend?" (17) The world of matter, of time, typified by Holmes and Bradshaw, strikes within hours, and Smith retaliates by escaping from its clutches. His body is carried in an ambulance. To the materialists who care for his body he has left it. Smith who had been stranded, "unable to pass," earlier in the presence of the car, now races through the streets. He passes from life to death, from time beyond time; the ambulance, in terms of clock-time, is the moment of transition. Peter Walsh is touched by its sight for it is "a moment in which things came together; this ambulance; and life and death" (168).

Blackstone points out that the present experience mingles with the past, especially in Clarissa's mind (Blackstone 93). The past is interwoven with present actualities, so that past and present merge into a simultaneous experience. The past exists not only in its present consequences and relations. As against clock-time progressing irrevocably, consciousness can revoke the past. The two principal characters constantly relive the past. In the case of Clarissa who tries to find an enduring quality in psychic time, the past is often associated with a living character, Peter; Peter, Clarissa's one-time lover, also shares her past. To Septimus who tries to escape time altogether, the
past is often connected with the dead Evans. He is afraid of death but at the same time the more fascinated by it. When he is musing about the beauty of a tree, his wife says, “It’s time”; and then: “The word ‘time’ split its husk”, and from his lips words fall in an “immortal ode to Time”. He sees Evans approaching and asks him away but he comes, giving him an “astonishing revelation” (78-9).

Thus, to sum up, Mrs Dalloway is a step forward in the treatment of time. Jacob’s Room showed what psychic time is not; Mrs Dalloway tries to define it in positive terms, by showing what it is. It is an attempt toward presenting consciousness and its experience of time. As against the finiteness of time it tries to find immortality in consciousness and its perceptions.

Unlike clock-time which is quantitative, psychic time is qualitative: first, it is not sequential as it is in clock-time (“First one thing and then another” 160) and cannot be broken into past, present and future; it is not linear but concentric and simultaneous. Secondly, it does not exercise an arbitrary authority to impose order on life and experiences as clock-time does. Whatever order one attains in psychic time is not imposed from outside but elicited by a mystical vision from the inside, not demanded but commanded.
Besides being qualitative, psychic time is highly individualistic and almost incommunicable. Clarissa and Septimus who live in it are either of them lonely. Again, life of body may be limited and circumscribed in time, but life of consciousness refers beyond matter and transcends temporal limitations. Septimus survives as part of Clarissa herself. It is thus that the Shakespearian refrain “Fear no more the heat o’ the sun” becomes a central statement of the novel—the sun, a temporal agent, destroys only the body; consciousness endures much longer.

An important part of our experience of time, “the moment”, recurs throughout the novel as a motif. We have already stated that certain moments are much more important to the individual than others. At the superficial level, the moment belongs to external time—in fact it is the point at which the straight line of linear time intersects the constantly shifting circumference of psychic time. While it is the consciousness that gives it qualitative significance and makes it real, it bears the stamp of apparent actuality unlike a more sustained experience of psychic time. Thus Clarissa loves “life; London; this moment of June” (6). The moment happens in linear time but it is enriched by something beyond, something more real: “it was the moment between six and seven when every flower...glows...; every flower seems to burn by itself” (16). Except for this, the moment is exclusively a creation of the
consciousness. In it one experiences in an intensified form all the characteristics of psychic time. First, it is invested with a qualitative significance: Peter Walsh, at the stroke of half-past eleven, seeing Clarissa, has an “extraordinarily clear, yet puzzling, recollection of her, as if this bell had come into the room years ago, where they set at some moment of great intimacy, and had gone from one to the other, and had left, like a bee with honey, laden wit the moment” (56). Again, in the moment, past, present and future meet. (Peter Walsh immediately sees his future “rolled down to him” 56). It is man’s shelter from the relentless march towards death; Clarissa, afraid of old age, finds solace in the moment: “She was not old yet. She had just broken into her fifty-second year. Months and months of it were still untouched. June, July, August: each still remained almost whole, and, as if to catch the falling drop, Clarissa...plunged into the very heart of the moment, transfixed it, there” (41-2). The problem thus is how to perpetuate the moment—and we find Virginia Woolf concerned with it in To the Lighthouse. Another problem with the moment, as the essence of psychic time, is that it is too personal to unite people. Clarissa reflects “how moments like these are buds on the tree of life, flowers of darkness they are, she thought (as if some lovely rose had blossomed for her eyes only)” (33). Lastly, like psychic time, the moment can have a transcendental value. At the moment of her identification with the dead Septimus, Clarissa
has such a moment of incredible happiness because, bounded as she is in time, she has had a union with the timeless, with Septimus who is dead. (See for instance Mrs Dalloway 205). The moment is the quintessence of one's experience of time. It is the eddy one lingers at in the stream of one's consciousness.

To the Lighthouse--"life stand still here": We have noted that in contrast to clock-time psychic time has two demerits—it cannot be long sustained; and it cannot unite people. In To the Lighthouse (1927), Virginia Woolf seems to be concerned with focusing on the moment, the eddy in the stream, in close-up and examining how it can be made permanent, "to crystallize and transfix the moment" (5).

Structurally the novel is the reverse of Mrs Dalloway. While the earlier novel expanded a day into a lifetime, To the Lighthouse contracts ten years into the fabric of a day, for, though the second part 'Time Passes' separates 'The Window' and 'The Lighthouse' by ten years, the third part continues the essential action of the first. Part I depicts an evening when James the son wants to go to the lighthouse the next day. The 'action' is taken up in a morning after ten years which period is treated as though it were one night. The second part begins when the characters go to bed, and ends with the word "Awake". During these ten years,
“The long night seemed to have set in.” The passage of years is then indicated by such statements as “But what after all is one night? [...] Night succeeds to night” (145) and by the descriptions of the many nights in the changing seasons. The pageant of seasons gives this section an added dimension of “time in relation to eternity, the short span of mortal lives contrasted with the recurring seasons and the enduring world” (Bennett 105).

Time destroys the house; we are told parenthetically of the death of some characters including Mrs Ramsay. When the third part begins the remaining characters are preparing for the expedition to the lighthouse. The unity of time that Mrs Dalloway observed is here deliberately broken.

Johnstone notes how the flow of time is measured in the first and third parts not by clocks as in Mrs Dalloway but by the natural events of a day—Mrs Ramsay’s trip to and from the town, her knitting which she tries to finish before night, dinner, bedtime, the movement of the boat from the bay to the lighthouse, and so on.

Seen plainly as the contrast between clock-time and psychic time, the novel is again the reiteration of the significance of the latter. The life of
consciousness being more important than the physical life, the middle part which treats external time covering ten years is given far less space in the novel than the other two which, in terms of clock-time, cover only parts of two days. Analysing the section in Part I where Mrs Ramsay measures the brown stocking against her son’s leg, Eric Auerbach (in his useful analysis “Mimesis: the Representation of Reality in Western Literature”, 1946, reprinted in Beja) points to the disparity between “the brief span of time occupied by the exterior event and the dreamlike wealth of a process of consciousness which traverses a whole subjective universe” (Beja 120).

Among the characters, Mr and Mrs Ramsay most typically represent the two views of time, reflected in their attitudes to the proposed visit to the lighthouse. Mr Ramsay is the scientist who needs logical conviction to accept anything: Mrs Ramsay who always exaggerates and tells pleasant lies annoys him by her sheer irrationality. Her instinct is ultimately proved as definitely better than Mr Ramsay’s truthfulness. He believes in facts; she depends on vision. Thus, when the expedition is proposed, Mrs Ramsay assures James that they could go the next morning. Mr Ramsay, seeing “the barometer falling and the wind due west” (38), is certain that it would rain. To him, time is a linear process and the future an untravelled region which can be predicted but not
visualised. To Mrs Ramsay, on the other hand, external time is a limited region which exists in space—past, present and future. The expedition exists in time, and its realisation is only a question of reaching the point in time. The novel opens with her assurance to James that they could go to the lighthouse. “To her son those words conveyed an extraordinary joy, as if it were settled the expedition were bound to take place” (5). A little later, she adds as if in explanation to the rationalists: “And even if it isn’t fine tomorrow, ... it will be another day” (31).

To people like Mrs Ramsay, then, life is not a “railway-line” but a living organism: “life, far from being made up of little separate incidents which one lived one by one, became curled and whole like a wave which bore one up with it and threw one down with it, there, with a dash on the beach” (55). Time is not divisible into an irrevocable past and an unpredictable future. In the course of Lily’s painting, Mrs Ramsay excuses herself to be alone upstairs for a moment, and has a vision of stability and order; then, “it seemed always to have been, only was shown now, and so being shown struck everything into stability. They would, she thought, however long they lived, come back to this night; this moon, this wind, this house, and to her too” (130). And they do: Lily and Mrs Ramsay come back later in their moments of vision.
Mrs Dalloway moved up and down in time between past and present. To the Lighthouse shows what is to come is very much present and shapes the present, and how what is past can be recovered later. The first part is the present which includes in it the future: the voyage to the lighthouse and Lily Briscoe's painting are already fated to be consummated by the end of the part. Mrs Ramsay who predicted fair weather has, in spite of the falling barometer, already begun to feel triumphant. The consummation is achieved; it only needs to be realised at a distance in time. Mrs Ramsay's own vision of stability comes to her from this distance, for at the end of Section 17 of the first part she sees the day as "already the past" (128). It is the actual distancing that is performed by the middle part. The part begins with a statement of this necessity of distancing for objective perception. Mr Bankes says, "Well, we must wait for the future to show", and Andrew agrees, "It's almost too dark to see" (143). When the third part begins, Lily finds herself ready to realise her vision, having "come back" after all these years: "She had come late last night when it was all mysterious, dark. Now she was awake, at her old place at the breakfast table, but alone" (165). Again it is the present, in which the impressions of the first part are kept remote in time but also recovered. Lily sees Mrs Ramsay sitting in the chair; she gets her vision and Mr Ramsay, James and Cam reach the lighthouse. As Bernard Blackstone suggests, time moves in
this part in contrary directions from the present: Mr Ramsay sails into the future, to the lighthouse; Lily's mind travels back into the past until Mrs Ramsay is recreated” (Blackstone Virginia Woolf: A Commentary 101). It is the triumph of Mrs Ramsay and her integrated consciousness which commands “Life stand still here” and shows order in chaos, stability in “this eternal passing and flowing” (183). Personality outlives time through things (like the lighthouse) and through others.

The lighthouse flashing across the waves seems to represent the synthesis of time and eternity. Joan Bennett identifies the three movements of the novel with the two strokes of the lighthouse interrupted by a period of darkness. (Bennett 103-4.) The first movement, then, broadly covers the impressions of consciousness in present time; the second shows them subjected to the ravages of time; and the third depicts how some moments survive time and “partake of eternity”. Noting her own self, the “wedge of darkness” which attains this eternity, Mrs Ramsay meets “that stroke of the lighthouse, the long steady stroke, the last of the three which was her stroke” (73).

In Mrs Dalloway Virginia Woolf explored the possibilities of “the moment”. The two main drawbacks of the moment were its fleeting nature and its personal nature. In To the Lighthouse she examines how
to overcome the first problem: how “any turn in the wheel of sensation has the power to crystallise and transfix the moment upon which its gloom or radiance rests” (5). For though such moments are many, they are not long sustained. They are but “little daily miracles, illuminations, matches struck unexpectedly in the dark” (183).

Only two characters succeed in perpetuating the moment—Mrs Ramsay and the painter Lily. Both are creative personalities who can be outside and within the moment at will. Mrs Ramsay “had a sense of being past everything, through everything, out of everything, ... as if there was an eddy—there—and one could be in it, or one could be out of it, and she was out of it” (96). Thus, in order to perpetuate the moment which is the meeting point of external and psychic time, an enrichment of the opportune moment, it has to be a subjective experience and an objective perception. The person who is sensitive enough to assimilate its impressions, and detached enough to observe the order inherent in the many impressions, can stabilise the moment when it comes. Only a well-integrated, androgynous personality can possess this ability to subjectively experience and objectively create. Mrs Ramsay brings together all the members around the table and gets the delicacy served at the “precise moment”. Observing from the outside, she feels the unity by which she has enriched the moment rising out of the group,
partaking of eternity. "Of such moments, she thought, the thing is made 
that remains for ever after. This would remain" (121).

The moment of unity does remain, and is recaptured by Lily ten years 
later. In the spiritual presence of Mrs Ramsay who "brought together", 
she dips into the moment, long past, of union with Charles Tansley, the 
"moment of friendship and living—which survived, after all these 
years, complete" (182). This moment inspires her to learn how Mrs 
Ramsay made of the moment "something permanent"; it is a revelation. 
"In the midst of chaos there was shape; this eternal passing and 
fleeting... was struck into stability" (183).

Some moments can endure; some persons can perpetuate them. But they 
cannot unite people. An object of common perception, like the plate of 
fruits that Carmichael and Mrs Ramsay look at, can join them. But 
moments of vision are not a common experience but intensely personal; 
nor are they mere objects of perception but perception itself, a 
subjective experience. Indeed, in this sense life itself is 
incommunicable: Mrs Ramsay looks at her own life, "a little strip of 
time", which is "something real, something private, which she shared 
neither with her children nor with her husband" (69); her self is "a 
wedge-shaped core of darkness, something invisible to others" (72).
She can only perpetuate the moment in objects of perception like the lighthouse, and hope that it will be recovered later. And she does not hope in vain.

**Orlando-- through the telescope of space:** *Orlando* (1928) is an interesting if shallow parody of the dominant methods and themes of Virginia Woolf. It is a caricature of biography and her theory of androgyny. Similarly, she explores the extreme possibilities of linear time, stretching man’s life-span to cover a few centuries, fusing biography and history into one. The changing facets of English history and English way of life are recreated through the metamorphoses of a single individual. In the sixteenth century, the hero-heroine is sixteen years old. He is masculine, poetic and violent in the Elizabethan age, pensive and morbid in early seventeenth century; presides at literary tea-parties in Augustan age; blushes and swoons in the sentimental Victorian age (Blackstone 131).

The transition from one age to another is marked by direct statements and by Orlando’s ageing coupled at times with descriptions of climatic changes. These transitions are sudden rather than gradual. For instance, in his youth, “with the suddenness and severity that then marked the English climate, came the Great Frost” (23). Then he meets Sasha and
falls in love with her, deserting Lady Euphrosyne: “For as he looked the thickness of his blood melted” and as spring breaks over winter his manhood wakes (28). But this, he soon discovers, is an illusion for the Frost persists and at length, as the Frost thaws, Sasha leaves him and reality strikes him in the form of raindrops (41-2).

The advancement of Orlando’s life in time is thus framed within spatial phenomena, as the wind is trapped in Orlando’s large house, “blowing this way, blowing that way, winter and summer” (9). Indeed, time itself is quite often represented in spatial terms. Orlando’s house, we are told, has three hundred and sixty-five bedrooms and fifty-two staircases, an obvious analogy with the numbers of days and weeks in a year. One of the themes of the novel is the relation of time to human personality. “Time has no simple effect upon the mind of man. The mind of man, moreover, works with equal strangeness upon the body of time”. (Orlando 69). This theme of time-personality relationship is borne out by the symbolic use of the house whose rooms represent the different selves of man at different times: “For if there are (at a venture) seventy-six different times all ticking in the mind at once, how many people are there not...all having lodgment at one time or another in the human spirit?” (218) Orlando is seeking the true self which is “the compact of all the selves” up to the present. It is only by searching
throughout the past that Orlando can find out this wild goose, the true self, and the novel is at one level an account of this search.

This voyage into the past is symbolised by a journey through a gallery—another spatial representation of time: "So she sat at the end of the gallery [...] in Queen Elizabeth's armchair. The gallery stretched far away to a point where the light almost failed. It was a tunnel bored deep into the past" (225). Orlando finds her true self at last, having sought it in relation to undivided, integrated time. She visits the chapel where she had been married and would be buried; the room where she had stayed as Ambassador, which "shone like a shell that has lain at the bottom of the sea for centuries" (224). The house, she realises, "belonged to this time now". Getting back to the present, she is welcomed by the wild goose, her true self.

Orlando reaches the present through a "ferny path" leading higher to the oak tree on top of a hill. The oak tree to which Orlando writes an ode is another spatial symbol of time. This oak which is "so high indeed that nineteen English counties could be seen beneath" (12) is the twentieth century, the present which grows out of the past. Sitting under it, Orlando sees his whole past which "rushed into the falling second, swelled it a dozen times its natural size" (70).
That, then, is what the novel does with the spatial clock-time; a short span of time can be inflated by our consciousness, as the earlier novels showed. Time gets stretched and contracted by perception. “An hour, once it lodges in the queer element of the human spirit, may be stretched to fifty or a hundred times its clock-length; on the other hand, an hour may be accurately represented on the time-piece of the mind by one second” (Orlando 69). In a passage quoted by A A Mendilow, Sterne said, “Glasses can make an inch seem a mile. I leave it to the future ages to invent a method for making a minute seem a year” (Mendilow 96). Sterne was here anticipating writers like Virginia Woolf. Only, this possibility is carried to the extreme of actuality in Orlando. “This extraordinary discrepancy between time on the clock and time in the mind” (69) is once again a major concern of the novelist.

Indeed, many of the motifs of earlier novels can be found here, too, if at times in a mocking vein. Orlando is an exaggerated restatement of those motifs, except that it extends the scope of Virginia Woolf’s experiments beyond the individual and the society, to point to the historical heritage of a man through the centuries. In the words of A A Mendilow, it is “the phylogenetic time” incorporating itself into “the ontogenetic time as our ancestors are parts of ourselves” (Kumar 83).
The Waves— "moments of being": Though Orlando, being a "biography", allowed the intervention of the author, The Waves (1931) marks the complete annihilation of the author except in the interludes. It develops through the minds of six characters from childhood to middle age. The most lyrical of Virginia Woolf's novels, it is also the most complex, and each of the six characters is drawn with a subtlety which often defies analysis.

The novel, showing the development of the characters, is framed by interludes which mark the transition from one stage to another. These italicised interludes are direct descriptions of the diurnal progression of the sun; in the background are the incessant roar of the sea, the waves in perpetual motion, and the songs and silences of the birds. Each stage in the lives of the characters' lives corresponds to each of the nine progressive phases of the sun. When the novel opens, the sun is just rising, and the characters are in their infancy. It ends with the sun having sunk, and Bernard, who is the only character "present" in the last section, challenging the approaching Death, rounded off by the italicised words, "The waves broke on the shore". Here, as J K Johnstone says, "the day becomes easily and naturally a lifetime, the lifetime becomes eternity". The interludes merge the characters in "the vast and eternal sea of reality" (Johnstone 357).
Each character is an individual, and a very complex one. It is difficult to define his response to life, to draw "circles of chalk between his feet". In fact, by projecting time on the two levels of the normal life-span and a day, Virginia Woolf tries to suggest how language fails to convey the intricacies of the human personality at any particular stage. For every moment gives another shake to the kaleidoscope of our experiences. Bernard realises this: "it is not age; it is that a drop has fallen; another drop. Time has given the arrangement another shake...Thus in a moment, in a drawing room, our life adjusts itself to the majestic march of day across the sky" (233). As the sun reveals a different pattern of the waves at every stage, the characters' response to their temporal existence evolves through many intricate interactions. Bernard the phrasemaker, who is intensely conscious of the private and public parts of his self, wavers between the two manifestations of time: "but suddenly one hears a clock tick. We who had been immersed in this world became aware of another" (235). His is a progression toward the ultimate recognition of psychic time, of 'the moment', which endures as against clock-time which is "tapering to a point" (158). His attempt to communicate the moment proves futile, and he is tired of phrases which falsify it: "There is always a deep below it... a rushing stream of broken dreams, nursery rhymes, street cries, half-finished sentences and sights..." (219). He cannot make
much out of the spatial dimension of time, of “the light of stars falling... on my hand after travelling for millions upon millions of years” (230). At last, finding something indestructible in the moments of being, the waves of psychic time, “the incessant rise and fall and fall and rise again,” he defies death itself.

To Neville, who lives by more clock-time, death is the end. When Percival dies, he feels himself severed from his past. Bernard later recollects that “from the myriads of mankind and all time past he had chosen one person, one moment in particular” (p. 235). He lives solely in the present, and is worried that “we grow old”. Against this he tries to find refuge in personal relations: “let us abolish the ticking of time’s clock with one blow. Come closer” (155).

Rhoda, too, is attached to the present, the “here and now”, the fleeting moment: “This I say is the present moment... This is part of the merging monster to whom we are attached” (55). She cannot see life in its totality but only as separate instants. She says, “I do not know how to run minute to minute and hour to hour” (111). Try as she might to escape from the present, she cannot forget her roots: “these moments of departure start always in your presence, from... here and now” (119). But she manages to escape through the present itself, in the moments of
intense sensations, which “blow so vast a bubble that the sun might set and rise in it and we might take the blue of midday and the black of midnight and be cast off and escape from here and now” (192). In the one drop of the moment she tries to find the vast sea of all time.

Jinny who is given to sensuality, and Susan the perfect housewife have a much too ordinary attitude to time. Jinny loves to enjoy herself through the senses. For her, time is a vast cellar of self-indulgence: “Days and days are to come; winter days, summer days; we have scarcely broken into our hoard” (121). She is the extreme pragmatist, trying to enrich by bodily pleasures every second of her life. “For she still sought the moment. Without illusions, hard and clear as crystal, she rode at the day with her breast bared” (237). Susan who has accepted a life of complete domesticity sees time as a cycle of birth and death, of winter and summer. And she cannot detach it from her house. Crooning her baby to sleep she muses, “whether it is summer, whether it is winter, I no longer know by the moor grass, and the heath flower; only by the steam on the window-pane, or the frost on the window-pane” (147).

Louis is the individual struggling against the society and its demands upon one’s true, private self. As an individual, he feels
himself part of a common heritage, "the eternal procession" through "infinite space" and "the abyss of time". "Every day I unbury—I dig up. I find relics of myself in the sand that women made thousands of years ago, when I heard songs by the Nile and the chained beast stamping" (109). Every moment's impressions have to be assimilated and a total design found. One should "realise the meeting-place of past and present" (56), "nail these impressions" and find one's identity in relation to historical continuity (145), and must "weave together" (173). But social life limits our visions by chaining us down to the clock. "This is life: Mr Prentice at four; Mr Eyres at four-thirty" (144).

The image of the chained beast stamping seems at one level to suggest the individual in perennial Promethean struggle against the delimiting society. At another, it could be seen as time itself, bound in a spatial frame.

The Waves records the impressions of many moments. There are also moments of extraordinary intensity. The characters who have individually experienced 'the moments' participate in the two dinners of reunion (Johnstone 357). In To the Lighthouse the moment could be perpetuated but could not integrate people; here, inversely, it unites people but is not sustained. Bernard tries to find a common bond in
“the moments of being together” as Rhoda calls them, in the annihilation of individual identity: “The winds, the rush of wheels became the roar of time... We were extinguished for a moment... Past time, past history, we went. For me this lasts but one second” (230). The moment of unity is too short-lived. “The moment was all; the moment was enough. And then Melville, Jinny, Susan and I, as a wave breaks, broke asunder, surrendered” (239). At last it is in silence and solitude, going back to “find the particular coat that belongs to me” (255) that Bernard is able to challenge Death.

Unlike Mrs Dalloway and To the Lighthouse where the characters moved up and down in time, it is the moment-to-moment life in the present that is shown in The Waves. Even Louis who is aware of historical continuity always keeps his eyes open, and hears the beast stamping. In To the Lighthouse we heard the roar of the sea of all time in the background; here we only listen to the individual waves breaking on the shore.

The Years: the clocks remade: The Years (1937) is a regression to the traditional form. Though Virginia Woolf wanted to combine the factual with the visionary, the traditional Night and Day with the original The Waves (in fact she says as much in A Writer’s Diary 197), the attempt
is a failure. *The Years* is the chronicle of a family and does not go deeper. As far as Virginia Woolf's treatment of time is concerned, this novel has a chronological narrative, and the characters live in clock-time. As Shiv Kumar points out, only Eleanor apparently acquires a certain stature in time, and that through a mere accumulation of years (Kumar Bergson and the Stream of Consciousness Novel 85).

*The Years* is the chronicle of a typical Victorian family, the Pargiters, from 1880 to the "Present Day", 1937, through three generations. But by the very arbitrariness of the choice of the years and the seasons, Virginia Woolf seems to emphasise the un-authenticity of clock-time for clocks are "irregular". The clocks are not assimilated into the total experience of consciousness and its 'duration' but fulfil their ordinary role. Nevertheless, like Rose in the novel, Virginia Woolf is "still conscious of the two worlds; one flowing in wild sweeps overhead, the other tip-tapping circumscribed upon the pavement" (93). However she might dote on the world sweeping above, she has to look at it from the circumscribed ground: like Kitty she seems to be overcome by a "sense of the passage of time" (149). Perhaps because of her subject matter, the time sequence from which Virginia Woolf tried to escape is "the *raison d'être* of *The Years*" (Johnstone 368).
Temporal movements are equated with movements in space in such symbols as the tunnel, the train and the stairs. For instance, going upstairs, Mrs Chinnery is in the “mysterious upper chamber of extreme old age” (169). Each year in the novel, Johnstone points out, is introduced by a passage giving us spatial impressions of the English countryside and of London, with the background of the rain, the smoke, moonlight, wind, snow or mist (Johnstone 368).

Time in relation to personality is once again a predominant concern. The clock divides time; the past becomes pinned down to the eighteenth century (The Years 158). Things being “irrecoverable” as Eleanor feels, the past can only superimpose itself over the present and not merge into it (Eleanor’s past “rising above her present”, The Years 135). Clock-time also divides personality: Eleanor feels herself as two different persons and “that she was living at two different times at the same moment” (135).

The novel only restores what has already been explored about ‘the moment’ – how to make it a common experience and how to make it permanent. Eleanor wishes for another life, “here and now... with living people” because she knows this life is “too short, too broken” (343). She wants “to enclose the present moment; to make it stay; to fill it
fuller and fuller, with the past, the present and the future..." (344). In fact the questions "what is this moment; what are we?" remain unanswered to the very end of the novel. In her experiments with time, Virginia Woolf's The Years is a step backward, a reconsideration, the statement of a doubt. It is a caution against the summary neglect of clock-time.

**Between the Acts**—time versus art: Like Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse and The Waves, which were structurally contained within one day, Virginia Woolf's last novel, Between the Acts (1941) also is unified within the time sequence of a day. It begins on a summer's night and ends when it is midnight once again. The 'action' takes place in the present, and is told mostly by the author who reappeared in The Years. The present is the most dominant aspect of time explored in Between the Acts where the "cheap clock" ticks and the second hand jerks on (150).

This "jerking" movement is at times reproduced by a technique of momentary flashes with alternating change of scene. Among the audience anticipating the pageant, Mrs Manresa impatiently asks, "Tell me, what's it to be?" and hears laughter from among the bushes. Immediately the focus shifts to Miss La Trobe the producer and the
actors among the bushes, laughing while they get ready. We get a
glimpse of their activities, and as their laughter dies away we are taken
back to Mrs Manresa and others.

While this technique and the unity of time contribute to the structural
unity of the novel, it is also achieved by projecting certain events into
the future so as to give the events an apparent inevitability. This
technique of prefigurement was first used through the embroidery in
The Voyage Out. Here the effect is achieved once by the change of
tense. Isabella is anticipating the conversation between Mrs Swithin
and Mr Oliver when suddenly it is changed to actuality:

    And he would say: “Today? By Jupiter! I’d forgotten!”

    “If it’s fine”, Mrs Swithin continued, “they’ll act on
the terrace...” (20. Emphasis added.).

Again, Miss La Trobe anticipates the reconciliation between Giles and
Isabella: “There was a high ground at midnight; there the rock; and two
scarcely perceptible figures...She heard the first words” (147). The
picture is realised at the end of the novel:
It was the night that dwellers in caves had watched from some high place among the rocks.

Then the curtain rose. They spoke. (152)

The future has become the present.

However, it is not only the present that dominates the novel like the “chuff, chuff, chuff” of the gramophone which ticks away time. The machine marks time only between the acts, in the interval; during the acts themselves we get the pageant of English history from the Elizabethan age down to the present. Historical time, which was coalesced into the active present of a person’s life in Orlando, and which was directly presented in The Years is here but one mode of time. The pageant recreates some stages in the English past. Besides it, Pointz Hall with its many portraits and the watch “that had stopped a bullet on the field of Waterloo” (p. 10), and the countryside around it where, beneath the churchyard wall, “the old families who had all intermarried...lay in their deaths intertwined” (p. 9), also evoke the historical aspect of time.
Evolutionary time is also explored in the novel. It is mostly presented through the musings of Mrs Swithin as she reads an Outline of History. She thinks of the prehistoric monsters of the times when the entire continent was one (10); she looks at the pictures of “mammoths, mastodons, prehistoric birds” (151). As she finishes a chapter about prehistoric man and goes to bed, we return to the present, the June night when Isa and Giles, alone together for the first time that day, have their moment of reconciliation.

The pageant brings together all the three periods of time (Johnstone 371). Primarily, it is a review of historical time. It is once saved from failure by the bellowing of cows, “the primeval voice”; and it ends with present time.

Prehistoric time, like historical time, is shown as leading up to the present. Mrs Swithin thinks of the rhododendron forests “between three and five”; she muses about the prehistoric monsters “from whom presumably...we descend” (10).

For Mrs Swithin the past only illuminates the present but does not survive in it. With all her sense of history and prehistory she says, “We’ve only the present” (62). Miss La Trobe’s pageant shows man as
essentially the same in any age, and Mrs Swithin is conscious of man’s evolution from beasts. For in all these, time is conceived, to relate it to our basic distinction, as essentially spatial. Indeed, as Johnstone suggests, the novel shows Virginia Woolf’s sense of the vast space (Johnstone 371). Mrs Swithin thinks of the swallows that come each year from Africa; she becomes, as it were, the swallows themselves, as her brother Bartholomew calls her a “Swallow”.

It is not that Virginia Woolf has forgotten the psychic dimension of time, for she says of Mrs Swithin: “It took her five seconds in actual time, in mind time ever so much longer” to separate the actual person, Grace, from a monster she was visualising (11). But Virginia Woolf has come back, it seems, to clock-time simply because it is actual. Psychic time is an individual perception while clock-time unites people, if superficially, in spatial terms—as the gramophone’s ticking does. Psychic time, again, is too intense an experience to be sustained for long. Whereas Mrs Dalloway hopes to live in others’ consciousness, Mrs Swithin stakes her immortality in perception and in things: “We live in others...we live in things” (53). It has to be pointed out that the “others” she hopes to live in are equivalent to “things” which are spatial, like the boots that remain in Jacob’s Room. In other words, Mrs Swithin does not hope to survive in the consciousness of others; hers is
not a mystic survival as Mrs Ramsay's is. She hopes to live in objects
and perception through, as it were, seasonal rebirth in the sense in
which one's children are one's rebirth. Speaking the words quoted
above to William Dodge, she takes him to the nursery: "Standing by the
cupboard in the corner he saw her reflected in the glass. Cut off from
their bodies, their eyes smiled, their bodiless eyes, at their eyes in the
glass" (54). The body might disappear but we live through our eyes, our
perceptions. But as though showing him a more practical and
understandable way, she opens the door and shows him the nursery.
Coming as an answer to her question "what next?" the nursery
symbolises the possibility of rebirth for the race, if not for the
individual. The theory, far from being mystical as Mrs Dalloway's, is
the commonplace view of evolution, of what may be termed racial
heredity. This is emphasised by the image of the swallows. They return
every year, suggesting to Mrs Swithin the cycle of birth and rebirth.
The rebirth, again, of the race for Mrs Manresa who is with her realises
that "it was unlikely... that the birds were the same" (74).

The clock, conceived in the earlier novels as a superfluous, is here
recognised as inevitable. In Jacob's Room, it was an exception: "The
clock, however, struck" (127. Emphasis added). Here, it is the rule:
"And, of course, once more the chime pealed" (36. Emphasis added).
As an individual, then, one has to live in the present a transitory life. With her sense of the past and of a possible future, Mrs Swithin tries to live in the present moment, enriching it, "increasing the bounds of the moment by flights into past or future; or sidelong down corridors and alleys" (11). In her essay "The Moment: Summer's Night", Virginia Woolf wrote, "If you are young, the future lies upon the present, like a piece of glass, making it tremble and quiver. If you are old, the past lies upon the present, like a thick glass, making it waver, distorting it" (Woolf Collected Essays II 293). Between the Acts, which begins with the words "It was a summer's night...", has much in common with this essay. Isa who is comparatively young feels that she has a future, "the future disturbing our present" (62). And Mrs Swithin believes that the past shapes the present.

More than the moment of extraordinary vision it is the ability of art to integrate people, and to perpetuate this integrity that the novel considers. Clock-time unites, but superficially and temporarily; art finds the essential unity in things because imagination is "one-making" (122). Between the acts the gramophone ticks: "Chuff, chuff, chuff went the machine. Time was passing. How long would time hold them together?" (106). But during the acts the audience attains a deeper unity, culminating in the last act showing the present. Then, "the very
cows joined in... and the barriers which should divide Man the Master from the Brute were dissolved” (128). Miss La Trobe the artist unites people and achieves “from chaos and cacophony measure; but not the melody of surface sound alone controlled it” (131). As the Rev, Streatfield, the representative of the whole audience, says in his speech, “Each is part of the whole” (133); “We act different parts; but are the same” (134).

This unity is not imposed, nor is it transitory. The audience, reluctant to go, linger there. They echo the words of the gramophone to “keep together”. But time, typified by machines like the car and the aeroplane, interrupts the unity. The gramophone itself sings, “Unity... Dispersity”, provoking the question: “Are machines the devil, or do they introduce a discord... Ding, dong, ding...” (140). But the unity survives it. At night, Isa and Giles are reconciled as Miss La Trobe visualised.

Here clock-time is contrasted not with psychic time but with art mainly by virtue of the deeper unity which art attains. Moreover, clock-time develops mechanical responses and customary behaviour to which the society is subjected through the centuries. But art with its imaginative ability inspires creative responses. For instance, Miss La Trobe’s show
stirs in Mrs Swithin her “unacted part” of Cleopatra. This vision of creative unity is the suggestion that the novel leaves one with in the end—the unity not merely during the acts but between them as well.