
Janice M. Stein
Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses/5906

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Historical Dissertations and Theses by an authorized administrator of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact gradetd@lsu.edu.
INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.
THE THOUSAND APPLIANCES:
VIRGINIA WOOLF AND THE TOOLS OF VISUAL LITERACY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of English

by

Janice M. Stein
A.A., Delgado Community College, 1978
B.L.S., Loyola University of New Orleans, 1984
M.F.A., Louisiana State University, 1989
December 1994
For Dan
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my gratitude to two groups of people without which this dissertation could not have come to fruition. The first is comprised of the members of my dissertation committee. Dr. Panthea Reid, my advisor, always generously shared of her time and resources while working on her own soon-to-be-published *Art and Affection: A Life of Virginia Woolf*. Dr. Anna Nardo's sharp critical eye and practical advice helped solve numerous rhetorical problems in my early drafts, while Dr. Addie Russo's theoretical perspectives challenged my thinking. And Dr. James Bolner and Dr. Susan Ryan brought to the project the all important perspectives of readers from outside the literary discipline.

The second group of people who were indispensable to my work is my family. My children, Jeannine, Scott, Gretchen, and Ross, graciously set aside some of their claims on "Mom" and made my project a family goal. Dan, my husband, proved himself my most loyal friend and needed partner. To describe my indebtedness to him, "gratitude" is not a large enough word.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION .................................................. ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ........................................... iii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS ...................................... v
ABSTRACT .................................................... vi

CHAPTER

1  BETWEEN SEEING AND WRITING:
   AN INTRODUCTION ........................................ 1

2  METAPHORS OF THE PEN:
   WRITING TOOLS AND THE CREATIVE PROCESS ........ 36

3  SOLID WORDS:
   VISIBLE SIGNS AND THE SELF .......................... 70

4  BETWEEN BEAUTIFUL BOARDS:
   TEXTUALITY AND CONCEPTUAL SPACES ............. 121

5  BEHIND THE PAGE:
   WOOLF'S VISUAL LITERACY ........................... 167

WORKS CITED ............................................... 220

VITA ....................................................... 226
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS
The following abbreviations refer to frequently cited texts by Virginia Woolf:

CDB  The Captain's Death Bed
CE   The Collect Essays, 4 vols.
D    The Diary of Virginia Woolf, 5 vols.
EVW  The Essays of Virginia Woolf
HH   The Haunted House and Other Stories
LVW  The Letters of Virginia Woolf, 6 vols.
MOB  Moments of Being
PA   A Passionate Apprentice: The Early Journals
TLC  "Friendships Gallery" and "'Anon' and 'The Reader'" in Twentieth Century Literature.
ABSTRACT

The texts of Virginia Stephen Woolf are rife with references to writers' tools, which she referred to in her diary as "the thousand appliances one needs for writing even a sentence." This dissertation examines the exact nature of Woolf's "need" for the tools of her craft and their influence upon her thought and art. Pens, and by association, ink and the writer's hands, were the center of all her authorial experiences and provided the literal link between the idea of art and its fruition as a work of art. The graphic shapes of words and paralinguistic devices such as punctuation and textual arrangement were Woolf's medium of choice, her most important appliance. For her, written language was the physical manifestation of a writer's consciousness, and she habitually substituted text for writer, book for body. This word/flesh association forced her to limit her experiments with visible language to effects that did not violate the conventions of reading. After prolonged attempts to fill pages with written language and to fit a prescribed number of words into a specific space, Woolf discovered correspondences between narrative time and textual space. Collectively, Woolf's ideas about her appliances shaped her critical theories about individual literary works and the history of literature itself, habits of thought characteristic of "visual literacy," hyperawareness of the physical scene of
writing and a text's materiality or madeness. Woolf's hyperawareness is best demonstrated fictionally in Orlando, her most sustained treatment of the writing process. Both Orlando and the Biographer share a measure of Woolf's visual literacy. In her critical writing, Woolf drew heavily upon the scene of writing with its "thousand appliances" and the bibliographic features of written language. In her notes and drafts for Turning the Page, the "new" history of British literature, uncompleted when Woolf died, she recorded her plans to explore the "connection between seeing and writing" and the significance of widespread printing of books, which signalled an orality-to-literacy shift. Solid word objects at once made language more durable and writers more vulnerable under the public's eye.
Peter Bürger begins his Theory of the Avant-Garde with practical advice for an introduction to a study such as I undertake:

I believe it would already be a significant step forward in scholarly and scientific discussion if it became a matter of course for every scholar and scientist to advance reasons for the choice of his [or her] topic and the problem to be dealt with. (3)

In justifying my own choices, I begin by stating an assumption that serves as the theoretical basis for my analysis of Virginia Stephen Woolf's thought and art, the contention that written language, all written language is a visible medium. The assumption is both mine and Woolf's. To test its validity, the current reader needs only to refocus the eyes so as to look at the graphics on this page, the irregular shapes of the letters and words, the thick intersecting margins framing a rectangular block of dark then light then dark horizontal stripes. Of course, to focus thus exclusively on the material properties of written language is to retard the lexical function of words; to read, we must resist the temptation to look too intently at the page. However, the knowledge of the materiality of the textual surface, while often repressed, is never completely forgotten, and our experience of a text is a delicate balance between looking and reading, seeing
and writing. At times during the reading or writing process, the knowledge may resurface like a distant memory, and the book, the page once again appears as an object in the physical world. It is such moments in the life of Virginia Stephen Woolf that I adopt as the subject of my study.

The problem I presently address takes the form of a question that Woolf found herself asking at moments when written language's visibility was uppermost in her mind, a question about the exact nature of "the connection between seeing and writing." Shortly before her death, she made the following entry in her Notes for Reading at Random: "The connection between seeing & writing: Michael Angelo, Leonardo, Blake, Rossetti, a twin gift. Wh[ich] shall be born. depends on Nin Crot & Pulley" (TLC 377). Brenda R. Silver, editor of the first published version\(^1\) of these notes, explains that Woolf's "Nin Crot & Pulley" were her "fanciful names for the complex of economic, political, cultural, and personal forces that influence the writer" (TLC 360). In The Sisters' Arts: The Writing and Painting of Virginia Woolf and Vanessa Bell, Diane Filby Gillespie cites this note as indication that Woolf possessed a capacity for what she terms "dual creativity," the ability both to write and to draw or paint. She relates the entry to a series of sketches that Woolf copied from works of William Blake and Dante Gabriel Rossetti while she was
still in her early twenties, finding their inclusion in the list of names all the more relevant because both these men were known as artists and writers (26). However, Gillespie neglects to note that Blake was also an author-printer who believed that producing the visual text was an important part of the creative process.

While studying the childhood artistic tendencies of the two Stephen sisters, Gillespie raises the question, "Had Virginia Woolf's situation been different, might she have become a visual artist?" (Sisters' 21). "Visual artist," in Gillespie's lexicon seems to mean someone who sketches or paints, and her question assumes the position that Woolf, once she became a writer, no longer thought of her art as visual: "Virginia Stephen gave up her experimentation with the visual arts fairly early, although in 1910 she was still trying her hand" (Sisters' 31). But, when the term "visual artist" is expanded to mean someone who works with a visual image in any medium, including written language, Gillespie's statement can be entirely true only if Woolf had abandoned her writing tools as well.

To ask questions about the connection between seeing and writing and to speak of the visual properties of written language is to step immediately into the ever-widening river of critical discourse on "visible language," a topic whose popularity among literary scholars has grown dramatically during the last two decades. Typically,
studies of visible language focus on unconventional typography or other bibliographical features of a text that call attention to the fact that it was made by human hands. Critics generally agree that unusual visual features force readers to look at the written language in addition to reading it. For example, Leon Roudiez examines a reading/looking borderline and explains it as a gradation in "materiality." On the "reading" side of the borderline, he finds tendencies toward "transparent language":

"Inevitably, rationalism and idealism have overemphasized the symbolic modality, placing great store in Cartesian logic, syntax, linearity of discourse, univocity, and regular typography" (204). On the other side, "visible language," operative on the textual surface, disrupts the linear reading process:

When a writer places emphasis on materiality of his signs, his writing moves in the direction of scription, and it gains either fullness or opacity. The reader is obliged to pause instead of being able to leap toward those mental images that signs might otherwise give rise to. (233)

By "materiality," Roudiez means any aspect of the text that calls attention to itself. If that aspect is phonetic, it will add "fullness" to the sign system. "Opacity," Roudiez's subject of critical concern, is the result of heightened visual aspects of the text, which challenge the linear logic of traditional (patriarchal) discourse and subvert its authority. However, the transparency Roudiez
notes in traditional texts is merely conceptual; no written text is physically transparent.

With so much attention focused on the textual surface, the temptation to analyze only the unconventional features of a text is understandable. In The Stuff of Literature: Physical Aspects of Texts and Their Relation to Literary Meaning, E. A. Levenston associates his analysis of visual signs, his "graphicology," with semiotics: "Graphicology takes its place as one level of semiotic organization in this totality of meaning-systems, linguistic and nonlinguistic, that constitute a book" (6). Acknowledging but omitting such features as dust jackets, titles, and illustrations, he divides his study into four major categories of visual features: spelling, punctuation, typography, and layout. Because his primary concern is the relationship of graphic form to grammatical and lexical meaning, Levenston then further distinguishes within each category those devices which are "additive" or "nonadditive" in relation to the lexical function of language. "Additive devices," he explains, "provide further information, or semantic content, that is not available at the levels of grammar and vocabulary" (3). "Nonadditive" devices, Levenston claims, do not contribute to the informational features of the text.

Levenston's analysis of the four categories of visual devices consistently begins with a brief discussion of
their conventional usage, but he quickly shifts attention to deviation from norms. In so doing, he extends his definition of poetic language only so far as to include nonstandard visual devices. However, as Peter Rabinowitz emphasizes, the conventions of reading are at least as deserving of critical attention as are deviations from them:

> They [conventions] serve as enabling conditions for literature's ideological structures. Thus, study of literary conventions can help illuminate the connections between politics on the one hand and interpretation and evaluation, as the academy currently practices them, on the other. (9)

Understood in the context of visible language studies, Rabinowitz's observation makes evident the politics of the textual surface. There are those textual critics whose "enabling conditions" include the notion of a transparent traditional text, and there are those who challenge that notion by insisting that all features of written language are visual. My own claim is that, with the exception of braille, reading and writing always involves sight. Literacy is visual. And the tools of textual production -- pens, ink, paper, printing presses, and the graphic images of alphabetic shapes -- are the tools in service of a material art form. As a critical approach, analysis of only unusual textual features masks or denies these facts. While emphasis on the nonconventional may help us understand those disruptions that pointedly call attention to the textual surface, this approach does not elicit
insights into the signifying functioning of more traditional devices, nor does it help us perceive subtle nuances of meaning operative at the visual level.

Other, far less myopic studies attempt to explain the thought processes and social conditions fostering the use of visible language. Describing the aesthetics of the "Futurist moment," Marjorie Perloff explains that "here is a program that points the way to our own urge to break down the boundaries between 'world' and 'text,' between the reality out there and the art construct that re-presents it" (xvii). She describes a Futurist aesthetic that took as a central tenant the notion that written language, like all art forms, is not about the world of things but part of that world. Wendy Steiner notes a similar tendency in The Colors of Rhetoric: Problems in the Relation between Modern Literature and Painting:

Art [was conceived of] as an independent object with the same degree of 'thingness' as objects in the world. . . . The true means of representing reality was not to represent it at all, but to create a portion of reality itself. And the way to do so was to stress the properties of the aesthetic media in question, since these are palpable, thinglike. (17)

Perloff and Steiner discuss works that challenge the traditional "pictures are visual/writing is verbal" distinction by incorporating properties from both art forms. And while most of the examples used by them are highly experimental, both critics take pains to examine ways in which these features serve as statements about all
art, even the conventional. As Steiner explains, "the modernist movement toward concreteness" (17) is as much a way of thinking about art as it is any one practice or device. In other words, visible language is a manifestation of an attitude about the written word and its place in the world of things. And, it is at this juncture that critical discourse concerning visible language turns from analysis of visual qualities in art to visual thinking about art. Or, stated another way, the subject modulates from visible art to visual thought.  

Max Nanny, in Iconicity in Literature, analyzes both visible art and visual thought within the context of current linguistic theories. He begins by explaining that iconicity, a similarity of signifier and signified, is dependent upon two factors, the reader's "recognition of the similarity" and "the level of the text at which it is used" (200). However, he continues, even given these limitations, "[It] is not much of an exaggeration to say that the possibilities of form enacting meaning are 'virtually unlimited'" (200). Nanny groups iconic devices in literary texts into three groups. The first group is comprised of "iconic representations of primarily temporal sequences" (200). The second is "juxtapository techniques," and the third is "global modes of iconicity" in which the text as whole serves as an icon of its subject or theme.
Nanny suggests that iconic devices can be functional in both conventional and nonconventional poetry or prose. However, his analysis of specific devices is limited to those most often mentioned in discussions of visible language: lineation (201), stanza-breaks (202), and sequence (204). To these, he adds "a highly familiar literary device . . . iteration, or the repetition of textual elements" (205). Despite his noting the necessity of reader awareness, Nanny himself seems unaware of the full range of possibilities inherent in the materiality of word objects. For instance, he argues that "basically, written or printed language on paper can be subjected to only two kinds of ordering, namely, linear succession and two-dimensional juxtaposition" (200), leaving out elements such as the size, shape, and color of the graphic images. In the one instance in which he does acknowledge the visual appearance of a word, his choice of example is most unfortunate. Analyzing Emily Dickinson's "Our lives are Swiss --," he finds "The Italy (in italics!) of the text" (203) especially significant. However, he fails to note that because Dickinson's poems were not published in her lifetime, she would have written the word in her manuscript as "Italy" (with underline!). The iconic effect of the italics is the result of printing conventions, not the artist's visual awareness.
In *Black Riders: The Visible Language of Modernism*, Jerome McGann draws upon the aesthetics of William Morris to analyze the Modernist poets' use of fine press printing as a literary device. He demonstrates that awareness of the physical properties of written language is manifest not only in the use of unconventional typography or innovative textual arrangement, as visual art. Rather, it is also identifiable as a materialistic attitude towards written language occurring in both reading and writing practices, as visual thought. He calls this attitude "literalness," which he finds "widespread" and "diversely pursued" among modernist poets, resulting in "the twentieth-century's revolution and hypertrophy of the word" (106). In his analysis, McGann points to such shared characteristics as a "textual process for revealing the conventions, and the conventionalities of our common discursive formations" (107), a "bibliographical constructivism" (107), and interest in "the machinery of writing" (109) and the "physique of its [a text's] meaning" (179). All of these characteristics, McGann argues, demonstrate that Modernists regarded written language as an object in the physical world and embraced this fact as an element of their aesthetic. As a result, Modernist texts "turn back upon themselves, urging readers . . . toward a correspondent reflexive posture toward the scene of writing" (106).
Previous to McGann's Black Riders, critics had identified two types of visible language, graphic experimentation in art (Roudiez and Levenston are examples) and visual thinking about art (as Perloff, Steiner, and Nanny discuss). To these, McGann added a group of "linguistic innovations" (23) for "bringing the reader's attention back to the text's literal surfaces and immediate moments" (22), techniques that manipulate rather than violate the conventions of reading. Such "innovations" as a line break, a shift to italic typeface, or a dash foster impressions or attitudes about written language, the process of its making, and its materiality. However, the devices need not be bibliographic elements. Instead, they may be entirely lexical, as in a self-referential remark by a narrator that creates visual images of the rhetorical circumstances, the fact that readers hold a physical object before their eyes. Or the remark may call to mind the creative process itself, the scene of writing in which ink flows from a pen in the author's hand. Again in such cases, the "visible language" is a language about art.

At the conclusion of his study, McGann asserts that the attitudes regarding word objects in the first half of the twentieth century constituted an important element in the "modern memory," of which the examples he offers are merely a few of the "most visible forms" (179). He suggests that the "map of modernism" should be redrawn so
as to restore forgotten memories about the status of written language in the world of things, a project whose first step must be the critic's acknowledgement of text as object. And in answer to McGann's call, I undertake this analysis of Woolf's "modern memory," her knowledge of written language's materiality, of the difference between looking and reading, and of the connection between seeing and writing.

Textual analysis of nonconventional graphic features such as is commonly used in critical studies of visible language is of little service in assessing Woolf's attitudes about written language; for the most part, her texts are visually conventional. And, although we encounter numerous writers and word objects in Woolf's novels, these provide few insights if taken solely at face value. In fact, Woolf herself questioned any analysis of literature that would be so limited, suggesting instead that the general reading public, critics and scholars must look outside the text for a full appreciation of the work as an art form.

As both author and critic, Woolf struggled to define the exact relationship between the physical trappings and activities of life and the creative process. In "Life and the Novelist," published in 1926, she suggested that creative inspiration originates with stimulation of the
physical senses as the author participates fully in "the
dance of modern life" (CE 2: 136). However, the creative
process is endangered if the novelist lingers too long with
the dance:

But at a certain moment he must leave the company
and withdraw, alone, to that mysterious room
where his body is hardened and fashioned into
permanence by processes which, if they elude the
critic, hold for him so profound a fascination.
(CE 2: 136)

Woolf further developed her theory of the author's sense
stimulation followed by necessary isolation in "The Leaning
Tower," a paper read to the Workers' Educational
Association in May 1940. At a crucial point in the paper,
Woolf turned the discussion towards the act of writing with
this comment: "Let us look at the writer next. What do we
see--only a person who sits with a pen in his hand in front
of a sheet of paper. That tells us little or nothing" (CE
2: 162).

Woolf suggested that attempts to understand the
"intellectual creativeness" (CE 2: 162) of writers will
always fail if the critic disconnects the realm of ideas
and cognitive activity from the physical world of objects
and sensory perception. To comprehend fully the successes
of writers who manage to accomplish the difficult task
before them, critics must turn to factual information about
the authors' lives, about the creative setting in which
they toiled. Woolf professed a biographical and historical
approach to literary theory that privileges the writers'
perspective. She maintained that critics must abandon the external view of the creative process and consider instead the scene of writing as it would appear to the author in question, a method that will be put to good use in the ensuing chapters. As Pamela Caughie points out in *Virginia Woolf and Postmodernism*, critical method is always a type of storytelling that produces narrative histories, such as the "story" of modernist and postmodernist and feminist writing (21). I agree, for criticism, like storytelling, requires selection and arrangement of moments and events in the "life" of the subject (an author, a text, an "age" or movement).

Selection of material is particularly challenging when the subject of study is Woolf's ideas about writing because writing and literature so dominated her life. Because she had so much to say about the processes of reading and writing, Woolf narrated in her own voice the history of her search for "the connection between seeing and writing." And, whenever feasible in this study, I allow her to write ("to speak" would be inappropriate here) for herself. In written language, patterns of irregularities in spelling (especially without the intrusions of an editor's "[sic]"), formation of contractions, text arrangement and paralinguistic devices such as underlining, dashes and brackets contribute to the author's unique "voice."
Therefore, when quoting Woolf, I will not regularize these textual features beyond what has already been done by her editors. Additionally, to examine the bibliographic features of her diaries, I will consult microform copies of the original handwritten pages.

Our most direct access to what Woolf may have seen and felt while writing -- thus the primary source for the present study -- is her diaries, the earliest surviving volume of which is dated 1897. At that time, Woolf, then Virginia Stephen had been fifteen. As Mitchell A. Leaska explains, the young Virginia intermittently wrote in these diaries or journals for the next twelve years, often experimenting with various types of pens and writing styles. "These pages," he tells us, "thus represent that rare instance when a writer of great importance leaves behind not only the actual documents of an apprenticeship, but also a biographical record of that momentous period as well" (PA xv).

Except for a brief period in 1915, Virginia kept no daily records from 1909 through 1916. But in 1917 until very near her death, her most productive years as a novelist and literary critic, she turned to her diary whenever professional writing and social or household obligations allowed; there she recorded details of her daily life. Scattered among the diary entries are some of Woolf's most candid, albeit fragmented, descriptions of the
immediate setting in which she was writing. The scene we can construct by piecing together these brief passages is not an external glimpse of the novelist. Rather, we see what Woolf saw: her own arm and hand extended across a blank page. Near the page is an inkpot, into which the hand dips the nib of a pen, the promise of the written word. But what happens next, when the ink-laden pen is positioned at the upper left corner of the page, is never certain in Woolf's scene. That the written word will materialize is not guaranteed by the writer's creative desires so much as by conditions in the physical world. Not all pens move. Not all nibs freely and smoothly release their ink. Not all hands endure the strain when they do. Paper may be too scarce or ill suited for the writer's purpose. But even when conditions are favorable for the writing process and words do materialize, their shape and durability are dependent upon other circumstances in the physical world.

"O the thousand appliances one needs for writing even a sentence" (D 1: 297), Woolf wrote in her diary for the year 1919. Considered in isolation, the comment seems little more than a hyperbolic statement of the obvious: all writers require something to write with and something to write on. However, descriptions of the writer at work and references to objects associated with written language -- writing instruments, paper, graphic images of words,
materials and equipment of book production, and the like -- can be found at the turn of almost every page of Woolf's texts. When these passages are extracted and placed together, patterns of thought and experience emerge, and Woolf's "O the thousand appliances" takes on the flavor of a refrain that punctuates and summarizes her personal and professional discourse on the creative process and the art it produces.

Woolf's comment about her "needs" before writing "even a sentence" should be taken both literally and figuratively. Indeed, at the time, Virginia and Leonard Woolf were in the process of moving, and she could not find her writing materials. On the other hand, the comment is immediately followed by her complaint about a temporary inability to compose, suggesting that the "thousand appliances" was also a metaphor for her cognitive abilities. Such rapid turn from physical conditions within the writer's environment to abstractions about the writing process is a characteristic of Woolf's habits of thought.

As Jean Alexander emphasizes in her The Venture of Form in the Novels of Virginia Woolf, Woolf demonstrated an "insistent fidelity to experience, beginning with the physical, perceptual experience" (5), which she then used to "make the inner being visible by finding its correspondent in the physical world" (64). And, as the present study will show, the physical properties of writing
tools, ink, paper, and written language enabled Woolf to think concretely about the writing process, literature, and literary history. In the chapters that follow, I will examine at length the exact nature of Woolf's "needs" for the tools and objects of written language and analyze the role of the "thousand appliances" in her creative process and in her critical thinking. In so doing, I will argue that these physical objects, always in her hands and before her eyes, continually called her attention to the physical properties of her medium, the madeness of her texts, and her own reading and writing processes. Over the span of Woolf's lifetime, these reminders resulted in a hyperawareness of written language that became the basis for much of her art and critical thought.

Woolf's many references to the scene of writing and the madeness of word objects cluster into conceptual groups, each related to one of her "appliances" or writer's tools: pens, the graphic images of words, and the paper on which they are written. These groupings suggest a convenient and logical organization for a discussion of Woolf's "modern memory." Her comments about writing tools, pens and ink incorporate a series of metaphors through which she was able to express concepts about the creative process and the conditions under which it could occur. With these, her metaphors of the pen, Woolf developed the
language she required to describe her own creative acts, the ones that produced art and the ones that failed. Assembling her writing paraphernalia signified the onset of intellectual activity as well as the physical act of handwriting. Affixing a new nib in a pen signalled either a shift from one writing task to another or a change in attitude about an ongoing one.

Even the selection of a pen bore significance for Woolf. At first her choice of a dipping pen was prompted by its associations with childhood. Afterwards, she remained loyal to her pen and inkpot because these tools suited her theories about the nature of the creative process itself. When her task was to produce "nobler & profounder thoughts" (D 1: 207), the pauses to dip her nib into ink allowed necessary moments of reflection. When "scribbling" (a word that appears frequently in Woolf's texts) to discover ideas and associations hidden under the surface of consciousness and to gain access to the poetic function of her language, the messiness of ink provided the necessary sensory stimulus.

Authors, pens, and writing activities: all are found within the same physical and temporal space, the scene of writing. Creative thought is itself entwined in a segment of human life, a set of human experiences crammed with physical activity and sensory stimulus. Woolf's pen, the center of all her authorial experiences, provided the
literal link between the idea of art and its fruition as a work of art. These conceptual links will be examined in the next chapter, "Metaphors of the Pen."

As I will discuss in "Solid Words," my third chapter, Woolf's numerous private and professional writings document her habits of looking at written language and provide insights concerning the mind set that determined what she would find there. If any assertion about Woolf can be made with absolute certainty, it is that she was extremely literate. By her own account, she was "Adeline Virginia Stephen, the second daughter of Leslie and Julia Prinsep Stephen, born on 25th January 1882 . . . into a very communicative, literate, letter writing, visiting, articulate, late nineteenth century world" (MOB 65). In such a world, books and pages filled with writing were a constant presence. After marrying Leonard Woolf at the beginning of her career as writer and critic, she could record in her diary that she and her husband "now sit as usual surrounded by books & paper & ink, & so shall sit till bedtime" (D 1: 34).6 Woolf's encounters with books always began with sensory perception of their size, their weight, their feel. She appreciated the beauty of fine editions and the practicality of small, inexpensive books made for traveling. Looking at letters of the alphabet and word objects led her to speculate about the similarities and differences between artistic media, and she frequently
compared writing to music, to architecture, and to painting and drawing. Likewise, she distinguished between spoken and written language, adopting the latter as her own art form. The graphic shapes of words and paralinguistic devices such as punctuation and textual arrangement served Woolf as her medium of choice.

Woolf theorized that written language was the physical manifestation of a writer's consciousness, and she habitually substituted text for writer, book for body. This word/flesh, text/body association began with her earliest experiences with books. Later, it developed into a significant element in her thinking. As Woolf took her notion a step further, the act of writing became an act of creation, self-creation -- an idea which was the source of much pain and anxiety for her, played out on the visual surface of her texts. A different but related set of associations arose from her confusing of literary ability with calligraphic skill, a metaphor that turns on the two meanings of the verb "to write" (the physical act of producing graphic images, the cognitive act of composing written language). Woolf placed importance upon the fact that letters as graphic images become more uniform as they progress from a handwritten to a typed to a printed form. And as they become more uniform, they also become more public, more stable, more enduring, or as Woolf often expressed it, more "solid."
While demonstrating Woolf's creative application of such conventions of reading as punctuation and other nonlexical marks, I must account for her distrust of radical experiments with the graphic images of words. Considering the findings of so many scholars regarding the reasons and conditions prompting authors to employ visible language, Virginia Woolf seems a most likely candidate to have employed visual innovations in her novels. As a feminist author, would she not wish to subvert the textual conventions of literary traditions that did not support women's writing? As a writer profoundly concerned about similarities and differences between literature and art, would she not wish to enhance the visual properties of her texts? As an artist directly exposed to the Modernist aesthetic, would she not wish to contribute to the proliferation of visually distinct works so frequently coming before her eyes? And as the owner and operator of the Hogarth Press, would she not have at her fingertips the machinery to produce such texts if she so desired? The obvious answer to all of the above should be yes. Nevertheless, as anyone who has looked at Virginia Woolf's novels can confirm, her texts do not resemble the visual experiments of her contemporaries.

Woolf states in unmistakable terms both her respect for the written word and her fear of its loss. The description of letters and their shapes occurs repeatedly
in her texts, and the inability to write or read images as words is portrayed as a terrifying experience. Woolf's notions of the fate of conscious beings for whom language does not signify meaning correspond to Julia Kristeva's theories of language functioning. According to Kristeva, the signifying process at work in a text functions at two levels, splitting the subject's language into two types of discourse. Her term "phenotext" is aligned with the phallic order of symbolic function and denotes "language that serves to communicate. . . . a structure," while "genotext," a maternal association, "moves through zones that have relative and transitory borders" (Revolution 87). What is manifest in different types of texts is the relationship between the two modalities: "the dialectic between them determines the type of discourse (narrative, metalanguage, theory, poetry, etc.) involved" (Revolution 24).

Referring to the modern (avant garde) text, Kristeva points out that where visible language is allowed to "disturb the transparency of the signifying chain and open it up to the material crucible of its production," the process "breaks up the totality of the envisioned object and invests it with fragments (colors, lines, forms)" (Revolution 101-102). However, she cautions that these visual fragments must always remain "linked to sounds, words, and signification . . . always produced with
reference to a moment of stasis, a boundary, a symbolic barrier" (102). While the dialectic is functional for most speaking and writing subjects, in extreme cases, "a passion for ventures with meaning and its materials" (*Desire x*) will lead them to a rejection of the symbolic function " to the point where meaning has not yet appeared (the child), no longer is (the insane person), or else functions as a restructuring (writing, art)" (*Desire x*). Thus, Kristeva's theories help us understand Woolf's experiences with the textual surface (as child, as victim of frequent emotional episodes, as writer) and her theories about the dangers of transgressing the threshold of signification: When the integrity of the word is torn apart, so too is the self.

In "Between Beautiful Boards," I will trace the development of Woolf's concepts about time and space in written language from their beginnings as reactions to the spatial properties of writing surfaces. Several studies of Woolf's fiction have explored the temporal-spatial properties in her narrative designs. Generally, analysis takes one of three approaches: comparisons based on philosophical theories of time, comparisons of physical objects to temporal concepts, and comparisons of literature and other arts. Typical of the first approach, Shiv K. Kumar points out that "time with her [Woolf] is almost a mode of perception, a filter which distills all phenomena before they are apprehended in their true significance and
relationship" (68). Rejecting the notion of any direct influence of Henri Bergson's theories of time as a durational flux, Kumar deems Woolf "a typical Bergsonian novelist" because she revolted against "the tyranny of chronological time" (68) imposed by the Edwardian novel. He compares Woolf's narrative designs to Laurence Sterne's Tristram Shandy, "undoubtedly the first time-novelist" (69) and admits Woolf's admiration for this work. Nevertheless, Kumar denies that Sterne's Lockean spatialization of time was the model for Woolf's own innovations (70), instead likening them to the stream of consciousness narratives of James Joyce and Dorothy Richardson. Taking another approach, Jean Alexander searches for different narrative models, always a physical object, in each of Woolf's novels. For example, she suggests that the physical "correspondent" for the design of Jacob's Room is a globe or circle:

> The circle as a form is descriptive not because of its reversibility but because the circle is a symbol of wholeness, and the continuous movement is in stasis; the form is completed in Jacob's world, simultaneously retraced for the author, retraced for the reader. (65)

By far, the largest group of critical studies trace Woolf's narrative designs to influences from the other arts, several of which have been gathered together in Diane F. Gillespie's The Multiple Muses of Virginia Woolf. For instance, Panthea Reid [Broughton] discusses the influence of artist and art critic Roger Fry. In Art and Affection:
A Life of Virginia Woolf, she traces Woolf's personal relationships with Vanessa Stephen Bell, Duncan Grant, Roger Fry, and other artists. Marianna Torgovnick's The Visual Arts, Pictorialism, and the Novel: James, Lawrence, and Woolf presents her analysis of narrative designs based on concepts from the pictorial arts.

Studies within each of the three groups of comparative approaches have added much to our understanding of Woolf's thought and art. However, to my knowledge, I am the first to suggest that she found correspondences between narrative time and textual space. Specifically, I find that her concepts derived from three types of experience: diary writing, writing articles according to demands of word count/columnar space, and typesetting. Each of these experiences with different types of "pages" contributed to what was to become for Woolf a concrete language based upon spatial-temporal correspondences. Diaries, chronological by nature, served as a spatial-temporal grid into which Woolf must "fit" her words. Moreover, because diary writing was a daily task, it also forced Woolf to consider the relationship between clock time and narrative time, the time of living and the time of writing. Word counts and columnar space restrictions also restricted content and style, restrictions that Woolf resented and sought to escape. In typesetting, "blanks" are never empty space on a page. Instead, they are filled with wooden blocks, the
typesetter's "furniture." All of these activities called Woolf's attention to the relationship between spatial surfaces and narrative time. As enclosed spaces, Woolf's pages became a paradigm of both the writing process and concepts about the functions of written language as a sign system, enclosures that she continually sought to escape via innovations in narrative design.

In the final chapter of this study, I will synthesize Woolf's ideas about her "thousand appliances" in order to show how collectively they shaped her critical theories about individual literary works and the history of literature itself. In assessing Woolf's habits of thought, I introduce a new term, "visual literacy," as an alternative to "visible language." Where "visible" in the latter term suggests a misleading transparent/opaque dichotomy in the physical properties of the written word, "visual" in the former emphasizes a difference in types of readers and writers. "Visual literacy," in its fullest sense, is a hyperawareness of the physical properties of writing, of a text's materiality or madness, which manifests itself during the process of reading, writing, or both. It is visible language either in or about art. A visually literate reader is one who approaches a text as a word object, whose reading of the text takes into account its physical properties and the conditions of its making. A visually literate writer is one who produces a text that
calls attention to its own madeness (with or without the use of unconventional typography), who regards the graphic images of written words as her or his medium and the creative process as an act of "making."

During the last years of her life, Woolf began a project in which she planned to write a "new" history of British literature. Although she never completed her project, she left behind enough notes and drafts to demonstrate the direction of her thinking, and this evidence will serve as my starting point for a discussion of Woolf's critical approach to the literary arts. From the outset, her plans for her literary history centered on a search for a "connection between seeing and writing."

The drafts of the first two chapters of her history reveal the importance she placed on the invention of printing and the rapid increase in the number and types of books available to the reading public. By her account, the printed word brought about the "death" of the anonymous voice of the oral storyteller and poet and the "birth" of both identifiable authors and an audience who for the first time perceived literary works primarily through the eye. These changes, she argued, constituted a very different rhetorical circumstance than was possible within the traditions of oral legend or drama. Because books were durable physical objects, they could be examined more closely than spoken language, making for what Woolf
considered to be a more expressive medium. Finally, she maintained that word objects should call attention to the scene of their own making, that readers should acquire the habit of lifting the page and glancing at the author seated behind.

As is evident in the working title Woolf eventually chose, Turning the Page, her concept of literary history was a visual construct based on book design. Each literary "age" corresponds to a page, the same textual space - narrative time design we find in her diaries and some of her novels. But behind each page resides individual authors seated in "a labyrinth of words" as they create unique word objects. Thus, Woolf posited three possible versions of the same narrative. The first is historical, in which all authors and their works become more "solid" and more public with the invention of printing presses and the widespread publishing of books. The second is bibliographical, in which a specific text evolves from handwritten manuscript to printed book during the creative process. The third version is biographical, in which a person begins as a novice writer of private texts than becomes the published author, at once more famous and more vulnerable to public criticism.

To demonstrate Woolf's ideas of the interrelationships between the three versions of the narrative, I will analyze her most sustained treatment of authors and the process of
writing, her sixth novel, Orlando. I will follow Woolf's urging and "lift the page" so as to examine the scenes of writing behind them, Orlando's 300 year writing of the poem "The Oak Tree," the Biographer's writing of Orlando's life, and Woolf's writing of the novel itself. All three scenes, I suggest, are framed within the covers of the same book. Orlando is an important text in the Woolfian canon. Published in 1928, it documents in fiction her visual literacy because in it she explored virtually all of her ideas about her thousand appliances and the physical properties of written language. She also endowed both Orlando and the Biographer with some measure of her own awareness of word objects. Orlando shares the young Virginia Stephen's desires for pens and paper and her sensory experiences with written language. The Biographer adopts Woolf's language and thinking about the physical nature of word objects and the process of their making. Additionally, Orlando points towards Woolf's plans for the history of literature. The Biographer links the changes in a writer's life and the changes in one text to universal changes in literary aesthetics. In fact, the strategy of particularizing literary trends in terms of an individual author was one of Woolf's favorite critical devices and can be found in many of her literary essays, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," for example.
In her notes and drafts for *Turning the Page* and in *Orlando*, Woolf characterized her present as the age of printed texts, a stage in the shift from orality to literacy that years later Walter Ong would term the age of "Typographical Man." In assessing the effects of Woolf's experiences with the tools of writing and word objects, I will ask the question that she herself might have raised: To what degree was she representative of the spirit of that age? Placing Woolf's visual literacy within the "Typographical Age," I compare her art and thought to contemporary tends, finding that in her awareness of the physical properties of written language, she was at one with her age. However, she limited herself to visual innovations that did not threaten the integrity of the written word or disrupt the reading process. The handprinted books from the Woolfs' Hogarth Press were allied with the arts and crafts movement rather than with the tradition of fine arts printing that McGann analyzes in *Black Riders*. Nevertheless, books from both types of presses called attention to the physical properties of a text and its madness.

According to Steiner's analysis of the Modernists' "cubist histography," Woolf's concept of history seems not to reflect the thinking of her contemporaries. In a cubist view of history, "temporal sequence is transformed into a [Gertrude] Steinian kaleidoscope" (Steiner 190). Woolf's
narrative of literary history is sequential. However, the scene that she promised readers would see if they "lift the page" -- a writer seated in a labyrinth of words -- is similar to the cubist writer's "painting" of history:

A cubist painting whose elements maintain their heterogeneity -- objects, people; things, signs; the banal, the dramatic; the contemporaneous, the anachronous -- aestheticized structure of interrelations. (Steiner 191)

Thus, Woolf's history incorporates both the movement of time (the narrative and the turning of pages) and the structure of interrelations (the scene of writing behind the lifted page), or what the Biographer in Orlando calls the dual forces of "brevity and diuturnity" (99). If Steiner's analysis of Modernist versions of history does not take into account Woolf's Turning of the Page, the cause is the analogy by which Steiner compares historical accounts to cubist painting. I compare Woolf's account to book design. Gregory L. Ulmer, in his essay, "The Object of Post-Criticism," argues that current critical practice is the result of a belated "application of the devices of modernist art to critical representations" (83), the principal devices of which are collage and montage. Also prevalent are rhetorical strategies such as discourse that "mimes its object of study" and allegorical narrative that "favours the material of the signifier over the meaning of the signified" (95). His theory would account for Steiner's approach. Likewise, Ulmer's own theory also is
based on the analogy of the pictorial arts: collage/montage is physically present in a painting but merely a concept in the critic's written text. Oddly, many of his own examples are from the works of Jacques Derrida that overtly call up the memory of their own materiality, a fact that slips Ulmer's notice. I mention Ulmer's essay because it illustrates a critical problem that I hope to avoid in my study. On the one hand, contemporary critics, Ulmer included, attempt to apply concepts and techniques drawn from Modernist aesthetics. On the other, they tend to overlook the fact that Modernist artists worked diligently to dispel the notion that written language is a transparent and nonphysical medium. As I have been arguing in this introductory chapter, the basic assumption underlying Woolf's (and my) literacy is that all written language is visible, equally as visible as a drawing or painting. The assumption takes us far in understanding Virginia Stephen Woolf's thought and art. Moreover, I suggest that it opens fresh avenues for reading of works by other authors and for narrating literary history based on an analogy that compares the processes of reading and writing and changes in literary trends to the physical properties of textual surfaces. Thus, in mime of my own object of study, this history of Woolf's search for the connection between seeing and writing moves forward with a reminder to the reader: Please, now turn my page.
Notes

1 Since it is the most accessible source for this material and the bibliographical features of the original texts are not relevant to this study, I will refer to Silver's version throughout.

2 Also at this juncture enters the plethora of conflicting theories about the relationship of the "sister arts," painting and poetry, beginning with Aristotle's *Poetics* and eventually extending to include novels as well. For excellent summaries of the history of the critical debates, see Ulrich Weisstein's "Literature and the Visual Arts" and Murray Krieger's *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign*.

3 Studies of the literary icon are also plentiful. However, not all critics consider visual icons. For instance, W. J. T. Mitchell is more concerned with icons associated with the signified (the author's subject) than with those visually apparent in the signifier (the graphic images of written language).

4 In the published editions of Woolf's diaries, regularizing of the text is minimal. See editor's comments in PA and DVW.

5 Throughout this study, my practice will be to use "Virginia" when referring to her life before marriage to Leonard Woolf and "Woolf" for times thereafter. However, in some places, to emphasize the fact that, as is true of any woman, she did not discard her original identity when she married and that her experiences were contiguous from childhood to maturity, I will use her full name, "Virginia Stephen Woolf."

6 Woolf did not move directly from her deceased parents' home to her husband's, however. During the interim and long afterwards, her literary interests were sparked by her group of "Bloomsbury" friends and acquaintances. See Mary Ann Caws' *The Women of Bloomsbury: Virginia, Vanessa, and Carrington*, David Dowling's *Bloomsbury Aesthetics and the Novels of Forster and Woolf*, and *The Bloomsbury Group: A Collection of Memoirs, Commentary and Criticism*, edited by S. P. Rosenbaum.

7 Pamela L. Caughie summarizes the theoretical debates in feminist criticism of Woolf in *Virginia Woolf and Postmodernism*. According to her, the debates center on various attempts to situate Woolf within either French or American feminist traditions. Alice Jardine, in "Pre-Texts for the Transatlantic Feminist," draws from Julia
Kristeva's theories to compare the "textual economies" of Woolf and Monique Wittig, finding in their work "the thematics/figurations which merit particular attention in women's writing" (231). Jane Marcus studies Woolf's challenges to literary traditions in Virginia Woolf and the Language of Patriarchy.

8 See N. Takei De Silva, Modernism and Virginia Woolf.
Virginia Woolf's thoughts naturally teemed with speculations about the creative process of writing, and to express her ideas, she often constructed imaginary scenes of the writer at work. One particularly colorful description of writing came to her during a 1906 visit to Greece. In the imagined scene, she compared the act of making entries in a travel journal to a ritual in which the writer's pen functions like a "philosophers stone":

You [the tourist/writer] make a pass in the air with a dirty stump of goose flesh [quill pen], having first spread a white sheet on your knee. Soon a procession begins to cross it; . . . . here are the bores & the dullards, the cheats & the liars, but their only purpose now is to amuse a leisure hour. . . . After all they let me draw the following reflections upon Greek domestic life -- & that is very valuable. (PA 338).

However, this scene of magic is an isolated example, most likely prompted by the type of writing project she had in mind (a travel journal) and her festive vacation mood. More typical is Woolf's depiction of the fiction writing process as a scene in which the author sits alone, a pen in hand and a sheet of paper in front of her, attempting to copy what she "sees": "Nothing so simple as a painter's model; . . . . Two words alone cover all that a writer looks at -- they are human life" (CE 2: 162). In this scene, closely resembling the actual setting in which Woolf
worked, characters do not parade across the page as if conjured by a magic spell. On the contrary, the writer "seated before human life" undertakes a complicated mental process of selecting and arranging details previously gathered through direct perception of sensory stimulus. As different as these two versions of the scene of writing are, they are alike in a very significant detail: in both, the hand that creates holds a writing instrument.

Woolf was very much aware that writing is both a cognitive and a physical process. She knew that the creative process is not complete until the pen moves across the page, and taking as her central image the hand holding a writing instrument, she developed a system of correspondences that allowed her to think concretely about her art. Although I refer to these correspondences collectively as Woolf's "metaphors of the pen," frequently they are examples of synecdoche, since her linguistic strategy was to take one detail from the physical aspect of writing -- a pen, an inkpot, a writer's hand -- as a substitute for the entire complex of mental activities associated with language composition. The strategy proved quite efficient. For example, it allowed her to summarize in a minimum of words the language skills and creativity required of a successful author as "a gift for pen & ink" (D 2: 17) or, conversely, to explain an awkwardness of style by commenting on "how stiffly one sets pen to paper"
Moreover, as is the purpose of this chapter to demonstrate, the complexity of Woolf's figurative language attests to her keen awareness of writing as a physical act of "making," an act that begins with the tactical experience of lifting a pen.

Woolf's texts are rife with comments about writing instruments and the accompanying paraphernalia, so much so that they reflect the state of technology during her lifetime.¹ The dates of Virginia Stephen's birth, 1882, and Virginia Stephen Woolf's death, 1941, frame a period in which hand-held writing instruments changed dramatically from quill to ball point pen. Manufacture of durable and flexible steel tips or, as they were commonly called, "nibs" to replace the troublesome quill tip began in England around 1829. Due largely to a process patented by Joseph Gillott in 1840, production of steel nibs ("steel pens") steadily increased during the subsequent 50 years (Whalley 43) so that Virginia Stephen was born into a literate society experimenting with an innovative new tool for its everyday writing needs. Sold cheaply by the box, steel nibs could be discarded when they became clogged with ink or worn by use. Moreover, the variety and ingenuity of nib designs allowed for a newfound versatility and individuality in execution of the written word (Whalley 51).
The penholder or "pen stick" to which the nib was affixed became a popular novelty item, available in almost any material from wood to glass to gold (Whalley 47). In the hands of writers, these pen sticks provided both visual and tactical stimulus. The sight and feel of the instrument could keep writers mindful of their task, thus propelling the "mysterious" creative process toward its fruition. But while the steel nib was clearly an improvement over the quill point, it still required dipping into ink. Woolf described in her diary for 1918 a scene that illustrates the shortcomings of dipping pens:

I went to a Registry Office for Nessa; & noticed that the woman had 6 or 7 pens on her table, tried one after another, found all save one unusable; nibs stuck to the holder with crusts of ink. (D 1: 102)

Early attempts at making a "fountain pen" with its own supply of ink are recorded in 1723, and "by the end of the nineteenth century some of the best known makes of fountain pen were in existence, their names being household words--eg 'Swan' and 'Waterman'" (Whalley 65). The two new writing devices, steel pens and fountain pens, competed for general popularity throughout Woolf's lifetime, neither gaining ascendancy. And just as Woolf's birth came at the beginning of a new era in writing instrument technology, so too her death coincided with its end. Almost universally, writers forever put aside their dipping pens when "the ball pointed pen, perfected after the outbreak of WWII, finally
superseded all ancestors of the quill" (Whalley 122). However, prior to the widespread popularity of ball point pens, an author's first task was to select an instrument of choice from the variety of appealing devices on the market, a task that Virginia Stephen Woolf always made with the utmost seriousness.

Quentin Bell notes in his introduction to Woolf's mature diaries that her own preference in tools for handwriting was the immediate descendant of the quill: "a dipping pen and ink" (D 1: ix). However, Bell does not elaborate on the background and reasons for Woolf's choice. In fact, evidence from Woolf's girlhood diaries indicates that the dipping pen was not her first preference. The diaries document that for her fifteenth birthday, among other gifts, Virginia received "a holder for my stylograph" (PA 21), a stylograph being an ingenious writing device that released ink from a self-contained well when its needle-like tip is pressed against the page. On April 17, 1897, Virginia experimented with a quill pen, observing that "the result is not beautiful -- No -- I shall not desert my beloved Swan" (PA 71). While Virginia's handwriting on the page where this entry occurs appears somewhat bolder and larger, the script seems no worse than on other pages. Nevertheless, the writer did not like the appearance of the script and clearly expressed her
attachment to the modern fountain pen, her "beloved Swan."

But two months later, on June 25th, a disaster occurred at the hands of a house servant named Marie:

I can hardly write this [diary entry] -- that never to be mentioned without anger -- Marie having thrown my beautiful pen out of the window on to Dorothea's balcony -- consequently producing a severe dislocation of the nibs, & general shock to the system, wh. it will probably never entirely get over . . . therefore out of consideration to the enfeebled powers of my beloved it [blank space on page] shall be left empty. (PA 106)

Although Virginia mentioned "nibs," she apparently meant the term loosely to refer to any pen point, not just those used as dipping pens. The phrase "general shock to the system [emphasis mine]" suggests a more complicated device than a pen stick and steel nib. This contention is further supported by the even distribution of ink in the entries. If Virginia had been using a steel pen, her writing would appear as a repeating series of dark then lightening images corresponding to successive dippings of the nib to replenish the ink (Nickell 18).

On June 26th, the day after the disaster, Virginia tried again to employ the "enfeebled powers" of her damaged writing tool, interrupting her inksmudged diary entry to comment parenthetically, "(impossible to write sense or any thing else with this pen)" (PA 106). Either as an act of angry protest or as a result of a true inability to "write sense," Virginia subsequently neglected her diary until June 30, 1897. When she did return to it, she accounted
for her absence as "owing to the disablement of my pen" (PA 108) and filled in the missing pages with brief notes written in a larger than usual hand. Within three more days, Virginia seemed to have given up on her "beloved": "I can write no more. This pen is terribly infirm" (PA 119). But despite the declaration of futility, she continued to use the damaged pen until at least August 6th, when she complained that "this pen grows worse & worse" (PA 120).

Virginia's persistent attempts to write with a damaged pen attests to her affection for its design, apparently not the durable steel pen type. Significantly, the loss of her favorite pen preceded by only a few days a decline in Virginia's enthusiasm for diary writing, which she reported as "a great dislike of the whole process" (PA 122). However, she managed to recover from her dislike when, on September 24, 1897, she and her sister Vanessa went to Regent Street where "with terrible agony & excitement" they shopped for a "new nib" for Virginia. When they arrived home with the purchase, Virginia was disappointed once again because the graphic image it produced was too fine for her tastes: "Oh the despair of that moment!" The sisters promptly returned to the shop and "boldly demanded another nib." As a result, Virginia could end the day by writing in her diary with a new nib, "& [we] got this most exquisite & delightful one" (PA 130). Apparently, both writer and her "beloved" had survived the ordeal.
Although we cannot be certain about the specific type of pen Virginia Stephen preferred in 1897, what is clear is the beginnings of her association of the functioning of a writing tool with her ability to compose written language. By 1899, the associations recorded in her journal had become stronger, and on August 7th, she elaborated their meaning:

My pen, I must add, is rather unwell at present, & the aspect of this book distresses me. I cannot write prettily when my pen scratches & all joy in the art is lost to me. I love writing for the sake of writing, but when my pen is enfeebled it becomes a task & a bother to me. (PA 139)

As was the case with the 1897 pen disaster, Woolf blamed the second problem with a writing tool on a servant: "The domestic Mary 'a nice girl, but very empty Miss' investigated the mechanics of my pen before we came away, & something of its divinity has fled since" (PA 139). The similarities between the two instances involving mischief of servants raises suspicions that Virginia's imagination was at play. But regardless of the cause of the damage, she again attempted to use a defective pen. She struggled along until August 26th, when, after making a journal entry and then deleting it, she admitted defeat. Below the scratched through text, she wrote in square brackets:

[Terrible misfortunes with my pen have interfered severely with the progress of this work. I am now forced to resume, but I do so reluctantly; & the next pages (few I trust) will be written with a steel nib!]. (PA 154)
Virginia's reluctance to take up a "steel nib" and her hope that she would use it for only a few pages rings with irony, given the long association with and love of steel pens that was to come.

No matter what Virginia's first preferences in writing tools may have been, by the time she was at work on her first novel, she had a steel pen firmly in her grasp. At least in the early phases of her career, the fondness for steel pens may have been emotionally motivated. Glancing at the dipping pen in her own hand, Woolf could reflect upon the past, as when she noted in her diary a fond memory of her mother, Julia Stephen, in the act of writing:

> Here I am experimenting with the parent of all pens--the black J. the pen, as I used to think it, along with other objects, as a child, because mother used it; & therefore all other pens were varieties & eccentricities. (D 1: 214)

In "Sketch of the Past," Woolf described her earliest memories of "Many bright colours; many distinct sounds; some human beings . . . all surrounded by a vast space" (MOB 79) and her mother as "the very centre of that great Cathedral space which was childhood" (MOB 81). Thus, we can imagine how the color of the pen, its sound as it moved across the paper, its feel in her hand, served as sensory stimulus evoking the maternal experience. A letter from Maria Jackson, Woolf's maternal grandmother, to Julia Stephen alludes to a constant cramping of Julia's writing
hand. Because Woolf later wrote on the back of the letter "Granny 1890," we know that she was aware of her mother's problem and her grandmother's suggestion that "I think if you were to use a quick [quill?] Pen it would be so much less tiring I do not think writer's cramp was ever heard of until steel Pens were invented" (Charleston Papers, Ad1, University of Sussex). As will become evident, Woolf's hand also frequently cramped around a steel pen. Nevertheless, on at least this one occasion, Woolf's desire to handle "the black J.," her mother's pen, superceded the discomfort she may have experienced from using it.

In another diary entry, Woolf went so far as to suggest an oral dependency upon her handwriting tool when she described "the blue penholder with which I write, & when I dont write suck" (D 1: 168). When she was troubled by harsh criticism of her writing, the materials from which her pen was made allowed her to regress momentarily to the safety of childhood:

I have a pen of <malachite> vulcanite (?) which perhaps serves the purpose of a babies coral. At least one has nothing to fear, & the sheer pleasure of writing seems singularly unalloyed. It proves itself so genuine. (D 1: 214)

By a "babies coral," Woolf meant a child's teething ring of the type made from that pinkish material. Again, the orality of the image is obvious. However, the key word in the entry is "unalloyed." Although the editor's notation suggests some doubt as to whether the passage reads
"malchite" or "vulcanite," the former word is more consistent with the entry's theme than is the latter. Malachite, like coral, is a natural or unalloyed substance often used for ornamental objects, whereas vulcanite is a synthetic product of the vulcanizing process which combines sulphur with rubber. Woolf recognized correspondences among the purity of materials from which her pen stick was made, the purity of childhood, and the "sheer pleasure" of private diary writing. Unlike professional writing, where the creative process can become tainted by concerns about critical reception, diary writing was as "singularly unalloyed" as the experiences of a child.

The language Woolf used to describe her recollections of her father's pen emphasize the coldness and hardness of steel. In "Sketch of the Past," she likened the character of Leslie Stephen, a publicly acclaimed man of letters, to a steel engraving "without color, or warmth or body; but with an infinity of precise clear lines" (MOB 109). This same sense of precision and professionalism is repeated in her description of Stephen's book-lined study filled with his writing paraphernalia:

He had written all his books lying sunk in that deep rocking chair... Across it lay his writing board; with the sheets of foolscap always folded down the middle, so that he could make corrections in the margin. And there was his fine steel pen and the curious china inkpot, with a well, lidded, out at the side. All his books were dipped out of that well on the point of Joseph Gillott's long shanked steel pens. And I remember the little flat shield that his pen had...
rubbed smooth and hard on the joint of his forefinger. (MOB 119)

Woolf's admiration for her father's dedication to writing is evident in her memory of the room where he worked, and clearly Stephen's "fine steel pen" stood as an emblem of the writing career she desired.³

Although Woolf's associations of pens with her childhood initially may have motivated her choice of the dipping pen, she later continued the habit because of her theories about the nature of the writing process. As early as 1918, Woolf acknowledged the possible practical advantages of fountain pens but rejected them nevertheless:

    The degradation of steel pens is such that after doing my best to clip & file one into shape, I have to take to a Waterman [fountain pen], profoundly though I distrust them, & disbelieve in their capacity to convey the nobler & profounder thoughts. (D 1: 207)

The connection she made between a type of handwriting tool and the thoughts of an author had its origin in the way the tools must be used. To become the "nobler & profounder thoughts" worthy to be called art, ideas must be transformed by the author's creative intellect, a process that cannot be rushed. For this reason, Woolf discovered a definite advantage in using a pen stick and nib. Writing with a steel pen, she was forced to pause while she dipped the nib into ink. These pauses allowed time for reflection. "Seated before human life," she could reconsider her ideas, develop and arrange them to better
suit her art form. A fountain pen, on the other hand, requires no pauses and promotes continuous, nonreflective composition.

Woolf found the pauses to dip her pen useful. However, this association of dipping pens with reflective thought does not completely justify her persistent preference for them. For instance, it cannot explain her first diary entry for 1919, where initially she found the speed with which she recorded the events of her life appalling:

I note however that this diary writing does not count as writing, since I have just reread my years [1918] diary & am much struck by the rapid haphazard gallop at which it swings along, sometimes indeed jerking almost intolerably over the cobbles. (D 1: 233)

Even dipping pens, Woolf realized, were capable of performing at a "haphazard gallop," which led her momentarily to decide that her diary writing "does not count" (D 1: 233). But no sooner did she come to this realization than she reversed herself to discover an advantage in nonreflective writing:  

Still if it were not written rather faster than the fastest typewriting, if I stopped & took thought, it would never have been written at all; & the advantage of the method is that it sweeps up accidentally several stray matters which I should exclude if I hesitated, but which are the diamonds of the dustheap. (D 1: 233-34)

Throughout her diaries, Woolf returned again and again to the notion that rapid writing "sweeps up" ideas via the
cognitive process of free association. Her favorite term for the process was "scribbling":

One thing in considering my state of mind now, seems to me beyond dispute, that I have at last, bored down into my oil well, & can't scribble fast enough to bring it all to the surface. . . . I believe I can write much more quickly: if writing it is -- this dash at the paper of a phrase, & then the typing & retyping -- trying it over, the actual writing being now like the sweep of a brush; I fill it up afterwards. (D 3: 12)

Besides facilitating the discovery of unexpected ideas and impressions, rapid writing allowed Woolf's language to function poetically. Conversely, when "one can't scribble" because a sense of purpose or history retards free association, "one takes thought. One gets it too literal" (D 1: 127).

The value Woolf placed on rapid scribbling of ideas raises questions about why she would not do away with nibs that require dipping. The answer, I suggest, is precisely because of the messiness of ink:

Having smashed my ink pot, I have recourse to safety pots again & purple ink I see dwells in this one; but I can't use with any effect the muffled respectability of a fountain pen. (D 1: 250)

What was "muffled" with the fountain pen was the sensory experience of ink, its swirl in an inkpot, its color, its smell, its smudges upon her hands. For Woolf, ink served much the same function as does the blinking cursor on a present day computer screen; both facilitate the creative process by constantly asking the writer for more, more.
Additionally, the messiness of ink intrinsically links the process of creation with its physical surroundings, makes it earthy, close to its source, and dipping pens, not the neat "respectability of fountain pens," could sustain that connection.

With notable frequency, Woolf's diary entries opened with comments about the task at hand, as if she needed to set her own creative stage before the intellectual process of writing could begin. Always present on Woolf's stage were her handwriting tools, and for her the simple gesture of taking pen in hand both literally and metaphorically represented the onset of intellectual creative activity. As she explained, a writer beginning a new writing project is "like an invalid who can look up & take a cup of tea -- Suddenly one can take to the pen with relish" (D 5: 235). Typically, the affixing of a new tip into her pen holder signified a shift from one writing task to another, as is clear in Woolf's first diary entry for 1939:

So I take a new nib, after bringing Roger [Woolf's biography of Roger Fry] to the verge of Josette with the old one, & spend my last 5 minutes, this very fine January morning, in writing the first page of the new Year. (D 3: 197)

In a reflection upon the ongoing effects of World War II and the uncertain prospects for peace, Woolf observed, "We live without a future. Thats what's queer, with our noses pressed to a closed door" (D 5: 355). Admitting that she was cut off from the normal activities of life, Woolf
nevertheless accepted her circumstances: "Now I need to write, with a new nib, to Enid Jones" (D 5: 355). Whether or not Woolf did in fact change the nib in her pen, the reference to this activity nevertheless clearly indicated a change in attitude, her resolution to ignore a future she could not control, and the onset of a new project for her pen, no matter that the task was merely to compose a letter.

Tools for writing provided Woolf with a vehicle for expressing her authorial experiences by serving as metaphors for intellectual activities. For instance, when she admitted to a temporary lack of interest in dairy writing, she expressed it as "I'm disinclined to get out pen & ink" (D 1: 89). On another occasion, she decided that "I had better assuage my fretfulness with pen & ink" (D 1: 228), a concretized acknowledgement of the therapeutic value Woolf found in her writing. In both cases, Woolf's figurative language turned on the practical necessity of writing paraphernalia. Thus, when illness prevented her from writing, she could lament, "My chief complaint is that I was divorced from my pen" (D 1: 119). After another bout of sickness, her pun on the word "recovery" (improvement in health/repossession) depended upon her pen: "Much more important (to me) than anything else, was my recovery of the pen; & thus the hidden stream was given exit, & I felt reborn" (D 2: 135).
Illness, Woolf noted, is only one fact of life that can separate writers from their pens. Because authors must work within a physical setting, threats to the creative process abound, as Woolf illustrated in her account of a particularly annoying experience:

I spend the first five minutes with this book before me trying to fish two drowned flies out of my ink pot on the tip of my pen; but I begin to see that this is one of those undertakings which are quite impossible -- absolutely impossible. Not Darwin or Plato could do it with the tip of my pen. And now the flies are increasing & dissolving; today there are three. (D 1: 192)

The account begins on a literal note; Woolf probably did discover flies in an open inkpot. However, the level of discourse modulates with the mention of Darwin and Plato, so that the increasing and dissolving of flies into her ink becomes a metaphor for intellectual problems and the skills required to solve them. Darwin's intellectual inquiries into the exact nature of the evolutionary process attempted to solve mysteries of the physical world. Plato searched for abstract philosophical truths about the meaning of human existence. On the other hand, writers must address both the concrete and the abstract. They must explore an "inkpot of life" that becomes evermore complex. Finding her task in this entry "absolutely impossible," Woolf harbored the experience as metaphor. However, later she noted with more confidence, "Still, I generally put in my pen & pick out something" (D 2: 100), her "something" meaning ideas, not dead flies.
Woolf's amazingly busy career as a novelist, essayist, and finally biographer often required that she simultaneously be involved in several writing projects, and the inherent emotional conflicts and practical problems of these demands are topics threaded throughout her diary entries. For example, while nearing completion of her biography of Roger Fry, Woolf wished to steal a few minutes from the drudgery of correcting proofs to write in her diary. But her desire for leisurely diary writing conflicted with her obligations to the Fry project, and she opened the day's brief entry with, "The litter in this room is so appalling that it takes me 5 minutes to find my pen. R. [the biography] all unsewn in bits" (D 5: 250).

Literally, the comment noted a brief delay in Woolf's plans; metaphorically, it expressed her frustration at finding herself torn between two writing tasks. She was able to distinguish between the two projects in terms of physical differences associated with their respective stages of production. The "unsewn" printed proof sheets of the Fry biography represented the grueling finalizing stage of the writing process from which she sought relief. On the other hand, Woolf had to find her pen because the bound blank pages of her diary awaited her. Thus "bits" of proofs became emotional "litter," an "appalling" obstacle between a writer and her creative tools.
The handwriting process is a physical experience, entirely dependent upon the writer's ability to grasp and manipulate a writing tool appropriately. For Woolf, the professional writer, the hand that held her pen seemed almost to exist independently of her own consciousness: "I think with pride that 7 people depend, largely, upon my hand writing on a sheet of paper . . . its keeping 7 people fed & housed" (D 3: 221). Painfully aware of the limitations of the human body, Woolf frequently blamed her own hand for failing to serve her creative needs. "My hand shakes so with carrying parcels that I can't write" (D 1: 163), she entered in her diary when an ordinary chore interfered with her writing plans. On another occasion, a headache plaguing her for four successive days forced her to note, "But can't write as the above shows. Hand won't hold pen" (D 5: 75).

The more writers write the more vulnerable become their hands, a physical fact which led Woolf to worry constantly, "Will my fingers stand so much scribbling?" (D 2: 142). Often hers could not. "I've no time or finger power left to describe Desmond in his office" (D 2: 13) or "My hand staggers" (D 5: 155) were typical of complaints throughout Woolf's career. Significantly, comments about her dysfunctional hand became more troubled as emotional pressures in her life came to a climax, and in the last
diary entry where she mentioned her hand, she was forced to admit, "I note with some dismay that my hand is becoming palsied. Why I cant say. Can I make clear straight lines any more? It seems not" (D 5: 346).

If Woolf's taking pen in hand signified the onset of the creative process, then the manner in which the pen was used reflected her attitudes about the nature of the project itself. In general, dedication to difficult writing tasks required more pressure on the pen than did leisurely personal writing. For example, when Woolf considered the possibility that her only claim to immortality could be as a letter writer, she recovered from her moment of self doubt and asked, "What about poor Jacob [novel in progress] then? hadn't I better drive my pen through sheets that pay of a morning? One type of writing seems to conflict with others" (D 1: 56). The same rigorous application of the pen applied to her plans for completion of *Three Guineas*: "If I can drive my pen hard, might have it done by August" (D 5: 100). And during World War II, the "driven pen" metaphor served as a declaration of resistance to the destructive forces facing the Woolfs at every turn. Deciding that one tool of textual production (the pen) would ensure the survival of another (the printing press), she wrote, "We must settle into work at any rate. We must drive our pens and keep the [Hogarth] Press going that way" (D 5: 175).
Just as often as Woolf employed her metaphor of the pen in reference to successful creative endeavors, she could vary it to describe dysfunctional writing. In the first variation, the pen itself refuses to function, as when Woolf failed at an attempt to describe Lord Eustace Percy. After noting her intentions to write about Lord Percy, she explained, "But at him my pen boggles, since I cannot delve any further back into the week" (D 1: 245). On another occasion, a comment that Woolf made about her husband Leonard's writing caused his pen to stall. She noted: I can inhibit poor L. as I myself am inhibited. Your trick is repetition, I say: whereupon his pen sticks like a broken machine" (D 2: 31). At other times, Woolf noted that the pen moves, but with disappointing results: "I fancied myself writing this account [of a trip to Manchester], & how good it would be; what lots of things I had to say; & now the pen brings blankness" (D 2: 101).

A second variation on the metaphor is a scenario in which the author's failure to hold a pen signifies either an inability to "grasp" her thoughts or an interruption in the creative process. When ideas for Three Guineas intruded upon her diary writing, Woolf noted:

I'm so entirely imbued in 3 Guineas that I can hardly jerk myself away to write here. (here in fact I again dropped my pen to think about my next paragraph --universities -- how will that lead to professions & so on.) Its a bad habit. (D 5: 62)
On the literal level, the "Its" that Woolf found a bad habit was the physical act of dropping; metaphorically, she was noting the equally as bad habit of allowing one writing process to interrupt another. Either version of the metaphor allowed Woolf to displace the experience of her own creative process onto her pen. There she could view it critically and express her pleasure or dissatisfactions from a position of relative emotional safety.

Although Woolf continued to write with a dipping pen throughout her lifetime, evidence suggests a gradual loosening of its appeal. As Woolf became critical of the literary traditions into which she had been born, the pleasurable childhood memories of dipping pens gave way to less favorable associations. Beginning with the publication of Three Guineas, Woolf aligned the inkpot on the side of her most unsympathetic critics. In one diary entry, she speculated, "Its on the cards that it [Three Guineas] will make more splash among the inkpots than I thought" (D 5: 142). And after a painful month in which all "inkpots" had had their say in the press, she wrote with relief, "the ink splash is over" (D 5: 149).

The train of thought that allowed Woolf to connect literary critics with receptacles for holding ink originates from the tradition of the writing quill: no professional critic would be found without his supply of
ink. Containers for ink came in a variety of styles, beginning with animal horns and ending with screw-on lidded bottles with special wells for replenishing fountain pens. Woolf's choice of the word "inkpots" is significant in that the term had been common between the sixteenth and late eighteenth centuries but was in disuse (in favor of "ink well") by the time she anticipated her "inksplash" of responses to *Three Guineas* in 1938 (Nickell 45). In fact, she had associated inkpots with antiquated quill pens as early as her birthday in 1905, when she received such a gift from her friend Violet Dickinson: "Violet to lunch, & she did bring a present - a huge china ink pot which holds almost a jar full of ink & is rather too large to be practicable. I must cultivate a bold hand & a quill pen" (PA 227). Accidents with open containers of ink were an everyday occurrence. Nevertheless, Woolf's "splash" suggested a rapid thrust of the nib or hasty gesture of the critic's hand across the page. Thus, her opinions of her critics were made clear: those who would challenge her *Three Guineas*, the "inkpots" of the past, were members of an outdated tradition who recklessly opposed her ideas on any grounds.

Eventually, Woolf's ideas about the differences between dipping pens and fountain pens found their way into her published theories. Describing Elizabethan literacy in "Reading," Woolf asked, "did they [Elizabethans] . . .
compose themselves and cease their chatter when they sat down to write what would pass from hand to hand, serve for winter gossip round a dozen firesides?" (CDB 154). Woolf emphasized that writing in seventeenth century England was very much a craft: "Writing is with them, as it can no longer be with us, making: making something that will endure and wear a brave face in the eyes of posterity" (155). This image of a sense of craft and endurance contrasts significantly with Woolf's description of her own age. In "Modern Letters," published in 1930, she suggested that advances in "communication technology," including the invention of fountain pens, had caused stylistic changes in letter writing:

> Whether the invention of the fountain pen is to blame, certainly well-formed handwriting is now the rarest of happy discoveries... This haphazard harum scarum individuality is reflected in the style. There is none at first showing -- each writer makes his own. Urgent need is the begetter of most of these pages... The whole affair is purely utilitarian. (CE 2: 260)

But "blame" was an unfortunate word choice because it wrongly implied that Woolf once again intended negative criticism of fountain pens and the hurried thoughts they produce. On the contrary, as the remainder of this study makes clear, Woolf found much to commend in "the privacy, intimacy of these letters [which] make them far more interesting and exciting than the old letters" (CE 2: 261). Indeed, modern letters had achieved a new expressive faculty:
If the art of letter-writing consists in exciting the emotions, in bringing back the past, in reviving a day, a moment, nay a very second, of past time. . . . [Then it] has now reached a stage . . . where it is not dead . . . but so much alive as to be quite unprintable. The best letters of our time are precisely those that can never be published. (CE 2: 262)

Individualized, rushed writing was more personal, more expressive of emotion, more alive than the self conscious letters of the past. What was printable was public, less personal, less emotional. Facilitated by the fountain pen, modern handwriting and modern letter writing were closer to life. Of course, this concession in favor of fountain pens was confined to private letter writing. Woolf, the professional writer, would require stronger motives to abandon her dipping nib.

In a 1929 diary entry, Woolf confessed general disillusionment with her pen's ability to perform under pressure of a publishing deadline for an article on Proust:

This is written, as many pages in the past used to be written, to try a new pen; for I am vacillating -- cant be sure to stick to the old pen any more. And then every gold pen has some fatal drawback. Never have I met one without. And then one cant be sure till one's written a long screed. And then one's ashamed to go back - - & then one does -- & then it begins again. (D 3: 228)

"Gold pen" was a widely accepted term for a gold nib tipped with iridium for hardness. These were used in dipping pens during the latter half of the nineteenth century, and Woolf's complaints about their drawbacks may have been well founded (Nickell 12). At any rate, as the pressures of a
professional career became greater, so too did Woolf's dissatisfaction with pens. While frustrated with work on her biography of Roger Fry, she wrote, "My pens diseased, even the new box; my eyes ache with Roger" (D 5: 138). Beginning with the next paragraph, she blamed her pen for an unrecoverable lost thought: "What was I going to say with this defective nib?" (D 5: 138). Ultimately, in 1939, nearing the end of her career, Woolf expressed a desire to do without pens entirely. After writing several long paragraphs in her diary, she noted:

Here I change pens. . . . my brains cold, yes, very like Janice's cheap car, which won't start. One should have a piece of porous paper to press on the brain when its hot, instead of chafing it to work, as I do now. (D 5: 259)

And several days later, Woolf openly blamed her pen for retarding intellectual activity, explaining, "Many many deep thought have visited me. And fled. The pen puts salt on their tails; they see the shadow & fly" (D 5: 324). We cannot know whether or not Woolf recalled her earlier position on the appropriateness of dipping pens to convey "nobler & profounder thoughts" or her even earlier associations of pens with the pleasures and simplicity of childhood. But what is evident in her remarks is that the pressures of writing, of life itself, were becoming too much for her. In her diaries, Woolf's final use of her metaphor of the pen was implied by the lack of closure in her last entry, written on March 24, 1941, just three days
before she resorted to suicide. Her "L is doing the rhododendrons. . . ." hauntingly suggests a pause to replenish the nib of her pen, a moment of reflection in which she decided that what she had to say next was not worth the ink, a final resting of her pen upon the open page.

In the novels of Virginia Woolf, we find numerous references to writing instruments and writers with pens in hand, far too many to mention them all here. However, a few selected examples demonstrate how deeply the images of pens had infiltrated her thoughts and how creatively she could draw upon them when needed. For instance, in the opening chapter of Night and Day, Woolf's second novel, Katherine Hilbery guides Mr. Denham around the room where her grandfather, the renowned poet Richard Alardyce, had created all of his works: "'This is his writing-table. He used this pen,' and she lifted a quill pen and laid it down again. The writing-table was splashed with old ink, and the pen dishevelled in service" (13). Within the Hilbery household, Alardyce's well-used writing paraphernalia stands in silent condemnation of Katherine's love of mathematics and her relief at moments when she "was rid of the pretence of paper and pen, phrase making and biography" (40). Likewise, the poet's pen contributes to the irony when Mrs. Hilbery becomes frustrated in her attempts to
write the biography of her literary father after sitting at her desk for no more than ten minutes. At such times, she would set down her own pen, and walk around the room "with a duster in her hand, with which she stopped to polish the backs of already lustrous books" (36).

In *Jacob's Room*, Woolf constructed writing scenes as a device for character development. For instance, Florinda's personality becomes evident as the narrator describes her letter writing:

> The impediment between Florinda and her pen was impassable. Fancy a butterfly, gnat, or other winged insect, attached to a twig which, clogged with mud, it rolls across a page. Her spelling was adominable. . . . Then there were the crosses--tear stains; and the hand itself rambling and redeemed only by the fact . . . that she cared. (94)

Contrasting with the unskilled but caring Florinda and her mud clogged pen is the "feminist," Miss Julia Hedge as she waits for books in the British Museum: "Unfortunate Julia! wetting her pen in bitterness. . . . Death and gall and bitter dust were on her pen-tip" (106). The central image in *To the Lighthouse* undoubtly is Lily Briscoe's painting; however, as in *Jacob's Room*, isolated references to writing paraphernalia are scattered throughout the novel. Such a reference facilitates a simile that describes both the nature of Mrs. Ramsay's mental ruminations and the narrator's difficulties in relating them to readers: "To follow her thought was like following a voice which speaks too quickly to be taken down by one's pencil" (40).
Another simile based upon writing occurs when the narrator describes the manner in which Mr. Ramsay pushed aside, "as if they were scraps of paper on which one scribbles notes in the rush of reading" (66), thoughts of his family in favor of "speculation suggested by an article in The Times" (67).

As Woolf's career progressed, her use of the metaphors of the pen became more essential to the themes of her novels. Orlando is Woolf's extended fictionalized treatment of the writing process, and as would be expected, writing paraphernalia can be found at the turn of every page. This novel will be discussed at length in the fifth chapter of the present study. In The Waves, Woolf's intention was to depict her character's interior lives. To differentiate each individual consciousness from the others, she allowed the characters to describe in their own words both their personal reading and writing experiences (an interior perspective) and the actions of other characters engaged in the same activities (an exterior view of literacy). Although in these descriptions, the primary emphasis is on the physical properties of spoken and written language, to be discussed in my fourth chapter, occasionally a character includes mention of pen and ink. For instance, Louis describes his classmates' nervousness before a writing task as "Now they suck their pens. Now they twist their copy-books" (20). Rhoda, also in the
classroom, notes with dread that "there are desks with wells for the ink. We shall write our exercises in ink here. But here I am nobody. I have no face" (33).

Significantly, most references to pens and ink in The Waves come from Bernard, the character who strives for a writing career. To Bernard, the inkwell holds promise: "I fill my mind . . . as one fills a fountain-pen in an inkpot. I have a steady unquenchable thirst" (68). He again refers to the inkwell as a way of describing the adult Louis' tendency to "add up" life's experiences into some grand total: "And one day taking a fine pen and dipping it in red ink, the addition will be complete, our total will be known" (82). Remembering his going off to school as a young boy, Bernard turns his mother's sewing needle into an instrument that both produces words and cuts the maternal-child bond: "Our mothers for some nights previously had stitched our initials in or boxes. A second severance from the body of our mother" (125). Thus the mother's needle/pen/surgical knife points reflects a central theme of The Waves: the developing personalities of the characters as readers and writers of language.

In Between the Acts, completed just prior to Woolf's death and published posthumously, her metaphor of the pen appears once again in fiction. It occurs when, at tea, Mrs. Manresa admits to a lack of literary skill, which she
expresses in terms of her inability to maneuver a writing instrument:

"I can't put two words together. I don't know how it is--such a chatterbox as I am with my tongue, once I hold a pen--" She made a face, screwed her fingers as if she held a pen in them. But the pen she held thus on the little table absolutely refused to move. (61)

Understood exclusively within the context of the novel, Mrs. Manresa's problems with written words and her confusion of literary skill with manual dexterity seem far removed from the author's own experiences. Although Mrs. Manresa, a forty-five year old "wild child of nature" (44), may claim to "have her Shakespeare by heart" (54), she in fact does not and shows only cursory interest in reading or writing. She prefers instead "to relax and curl in a corner with a cushion, a picture paper, and a bag of sweets" (66). Unlike Woolf, she is a complete outsider to experiences of professional writers and their craft. However, if we cross read Mrs. Manresa's comments with passages from Woolf's other writings, the words take on a decidedly ironic and self-critical tone.

The setting of Between the Acts is contemporaneous with Woolf's own lifetime; both she and Mrs. Manresa were children born in the age of the quill. The sensory and emotional experiences inherent in the use of dipping pens and the associations to which they would give rise were common to professional authors and less skilled, occasional writers like Mrs. Manresa. But, seeing with the eyes of
aesthetic maturity and a lifetime of experiences with her pen, the author of *Between the Acts* was able to look back across the years and smile at her own reflections on the creative process and the metaphoric language she had employed to express them. In a novel that explicitly explores the connections between life and art, she could invite her own readers to discover surprising similarities between the thinking of a rather comical character who cannot make a pen move and the experiences of the author who created her.

Through her metaphors of the pen, Woolf discovered the language she required to describe her own creative acts, the ones that produced art and the ones that failed. Assembling her writing paraphernalia signified the onset of intellectual activity as well as the physical act of handwriting. Affixing a new nib in a pen signalled either a shift from one writing task to another or a change in attitude about an ongoing one. Even the selection of a pen bore significance. At first Woolf's choice of a dipping pen was prompted by its associations with childhood. Afterwards, she remained loyal to her pen and ink pot because these tools suited her theories about the nature of the creative process itself. When her task was to produce "nobler & profounder thoughts," the pauses to dip her nib into ink allowed necessary moments of reflection. When "scribbling" to discover ideas and associations "hidden"
under the surface of consciousness and to gain access to the poetic function of her language, the messiness of ink provided the necessary sensory stimulus.

By the time Woolf came to write Between the Acts, she had achieved a level of objectivity from which she could turn a critical eye upon her own pen metaphors. It seems reasonable to believe that for the first time, she could have seen with clarity the connection between her writing tool and creative thought. Authors, pens, and writing activities: all are found within the same physical and temporal space, the scene of writing. Creative thought is itself entwined in a segment of human life, a set of human experiences crammed with physical activity and sensory stimulus. Woolf's pen, the center of all her authorial experiences, provided the concrete link between the idea of art and its fruition. All this Woolf would have intuitively understood had she been in the room to hear Mrs. Manresa's complaints about a pen that would not move. The "wild child of nature" would need not elaborate upon her figure of speech. Woolf, the mature author and critic who had searched her entire life for a connection between life and art, would have smiled knowingly at her character. Borrowing from one of her own diary entries, she would have replied, "Writing is an agony.... Yet we [authors] live by it. We attach ourselves to the breath of life by our pens" (D 2: 135).
Notes

1 In addition to pens and ink, Woolf frequently mentioned desks, pencils, blotting pads, special writer's cuffs, and typewriters. Although she would have numbered these items in her "thousand appliances," discussion of them is outside the scope of this study.

2 Panthea Reid notes the "cramped, barely legible hand" throughout this particular journal, explaining that Virginia "made her journal virtually inaccessible" as a means of insuring her much needed privacy (Art and Affection, Chapter 1).

3 Reid proposes that in girlhood, Virginia may have selected a different emblem for herself, the book, as a means of competing with Vanessa's easel and artistic talents (Art and Affection, Chapter 1).

4 Despite Woolf's appreciation of the spontaneous writing method, she nevertheless did revise the entries for January 20th-24th, all of which were written first in an improvised book and then edited and copied into her 1919 diary. However, comparison of the original version (Appendix 2, D 1: 325-27) and the one that appeared later in her diary shows that she made no changes to the passages I quote.
In 1920, Woolf recorded in her diary an insight about her own thinking: "My handwriting seems to be going to the dogs. Perhaps I confuse it with my writing" (D 2: 29).

Twenty years later, in *Between the Acts*, Mrs. Manresa, Woolf's "wild child of nature" who could not make her invisible pen move, echoes the thought. Not long after confessing that her own handwriting is "so huge -- so clumsy" (61), Mrs. Manresa commends William Dodge's literary talent in terms of calligraphic skill:

> Very delicately William Dodge set down the cup in its saucer. "Now he," said Mrs. Manresa, as if referring to the delicacy with which he did this, and imputing to him the same skill in writing, "writes beautifully. Every letter is perfectly formed." (61)

Clearly Woolf intended that we laugh at Mrs. Manresa, who consistently demonstrates her shortcomings in literary matters. But, despite her comic portrayal of her character's confusion, Woolf herself did not take lightly the calligraphic features of written language. Instead, she considered the graphic images of words to be the author's medium and most important "appliance."

Unlike Mrs. Manresa, Woolf did not so much "confuse" the various meanings of the word "writing" as explore and compare them. In her personal and professional writings, she documented her constant awareness of the materiality,
the "madeness," of written language. Stated simply, she regarded written language - texts handwritten or typed in manuscripts, inscribed or engraved on various surfaces, and printed in books - as objects made by human hands and existing within the physical world. Woolf's writings attest to her belief that words themselves provide a sensory experience which unites writer, text, and reader within a world of things.

2

Woolf approached her art via her physical senses, always questioning the exact nature of her medium and how it compared to media in the other arts. Before she became Mrs. Leonard Woolf and then a publicly acknowledged novelist, such comparisons suggested to Virginia Stephen merely the limitations of words. Often frustrated with her own skills, the young writer decided that her task would have been much easier had she chosen a different art form:¹

We are a world of imitations[,] all the Arts that is to say imitate as far as they can one great truth that all can see. Such is the eternal instinct in the human breast, to try & reproduce something of that majesty in paint marble or ink. Somehow ink tonight seems to me the least effectual method of all -- & music the nearest to truth. (PA 143)

Elsewhere she specifically compared her linguistic medium with that of musical sound, again finding the latter superior: "Our sensations were so exquisite, so jubilant that music alone could keep pace with them or express a
tenth part of their vividness." (PA 136). Although
Virginia's journal entry ends abruptly in mid-page with the
fragment "Black marks on. . .," the next word most
assuredly would have been "paper." She left blank the page
following her broken sentence, perhaps as further
demonstration of the failure of written language to express
her experiences. But whether or not Virginia was aware of
the effect, the absence of "black marks" itself functioned
expressively. Just as silence is an essential element in
music, so too Virginia's one and a half pages of linguistic
silence precisely underscored the criticism of her medium
and served as an ironic metatext on the inadequacy of
words. The unmarked pages were a linguistic equivalent to
a musical composer's disturbing, hanging, unfinished
melody. In creating a musical score, composers often take
creative advantage of the listener's anticipation of a
sequence of sounds; in creating a literary text, the writer
can take a similar advantage of the reader's anticipation
of a sequence of images (visually depicting a specific word
or a completed sentence, paragraph, or text). Both media
depend heavily upon linear logic, tradition, and
convention. Thus, even if only subconsciously, Virginia
demonstrated a parallel between the musical and literary
arts.

Virginia likewise compared her medium to stones
chiselled by sculptors or assembled according to the
designs of architects. During her 1906 visit to Greece, she rejected what had been written in guidebooks for tourists and instead attempted to "read" the ruins of Ancient Greece as material signs from the past. Her comments about the statues at the city of Olympia are typical:

Baedecker [sic] will count the statues; a dozen archaeologists will arrange them in a dozen different ways; but the final work must be done by each fresh mind that sees them. . . . There is the Apollo. He looks over his shoulder -- seems to look across & above the centuries. . . . And there are other noble fragments, somewhat broadly chiselled, because they stood on a height; the hair is a smooth band of stone; the drapery graved in rigid lines. Ah but the beauty. (PA 319)

The statues and architectural ruins prompted Virginia to think of words as if they too were solid objects, as in this entry, where she attempted to describe "the Hermes" (statue of Hermes of Praxiteles):

So we pile words; but it is a pretence. You must see him [the statue], & let the eye spring like a creature set free along those curves & hollows: if it has secretly craved such beauty! You dont know, till you satisfy it, how much it has craved. And the stone - if you call it stone - seems also acquiescent to the sculptors hand; it is almost liquid, the color of alabaster, & of the solidity of marble. There is a beautiful polished foot which you may stroke with your own soft flesh. (PA 319)

But, if Virginia thought that words were similar to stones, then she also doubted the skill of her hands to "pile" them creatively. In the same travel journal she complained, "I cannot lay my hands on any words but those that come upper
most tonight . . . ill fitting adjectives" (PA 320).

Compared with a "smooth band" or the "rigid lines" of stone, written language seemed inadequate in the young writer's estimation. However, she was not entirely discouraged because in the stones of Greece, she recognized qualities she hoped one day to discover in her own medium: malleability, solidity, and an ability to provide for the observer a tactical experience, art that "you may stroke with your own soft flesh."

Perhaps because her sister Vanessa showed an early talent for painting and drawing, the pictorial arts were particularly interesting to Virginia as a point of comparison. Frequently, remarks about writing in her diary included the mention of paint, as if the two media were one and the same:

A sunset of extraordinary magnificence of light so unapproachable by pen or paint. . . . No one -- save a poet -- can express in words or paint the human significance & pathos of the suns unclouded ring of light. (PA 155)

And by 1903, she was overtly using the language of the pictorial arts to describe her own methods:

I have sketched faint outlines with a pencil. But the only use of this book [her journal] is that it shall serve for a sketch book; as an artist fills his pages with scraps & fragments, studies . . . useful to him no doubt, but of no meaning to anyone else -- so I take up my pen & trace here whatever shapes I happen to have in my head. It is an exercise -- training for eye & hand -- roughness if it results from an honest desire to put down the truth with whatever materials one has to hand. (PA 186-87)
For Virginia, the writer, the "materials one has to hand" were words that could be applied like paint from a brush.

Virginia found the closest connection between the literary and pictorial arts to be the similar graphic natures of the two media; with either medium, the artist must produce marks on a surface. But to shore up the connection in her own mind, she had to distinguished sharply between language that can be heard (speech) and language that can be seen (written words). The distinction seems to have been an early one. For instance, in her 1899 Warboys Journal, she emphasized the differences while recording her appreciation of a orthographical joke:

This line ends a verse of a tombstone here ---
 'He sleeps & all his well --'
The H. partly obliterated by some more lettered clerk or stonemason. (PA 141)

Obviously, the original stonemason had relied upon the sound of speech, in which the phonetic difference between "all's well" and "all his well" is minimal. However, once transcribed into written language, the variation was unmistakable to the literate eye. Particularly because the words were cut into stone and not easily changed, the mistake could be only "partly obliterated," to the overall effect that the amended verse invited passersby to speculate on the material differences between speech and written language.

As an aspiring young writer, Virginia was not satisfied to have discovered a connection between her
medium and the visual arts. She likewise sought the exact point of departure between them. One important line of inquiry was her speculations about the possibility that nonalphabetic marks could serve a signifying function similar to written language. For instance, she predicted that she could divine meaning from the ink marks and scratches left in the room where she had spent her childhood in the family home in Hyde Park Gate:

I went over to [22] Hyde Park Gate -- for the first time since last Easter -- & Saw all the empty rooms, & was glad to find that now the furniture & books are gone; they are not painfully like home. Saw my old room -- so strange with ink splashes & shelves as of old. I could write the history of every mark & scratch in that room, where I lived so long. (PA 230)

The ink splashes in Virginia's old room initially may have resulted from her writing activities, and she planned to reconstruct their "history" in writing, but at no time were they themselves recognizable as alphabet forms. Nevertheless, for her, the designs stimulated free association of ideas and evoked memories and emotions of her childhood experiences. Ironically, had Virginia followed through with her plan to interpret the ink marks, her associations would have led her directly back to experiences with written words created with her own pen and ink. She would have found in the nonalphabetic marks the concept "Virginia's pen draws words," and her history in writing also would have been a history of writing.
Virginia was in the habit of examining carefully the graphic images made by her own pen. Frequently in her early diaries, she referred to her writing as making "some mark on paper" (PA 135). When noting the brevity and spontaneity of her one of her diary entries, she described the composition in terms of its visible qualities: "tho' my mark must be frail & somewhat disjointed" (PA 135). Well into her teenage years, Virginia was still practicing her penmanship. For example, she used available blank spaces in her Warboys Journal for this purpose, and during one of her practice sessions, revealed a motive for her efforts:

This book has now got to be a kind of testing ground, where I come to try my new pens. I have made the most heroic resolution to change my ideas of calligraphy in conformance with those of my family, which are more generally accepted by the world as the correct one.

[Ink squiggle]

dear but somewhat too romantic pen
This is written with my dear, but somewhat too romantic pen. (PA 416)

The numerous repeated words attested to Virginia's determination to force her medium into conformity. Significantly, she expressed willingness to suppress her original "ideas of calligraphy" only in order to be "accepted by the world." That she found the decision to change "heroic" and her pen "dear" revealed a degree of affection for her personal (and perhaps what she considered more creative) style in penmanship. Immediately after having formed the letters of the words "correct ones," she
broke with her resolution long enough to produce a nonlinguistic ink mark, a squiggle. Then, staring at her mark, she recovered her resolution and conceded that her "dear" pen may indeed have been "too romantic." However, as evidenced by Virginia's well placed "somewhat," which undercut the concession, her ambivalence about originality and conformity was not entirely resolved.

Virginia realized that because it was more permanent than speech, written language was more exposed to scrutiny as well. At times, she herself became the critic. While visiting "a cottage on a Yorkshire moor" in 1906, she discovered what she considered an inappropriate use of written language:

The crudity of these young people may be gauged by the fact that they write their creed, in red ink on a strip of brown paper over the hearth. It is a quotation I am told from William Morris. . . . All wrong -- all wrong, I cry with emphatic but ambiguous voice; because I cant say exactly where the confusion arises, or what it is that makes the combination of literature & life, drawing room & kitchen so disastrous. (PA 304-05)

Although she was at a loss to explain immediately the significance, Virginia was nevertheless strongly moved by her confrontation with so obvious an illustration that "literature" was itself a physical presence in life, an object which, in the case of "these young people," could be misused with "disastrous" results. However, more than 30 years later, Woolf would recall in "A Sketch of the Past" a similar word object that once hung in her childhood home at
22 Hyde Park Gate, and her description of it may explain her extreme reaction to the saying in the Yorkshire cottage:

I also remember nailed over the fire place a long strip of chocolate coloured cardboard on which was written; "What is to be a gentleman?" It is to be tender to women, chivalrous to servants . . . '—what else I cannot remember; though I used to know it by heart. What innocence, what incredible simplicity of mind it showed—to keep this cardboard quotation . . . perpetually displayed, as if it were a frontispiece to a book—nailed to the wall in the hall of the house. (MOB 117)

And, if the effects of mixing "literature & life" could be so disturbing in the privacy of a drawing room, kitchen, or hallway, they could be even more so when books come within view of the public's eye. As will be explained in the next chapter, the notion of private versus public texts took on monumental importance in Woolf's mature critical theories.

Of all the factors reinforcing Virginia's notion that words are physical objects, her experience with books must have been the strongest. A true bibliophile, she relished the sensory stimulus of words printed and bound in books, whose first appeal was to her eye:

It was the prose writers I loved first & most wildly. . . . I became enraptured, though not exactly interested, but the sight of the large yellow page entranced me. I used to read it & dream of those obscure adventurers, & no doubt practiced their style in my copy books. (D 3: 271)
The adult Woolf would refer to her own desire for "some good book" as "my insatiable appetite for reading" (D 5: 132) and as "the old hunger for books . . . the childish passion" (D 5: 336). However, hers was never a simple desire for reading material. Rather, it was equally as much a need for the physical presence of books and the visual and tactical enjoyment they provided. Reading a book could interest her intellectually (although not "the prose writers" and "not exactly"), but it was only via the sensory stimulus of looking at a page that she "became enraptured" and fell "wildly" in love.

At age 15, Virginia reported in her diary that she was "reading four books at once" (PA 22). On the following day, she received as a birthday gift from her father a 10 volume edition of J. C. Lockhart's *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott*, 1839. She described the gift in her diary:

His present for me cam -- Ls Life of Scott -- in a great brown paper parcell -- I expected one huge closely printed book, but instead behold 10 beautiful little blue and brown gilt leathed backs, big print, and altogether luxurious. The nicest present I have had yet. (PA 22)

Virginia declared her father's gift to be the "nicest present" on the basis of its appearance only. From then on, she always referred to the work as "my beautiful Lockhart" (PA 25), "which grows more and more beautiful every day" (PA 25).
Virginia regarded books as a necessity of life; thus she was concerned about their practicality and durability as physical objects. While preparing for her 1905 trip to Portugal and Spain, she went in search of books that were a convenient size for travel: "Then to Bumpuses [booksellers] where I found some really nice little books fit for the pocket, and yet good to read" (PA 255). And, before leaving for Italy in 1908, she assessed the physical properties of the reading material she planned to carry along with her, discovering both positive and negative features:

One little flat case holds all my travelling library. But happily you get the classics now, pressed & light, with decent print, though it lies thinly upon the page, & the paper shines, with only faint laden gloss if you get it in the light. (PA 386)

Virginia obviously appreciated the convenience of the editions she packed. However, she was just as obviously disappointed about the thinness and glossiness of the paper, which would detract from the ease of reading. She could look forward to enjoying the content of her "classics," but as a trade-off, she must forfeit the sensual pleasure of smoothly gliding her eyes across the pages of luxurious editions.

Virginia's awareness of the "madeness" of books further developed as she created them with own hands. From an early age, she was skilled in the craft of book binding, which reinforced her attention to books as language
artifacts. Although she did not begin taking lessons in book binding until 1901 (Willis 5), she even before then attempted to enhance the beauty or reinforce the stability of the texts she treasured. For instance, when she purchased a "1s. paper edition" of Honore de Balzac's *Engenie Grandet*, she immediately set about making physical improvements:

The cover got so torn in my coat pocket that I decided to bind it before reading it: so I cut it up, & sewed it strongly, & gave it a good blue paper cover, & put it in the Press & it is now a nice looking & strongly bound book. (PA 222)

Regarded in isolation, Virginia's binding of *Engenie Grandet* would seem to have been motivated only by a wish to keep it from falling apart before she had finished reading it. However, her concerns about the durability of books continued and eventually led her to make an association between recovering (putting a new cover on) a book and recovering (improving) its literary worth. The association first took hold while Virginia was writing her 1899 *Warboys Journal*.

In September 1899, "a sudden idea struck" Virginia, the notion that the pages of her *Warboys Journal* should be "embedded . . . in the leaves of some worthy & ancient work" because her writing "heretofore was contained in one modest paper book, that fronted the world in a state of nature -- naked but not ashamed" (159). Wishing to bestow upon her diary "the dignity of a binding, being ancient
tooled calf -- the tooling resplendent today as a hundred years ago" (159), she visited a second hand book shop near the Warboys Rectory where she was then vacationing. Virginia recorded in her diary the details of her excursion, especially her disappointment at finding merely, "The modest libraries of country parsonages . . . & chance outcasts of country gentlemens bookshelves are all bound rudely together like so many bales of wool, & stacked upon each other in dusty corners" (159). She speculated that had she been in London, the merchandize would have been more appealing to her senses and her choices more promising:

A London Bookseller tries to redeem his eternal sermons in calf clothing all mildewed & ink stained by a few modern flashy novels.

A country book stall I find rakes in this class of work [deteriorating] alone; . . . an old volume of Cowpers poems, all bescrawled & underlined . . . several remnants of family bibles - the title pages torn away from the discretion of a public book shop - &c&c&c. At last I gave up glancing at the title page & confined myself wholly to the outward aspect of the book. (PA 159)

Despite the bookstore's limited selection, Virginia eventually bought a copy of "LOGICK: OR THE Right Use of REASON etc.," by Isaac Watts, D.D., because of "its size, which fitted my paper - & 2ndly because its back had a certain air of distinction among its brethern" (PA 160). According to Leaska, Virginia then pasted the sheets of her Warboys Journal over Watts' text, thereby giving her own text in a "handsome leather binding" (PA 160 n8). Thus, by
enhancing her text's appearance, by making it outwardly resemble published books, she imagined that she had likewise enhanced both its durability and its literary worth. Of course, she apparently had no qualms about destroying the textual integrity of Watts' book.

By distinguishing between spoken and written language and by comparing her medium to others, Virginia came closer to defining the materials of her own craft. Of the two types of language, hers was the more tangible, more permanent, graphic form. And of the various types of artistic media, hers was the only one that served a lexical function. Specifically, she maintained that the literary medium is composed of the physical shapes of the alphabet and a supplemental set of conventionally defined marks of punctuation and other paralinguistic devices, which authors attempt to transform (not always successfully) into lexical signs by assembling them into words, sentences, and paragraphs in manuscripts or printed books. She acknowledged the limitations of her medium, its dependence upon lexical meaning and reading conventions. But she very much hoped to achieve with it the admirable qualities of the nonlexical mark, which as stimulus to the senses opened the reader's mind onto the teeming experiences of life.

On her voyage into a literary career, Virginia brought along a sensitive awareness of the material properties of
her medium and a curiosity about how these properties functioned in conjunction with the lexical aspects of written words. Rather than dismiss her awareness and questions as childish, the adult Virginia Stephen Woolf allowed them to flourish, for hers was an environment in which she encountered word objects at every turn. Gradually, the ideas she had been nurturing became theories about written language, theories that often found their way into her published works.

The comments Virginia made in 1905 about "reading" marks in the Hyde Park Gate nursery bear noteworthy similarities to "The Mark on the Wall," published twelve years later as her contribution to *Publication No. I: Two Stories*, the first title produced on the Woolf's Hogarth Press. In the short story, narrated in the first person, an unnamed woman sits pondering a spot she has noticed on the wall in her home. The spot, which she refers to as an "object," is "a small round mark, black upon the white wall," its appearance resembling black ink on a white page (although the woman seems not to notice the resemblance). The woman becomes so engaged with the spot that she forgets about the book she was reading under "a steady film of yellow light upon the page" (HH 37). Without moving closer to it, she wonders about the nature of the mark, imagining first that it is a nail hole and then that it is a small rose leaf. Because she cannot attach a name to the mark,
it at once signifies nothing and everything. So long as she is unsure as to the exact nature of the mark, the woman's imaginings about "A lady with white powdered curls" (HH 37) can lead her to "humanity" (HH 38), which suggests the "after life" (HH 39), "Shakespeare" (HH 40), and even tablecloths, Sunday Luncheons, and country houses (HH 41). Unlike linguistic signs that guide the reader's mind along a lexical pathway of meaning, the unidentified mark functions as a visual stimulus facilitating free association of ideas. The distinction between the two types of marks is made even more obvious at the end of the story, when immediately upon learning from her husband that the mark on the wall is a snail, the woman no longer is able to engage in free association. Once named, the mark channels the woman's thoughts in one direction only: "Ah, the mark on the wall! It was a snail" (HH 46). Pointedly "snail" is the final word in the story. And, once the woman can read the mark as "snail," there is nothing more, nothing less to say.

"The Mark on the Wall" can be understood as an allegorical examination of literacy and Woolf's prescription for her own writing. Having just looked up from her book to discover the mark, the woman in the story expresses relief and release from what she considers the constraints of written language:

I want to think quietly, calmly, spaciously, never to be interrupted, never to have to rise
from my chair, to slip easily from one thing to another, without any sense of hostility, or obstacle. I want to sink deeper and deeper, away from the surface, with its hard separate facts. To steady myself, let me catch hold of the first idea that passes. (HH 41)

The idea that occurs to her is "Shakespeare," but she quickly dismisses it, exclaiming, "But how dull this is, this historical fiction! It doesn't interest me at all" (HH 40). What most concerns the woman about the type of written language she finds in books is that it limits possibilities and thus cannot reflect the "the mystery of life; the inaccuracy of thought!" (HH 38). Books depict characters merely as "that shell of a person which is seen by other people -- what an airless, shallow, bald, prominent world it becomes! A world not to be lived in" (HH 41). The "reality" of written signs, signifying "hard facts" and generalizations and rules, has about it a "military" quality that troubles the woman. And clearly, it troubled Woolf as well.

Like the woman in the story, Woolf appreciated the physical presence of written signs. Gazing at the mark, the woman is reassured:

Indeed, now that I have fixed my eyes upon it [the mark], I feel that I have grasped a plank in the sea; I feel a satisfying sense of reality .. . solidity . . . the impersonal world which is a proof of some existence other than ourselves. (HH 44-45)

Woolf recognized along with her character a problem with written language, in that writers and readers all too
frequently lack awareness of its materiality. They overlook the solidity of writing as an object in the physical world, instead incorrectly imagining that "reality" resides within its semantic content. In the books of "our learned men [who are merely] the descendants of witches and hermits who couch in caves and in woods . . . writing down the language of the stars" (HH 43), readers hope to discover knowledge itself. "Knowledge?" the woman asks, "Matter for further speculation? . . . And what is knowledge?" (HH 43). Nevertheless, she imagines hopefully that "the novelists in the future will realize more and more" that "there is not one reflection [of life] but an almost infinite number" (HH 41). In "Mark on the Wall," Woolf did not reject written signs, which, after all, were the medium of her chosen art form. Rather, she objected to the manner in which they had been traditionally used. The story shows that Woolf was still entertaining the notion that nonlinguistic marks could stimulate thought. However, her personal aspirations were to remain well within the confines of the linguistic sign.

In searching for a more expressive use of written language, Woolf considered how the visible properties of words and paralinguistic marks could be manipulated so as to enhance their signifying capabilities. She studied the effects of subtle variations in written signs, their size, shape, color, arrangement, and the surfaces on which they
were inscribed. She often expressed the idea that the appearance of words could parallel their meaning, as when she recorded in her diary that "I lay in the shallow light," adding, "which should be written dark, I think" (D 2: 31). Dark, heavy script likewise seemed appropriate for Woolf's "business like" correspondences concerning numerous domestic problems: "Letters upon letters have been written in that bold hand & business like style unnatural to me" (D 1: 239). Woolf's privately distributed mock biography of Violet Dickinson, "Friendships Galley" is a dramatic example of her belief that appearance of the text can emphasize content. In preparing Dickinson's presentation copy of the biography, Woolf typed the manuscript with a violet typewriter ribbon and bound it in violet leather covers. Also, the size and hue of letters signified for her something of the importance of the content. "Here I should write large & bright about the SPRING" (D 2: 21), she wrote on a March day in 1920.

Frequently in her diary writing, Woolf explored her emotional life, and when the subject became too intense, one of her tactics was to abandon the alphabet entirely. For instance, instead of describing a period of emotional fluctuations in words, she drew them as ups and downs on a line diagram (D 5: 56). And on May 4, 1937, she slipped in a mathematical computation exactly at the point where she marked the day as the anniversary of her mother's death:
"The day mother died in 1895 -- that \( \frac{37}{42} \) years ago: & I remember it --" (D 5: 89). Apparently, lines and numbers were easier for Woolf to manage than were lexical signs, perhaps because diagrams and computations could objectify emotions without the necessary searching for exact shades of meaning.

When Woolf was not considering how she might incorporate visual effects within her own texts, she was responding to them as a reader. As always, she asserted that "nothing gives back more for one's money than a beautiful book" (D 1: 126). However, she had learned that sometimes looks could be deceiving, as when Leonard purchased a vellum, 1677 edition of "[Hugo] Grotius at a bookshop which promised better than it produced" (D 1: 167). Woolf's visual awareness had become acute, and she attempted to read "print as if through a magnifying glass" (D 1: 278). Such intense concentration was not always possible, given the pressures of the Woolf's busy life, but when she retreated to Asheham, reading became an intense sensual experience:

> I read books there [Asheham]; so divine it is, coming in from a walk to have tea by the fire & then read & read -- say Othello -- say anything. It doesn't seem to matter what. But one's faculties are so oddly clarified that the page detaches itself in its true meaning & lies as if illumined, before one's eyes; seen whole & truly not in jerks & spasms as so often in London. (D 1: 94-95)
Significantly, Woolf described the "true meaning" elicited from "divine" reading as a visual image on a page, and her word "illumined" suggested a close resemblance to an illuminated manuscript page decorated with color, gold leaf, and elaborate lettering.

Woolf's visual awareness included attention to every aspect of the printed page. In 1921, when she cancelled a subscription to the *Daily News* in favor of the *Morning Post*, her complaint was that the *Daily News* had failed to cover news events adequately and eloquently. The evidence, she argued, was there on the page for all to see:

> The proportions of the world at once become utterly different. The M.P. has the largest letters & the double column devoted to the murder of Mrs. Lindsay; . . . But the D.N. has become a vivacious scrapbag. News is cut up into agreeable scraps, & and written in words of one syllable. (D 2: 127-28)

In 1938, she made a similar "reading" of graphics, only on this occasion the news was about the publishing of her own *Three Guineas*: "Coming out day of 3 gs . . . the Lit Sup has 2 columns & a leader; & the Referee a great black Bar" (D 5: 147-48). The "bar" to which Woolf referred was a banner headline reading "WOMAN STARTS NEW SEX-WAR/Says Men's Clothes are 'Barbarous'" (D 5: 148 n1). Obviously Woolf regarded the size and blackness of the headlines as flattering testimony for *Three Guineas* and a sign of her own professional status within the literate community. Of course, she must have felt herself out-headlined when she
noted in her diary on September 16, 1938 that "Peace was written large on the Evening Standard placard yesterday in London" (D 5: 170).

Just as she had described her own girlhood writing style as "frail marks," Woolf frequently employed language flavored with visual imagery in her criticism. For instance, in a description of T.S. Eliot, she associated the writer's physical appearance with his writing style: "His eyes are lively & youthful when the cast of his face & the shape of his sentences is formal & even heavy" (D 2: 67). Referring to Henry James' The Golden Bowl, she described the text as "very closely packed with words -- 550 pages of small print. Henry James print too" (PA 52), by which she obviously had in mind the density of his prose. Certainly, that is what she meant when, after completing The Years, her wordiest novel, Woolf declared "No more long, closely written books" (D 5: 105).

Woolf's aversion for "closely written books" corresponded with her rebellion against the syntax of Victorian prose. She attributed a significant portion of fault with syntax to the abuse of the semicolon, exclusively a device of written language. In her diary, she summarized Lytton Strachey's criticism of his own conventional style:

He was disgusted by his own stereotype ways: his two semi colons: his method of understatement; & his extreme definiteness. Without agreeing, I conveyed my sense of his dangers, & urged him to
write . . . anything to break the mould of the early Victorians. (D 1: 277)

With his two semicolons, Strachey imitated the Victorians in their habit of stringing together clauses, which restricted ideas within a compact, rigid, linear progression of linguistic signs. Woolf elaborated on Strachey's Victorian style on another occasion:

[Strachey has a] metallic & conventionally brilliant style which prevents his writing from reaching, to my judgement, the first rate. . . . When I think of a Strachey, I think of someone infinitely cautious, elusive & unadventurous. To the common stock of our set they have added phrases, standards, & witticisms, but never any new departure; never an omega, a Post Impressionist movement, nor even a country cottage, a Brunswick Square or a printing press. (D 1: 236)

However, Woolf was not always successful in avoiding semicolons, as is evident in the passage quoted above. Nevertheless, she could report with satisfaction that while criticizing his own style, Strachey had called her "the inventor of a new prose style, & the creator of a new version of the sentence" (D 1: 277).

Woolf's mention of "an omega" and "a Post Impressionist movement" was acknowledgment of art critic Roger Fry's influence on her own theorizing about "a new departure" in literature. Fry, who introduced London to the Post-Impressionist painters and involved the English art community in his Omega Workshops, greatly challenged Woolf's aesthetics. Panthea Reid [Broughton] summarizes Fry's criticism of Woolf's thinking:
What Fry seems to have told her, in 1911 and thereafter, was that her notion of "faithfulness" to nature denied the value of the work of art itself because it valorized the art work only in terms of its fidelity to a world outside itself. (Gillespie, *Multiple Muses* 40)

In response to his harsh criticism of representational art, Woolf over time revised her techniques as a novelist, placing greatest emphasis on formal design and the least on mimesis. Fry called Woolf's attention to the madeness of art objects and encouraged her to reconsider the similarities and differences between the pictorial and literary media. Thus, she could refer to her own "plastic sense of words" (D 1: 168). She could speculate that if a painting was an object to be looked at rather than deciphered, why not a literary text as well? Could words serve some other than a lexical function? To answer these questions, Woolf must have turned her eye on the visual images created by her own pen.

Greatly reinforcing Woolf's sensitivity to the madeness of written language was the Hogarth Press. The Woolfs' first attempts at book publishing with the Hogarth Press were amateurish, and every experience could have reminded her of the physical nature of her medium. The letters and marks of punctuation that she handled while typesetting were embossed on small, individual squares of wood. In this form, they could be handled and exchanged like any other object of comparable size. They could be
borrowed: "Our [the Woolfs'] only outing after dark [was] to the printers to borrow inverted comma's" (D 1: 84). Or they could be purchased, as when Woolf visited the Carlson Foundry to buy "1/6 worth of h's (lower case)" (D 1: 141). There, she became impressed by the weight and solidity of type:

The Printer of the bank of England ordered 1,000 lbs of type to be conveyed at one in a van, the weight being beyond the capacity of a taxi. I find immense satisfaction in hearing the talk of these solid, competent business men. (D 1: 141)

Particularly noteworthy in Woolf's account of the foundry visit is how quickly her description shifted from the massive weight of type to the "talk" of "competent business men." Her thoughts progressed along a chain of associations held together by the word "solid," throughout meaning "secure" or "reliable." The "Printer" (capitalized, indicating a titled position), the "bank of England" (a trusted institution), and the "talk" (coming from men experienced in their business): all signified security and reliability. Moreover, because the setting was a foundry and because the subject of conversation was "1,000 lbs of type," the incident suggested to Woolf that language in both its forms (written and spoken) somehow had become unusually "solid," secure or reliable, a realization that provided "immense satisfaction," if only for a few moments.
In the same year that Woolf found "immense satisfaction" in both solid type and solid talk, she recorded an unpleasant mishap with letters of the alphabet:

On Wednesday Lottie spilt half a case of type on the floor, so that I had to spend 4 hours in sorting every compartment -- about the most trying work there is. She had mixed the letters in thoroughly, thinking or hoping that though divided in compartments the letters were all the same. (D 1: 143-44)

Woolf's tone in her diary entry seems annoyed, very much as she had been annoyed by the maids' tampering with her "beloved" pen. The four-hour task of sorting letters into compartments was a reversal of the writing process, in which she drew together individual letters so as to create written language, and the spilling of letters onto the floor may have reminded her that written signs were not as "solid" as they sometimes seemed. At any moment, words could be broken apart into individual letters, which meant that at any time a text could be destroyed. But, when work progressed without mishaps, Woolf found gratification in printing. She especially enjoyed typesetting, perhaps because the process somewhat resembled the writer's task. While typesetting, she fitted together individual letters and punctuation marks, albeit in upside down and inverted order, to form words and then sentences, which looked like word-blocks set into lines. She could examine the results of her labor as it emerged from the press and remark, "We took a proof of the first page of K.M.'s [Katherine
Mansfield's] story, The Prelude. It looks very nice, set solid in the new type" (D 1: 56). At such moments, it must have occurred to Woolf that at last she may have found a linguistic medium she could hold in her hands and "pile" like the stones of Greece.

Typesetting and printing suggested to Woolf that language could be made "solid," an idea that reassured and pleased her. She could think figuratively of a book as being "solid" if its content was intellectually or emotionally stimulating (as in "packed") or if its style was worthy of critical acclaim (as in "enduring"). For example, in 1915, she applied the term while evaluating the reading habits of patrons of the London Library, which she found to be "a stale culture smoked place, which I detest" (D 1: 25), coming to the conclusion that "no one, save ourselves [the Woolfs], reads solid books" (D 1: 17). Other types of books, she worried, were "so like bales of stuff upon a drapers shelves -- only with out the solid merit of good wool" (D 1: 165-166).

Woolf also could use the word "solid" to describe what she concluded to be negative characteristics of writing. In the negative sense, she habitually referred to Victorian books as "solid," the concept apparently originating in Leslie Stephen's library. Whenever she thought of books in relation to her father and his Victorian contemporaries, "solid" often meant conventional or authoritative (as in
"indestructible" or "rigid"), and overwritten or dull (as in "dense" or "heavy"). Thus, when the *Recollections* of John Morley, a friend of Woolf's father, was published in 1917, her immediate reaction to the two volume work was to describe it as "a real solid book, I think, like the books father used to buy, looking like them too, an ugly red" (D 1: 83-84). She could visit Louise Creighton, a friend of her parents and a prolific writer on historical subjects, and notice "nothing but those great [large] vellum folios, containing Italian History" (D 1: 100). Likewise, she could call a Victorian novel an "unwieldy triple decker" (D 2: 54), which meant both physically and conceptually "solid."

Woolf's two senses of the word "solid" revealed her ambivalence about the application of Post-Impressionist aesthetics in the literary arts. On the one hand, she agreed with Fry that emphasis on form could lead to artful innovations in design of the novel. On the other, she questioned total rejection of representation, which could lead to complete loss of meaning. Reid [Broughton] suggests that Woolf expressed her concerns in "Solid Objects," a short story written in 1918:

"Solid Objects" is a story with a thesis. It exposes the danger of art that 'appeals solely to the aesthetic faculties.' It facetiously shows that mere disinterested contemplation of aesthetic objects is not an effective or meaningful way to live in this world. (Gillespi, *Multiple Muses* 56)
In her story, Woolf chronicled a man's habits of contemplating objects purely for their aesthetic appeal. Beginning with a chunk of glass found on a beach, John, the central character in "Solid Objects," gradually becomes obsessed with his growing collection of objects, to the point where he ceases to function in society. His own life becomes as meaningless as the "art" on his mantel. Significantly, the story opens with a passage that can be understood allegorically as description of the reading process (HH 79). The first image is "one small black spot" standing out on the lighter background of a beach, suggestive of words written on a white page as they would appear from a distance. As the spot comes near, it begins to signify meaning: "this spot possessed four legs; and moment by moment it became more unmistakable that it was composed of the persons of two young men" (HH 79). The narrator's eye scans the approaching couple very much as it scans a page while reading, and the text explodes with life:

The mouths, noses, chins, little moustaches, tweed caps, rough boots, shooting coats, and check stockings of the two speakers became clearer and clearer; the smoke of their pipes went up into the air; nothing was so solid, so living, so hard. (HH 79)

At this point in the story, the narrative focus shifts from an overview of the "black spot" to the characters themselves.
As first seen in "Solid Objects," John is extremely communicative. He is "a man who is standing for Parliament upon the brink of a brilliant career," and the business of Parliament requires that he spend a great deal of time reading and writing: "any number of papers to keep in order -- addresses to constituents, declarations of policy, appeals for subscriptions, invitations to dinner, and so on" (HH 82). In fact, John first uses the piece of glass in service of his literacy; it becomes a paper weight. But before long, the object is calling John's attention away from his reading, becoming "a natural stopping place of the young man's eyes when they wandered from his book" (HH 82).

Drawn in by the beauty of the glass, John abandons the written signs of literacy for the "triumph" of discovering other objects. Instead of focusing on books, his eyes search the ground and pass from one to another of the objects on his mantel. Instead of moving a pen across a page, his hand holds a "long stick fitted with an adaptable hook" (HH 85) with which to prod the earth and rake in trash heaps. As the number of solid objects on John's mantel increases, their purpose becomes "more and more of an ornamental nature, since papers needing a weight to keep them down becomes scarcer and scarcer" (HH 84). In the end, John loses all communicative faculties, either verbal or written. Consequently, he loses all functioning in society as well. Words no longer signify meaning for John,
and acquaintences find him "too silent to be worth asking to dinner" (HH 85).

6

In her explorations of the signifying potential of visible language, Woolf seemed to know instinctively that there existed a boundary which she should not cross, the point at which words lose their lexical function and become merely graphic images on a page. Her hesitancy to experiment with the visual properties of language evolved from a concept that had been developing along with her habits of looking at words: not only was written language an object; it also was an object with living properties. The conceptual shift from word object to life form was a short one for Virginia when the book was a biography. A vivid example is her remarks about one of the books she owned, Mandell Creighton's *Queen Elizabeth*, 1896. Virginia thought the book "gorgeous" (PA 21); however, she soon became concerned for its future because it was too large for any of the bookshelves in the Stephens' home:

 Finished at last Queen Elizabeth -- Now the question is what shall become of her -- She is far too beautiful to lie about the nursery at the mercy of the ink pot or of Pauline, and far too big to live in any of our bookshelves. (PA 31)

Virginia personified the book, writing the name as Queen Elizabeth instead of *Queen Elizabeth*, using feminine pronouns, and suggesting that it could "live" if conditions were favorable. However, the personification is not merely
a figure of speech. In Virginia's imagination, Creighton had recovered the life of Elizabeth I, who thereafter lived once again between the covers of a book. But, as a physical object, books were vulnerable to the destructive forces of their environment, in this case the ink pot and Pauline. And, Virginia believed, so too was the queen in danger: "What shall become of her [?]" (PA 31)

Like Creighton's Queen Elizabeth, Virginia's diaries and journals were biographical books, and in them, the "life" preserved in written signs was Virginia's own: "Here is a volume of fairly acute life . . . ended locked & put away. And another & another & another yet to come. Oh dear they are very long, & I seem cowardly throughout when I look at them" (PA 134). Virginia expressed satisfaction that she had successfully "ended locked & put away" a year [1897] of her life, whereas at the beginning of that same year, she had expressed concern about "how many more weeks has it [her diary] to live" (PA 10). By 1905, she was publishing magazine articles, a new enterprise which caused her to regard diary writing as a "necessity" and the "story" of her own life as "dull" (PA 373). Frequently neglecting her diary, Virginia was forced to admit its death at her own hands: "So ominous a silence means -- what I recognized before, that my Diary sinks into a premature grave" (PA 273). Presumably, Virginia could look fearlessly into the "premature grave" of her diary on this
particular occasion. But she could do so only because her "life" in words had not died; it had merely changed its physical form from handwritten to printed signs.

The adult Woolf did not curb her habit of personifying books, beginning with a pun on the word "leaves" (as pages in a book/as plant life) as she described her new diary writing venture: "This book is now a natural growth of mine -- a rather dishevelled, rambling plant, running a yard of green stalk for every flower" (D 1: 150). Soon the plant took on human form, as in this report about her diary's progress: "Its grown a person, with almost a face of its own" (D 1: 317). Given the personal nature of a diary, we might expect that Woolf would imagine its "face" as resembling her own. However, she preferred to think of it as a "kindly blank faced old confidante" (D 2: 106). By extension, all books containing personal writing were to her "vast consciences, in our most secret drawers" (D 1: 95).

Woolf reserved the closest association of text and self for published works. She referred to nonbiographical books as if they were the authors themselves. "We have spent the day mostly indoors, labelling Roger" (D 2: 145) she could say, meaning Roger Fry's Twelve Original Woodcuts, which the Woolfs had hand-printed on their press. Apparently she was capable of making the text/author transference with remarkable mental dexterity because in
the same diary entry where she reported "labelling Roger," she also described the human Fry as carrying along a work by Julien Benda. This time, "Roger" was Roger, and another book became its author: "Roger had Benda in his pocket" (D 2: 150). It is hard to imagine that Woolf missed the humor in her habit, for instance, in this comment about needing to separate pages in a new copy of Lord Byron's Correspondences: "Where is my paper knife? I must cut Lord Byron" (D 2: 170). But even if she did smile occasionally at her personifications, she usually treated the text/author concept with great seriousness, especially when the text in question was her own.

As Woolf's career developed, the text/author substitutions became a theme that found its way into her fiction. In Jacob's Room, the narrator describes the British Museum, at the hour when readers all depart the library:

The books were now replaced. A few letters of the alphabet were sprinkled round the dome. Closely stood together in a ring round the dome were Plato, Aristotle, Sophocles, and Shakespeare: the literature of Rome, Greece, China, India, Persia. One leaf of poetry was pressed flat against another leaf, one burnished letter laid smooth against another in a density of meaning, a conglomeration of loveliness. (107-108)

In this passage, the names written on the walls of the library become the writers themselves. Books acquire "density of meaning" because they are pressed together, surface to surface. And the library itself, a gathering
place for these written artifacts, is seen as "the vast mind . . . sheeted with stone" (109). Continuing, the narrator again substitutes text for writer, book for body:

The night-watchmen, flashing their lanterns over the backs [emphasis mine] of Plato and Shakespeare, saw that . . . neither flame, rat, nor burglar was going to violate these treasures -- poor, highly respectable men . . . do their best for twenty years to protect Plato and Shakespeare, and then are buried at Highgate. (109)

The spines of men and the "backs" (spines) of books are practically indistinguishable in this passage. But writers are no mortal wo/men. Unlike the "poor" watchmen who will be buried eventually at Highgate, writers are assured their bodily integrity so long as their textual surfaces remain intact. This word/flesh, text/body association was a significant element in Woolf's theories about her medium. Thus, she could report that her rapid composing of "Women and Fiction" was a method that "gives one freedom & lets one leap from back to back of one's thoughts" (D 3: 222).

Woolf's associations of the textual surface and the writer's body evolved into the notion that the act of writing constitutes an act of creation, self-creation, an anxiety-provoking idea that goes a long way in explaining her hesitancy to experiment with the material properities of written language.

7

Throughout her lifetime, Woolf suffered much anguish over the possibility of loosing her capacity to read or
write: "My mind turned by anxiety, or other cause, from its scrutiny of blank paper, is like a lost child -- wandering the house, sitting on the bottom step to cry" (D 1: 315). During her numerous episodes of mental or physical illness and when overwork weakened her writing hand and eyesight, she indeed experienced the helplessness of a child, unable to function as a literate adult. At times, she equated inability to read or write with death. For instance, she complained, "My head full of ideas perished on the ill suited page [letter] to Margaret Davis" (D 1: 198-99). Woolf became distressed whenever her own literacy failed her, but on one occasion, she found lifeless words useful. While recovering from illness and struggling to read "anything I find handy" (D 2: 161), she again relied on the "leaves" pun as inducement to continue her efforts: "I can only hope that like dead leaves they [books] may fertilize my brain" (D 2: 161). Gradually, Woolf came to think of written language as the physical manifestation of an author's consciousness, as a body that housed the writer's mind. Even menopause, Woolf's "T of L" (time of life?), could be associated with a drying up of words:

I wish I could write out my sensations at this moment. They are so peculiar & so unpleasant. Partly T of L? . . . very cold: impotent: & terrified. . . . Very useless. . . . No words. . . . I have no protection. . . . I cannot unfurl my mind & apply it calmly & unconsciously to a book. And my own little scraps look dried up & derelict. (D 5: 63)
So close had become the word/flesh association that during the bombing of London in 1940, she imagined her own death in an air raid in language that made separation of author and text impossible; death of the text is death of the flesh: "two or three gulps attempting consciousness -- & then, dot dot dot" (D 5: 326).

Through the lives of her fictional characters, Woolf could explore her fears about the loss of literacy from a position of relative safety. In Mrs. Dalloway, Woolf created a character, Septimus Smith, who cannot recognize visual signs as language. A plane flying over the square in which Smith sits begins to form letters of smoke, but "Only for a moment did they lie still; then they moved and melted and were rubbed out" (29). While the letters come apart, the crowd below tries to interpret their meaning. "'Glaxo,' said Mrs. Coates. . . . 'Kreemo,' murmured Mrs. Bletchley" (29). But while everyone tries to distinguish shapes of letters, to arrange them into words, Smith perceives the images, not as language, but as "one shape after another of unimaginable beauty and signalling their intention to provide him, for nothing, for ever, for looking merely, with beauty" (31). Thus, Woolf posited the suicidal Smith as a human consciousness situated outside the signifying structure of language. Having done this, she used the Smith character to project the effect of
forces unleashed by destruction of the visible word: loss of self identity to the realm of chaos.

In *The Waves*, Rhoda, like Smith, also commits suicide. And, also like Smith, she is described as being outside the signifying structure of language. As a child, Rhoda puzzles over a chalkboard that refuses to yield its meaning to her:

> Louis writes; Susan writes; Neville writes; Jinny writes; even Bernard has now begun to write. But I cannot write. I see only figures. . . . But I have no answer. The figures mean nothing now. Meaning has gone. (21)

When she is somewhat older, Rhoda again fails to distinguish meaning in words, which appear as a "black stain on the white page of the Prayer Book" (33). While the developing intellects of the other characters struggle to establish an identity in relation to the written word, Rhoda continually tries to escape the ordering forces of language. Eventually, she succeeds, but only at the cost of her own life.

The fates of both Smith and Rhoda as conscious beings for whom language does not signify meaning correspond to Julia Kristeva's theories of language acquisition and the two level signifying system, explained in the introduction to this study. Rhoda's experiences document the child's struggle to acquire language and self-identity. Because she is unable to master the symbolic order, her psycholinguistic development is incomplete. Unable to see
through the surface of written language, she has no access to meaning and slides further and further towards abstraction and death. Smith's desire to see only the beauty of written images demonstrates the experience of the textual surface from the perspective of insanity. Having lost his position within the symbolic order, Smith also slides towards abstraction and death.

Woolf continued her exploration of the borderline between seeing and reading in *Flush: A Biography.* Published in 1933, the fictionalized biography is Woolf's story of "Flush," the canine companion to Elizabeth Barrett before her marriage to Robert Browning and later to the entire Browning family. Living in the household with two poets, Flush had an opportunity to observe literate acts on an almost daily basis, while he himself was forever denied access the lexical function of written words. For instance, while spending most of his time alone with the then infirmed and isolated Miss Barrett, Flush studied intently her every movement, fantasizing that he one day might be able to do the things she did:

> His own furry paws seemed to contract and he longed that they should fine themselves to ten separate fingers. . . . And when he watched the same fingers [Miss Barrett's] for ever crossing a white page with a straight stick, he longed for the time when he too should blacken paper as she did. (46-47)

But to the illiterate animal, the writer's pen was only a stick, not unlike any other he might encounter on his walks.
in the park. With no knowledge of lexical signs, Flush viewed the writing process as an activity of the fingers without purpose and written words as visible shapes devoid of meaning. Speculating on the writing scene just described, the biographer pauses to ask, "And yet, had he [Flush] been able to write as she [Miss Barrett] did?" then immediately dismisses such speculation with, "--The question is superfluous happily" (47). However, the question is not superfluous because it serves as the defining characteristic of Flush himself.

Flush shared with his human family the world of sensory stimulus, and at times, he could "read signs that nobody else could even see" (59). During the courtship of Barrett and Robert Browning, Flush "began to notice signs of change in Miss Barrett herself" (60) as she over and over again read daily arriving love letters:

There were many pages, closely covered, darkly blotted, scattered with strange little abrupt hieroglyphics. So much Flush could see, from his station at her [Miss Barrett's] feet. But he could make no sense of the words that Miss Barrett was murmuring to herself. Only he could trace her agitation when she came to the end of the page and read aloud (though unintelligibly), "Do you think I shall see you in two months, three months?" (61)

If Flush's experiences at all resembled those of humans, it was when, while on a family outing, he responded to the Italian countryside in much the same manner as did the Browning infant: "Did they not share something in common -- did not the baby somehow resemble Flush in may ways?"
Neither dog nor baby took interest in scenery or felt a compulsion to employ words. While the adults in the Browning group sat enraptured by the beauty of the Apennines and expressed a failing of words to describe it, "the baby and Flush felt none of this stimulus, none of this inadequacy" (136). And in at least one aspect, Flush's senses were superior to all humans:

Where Mrs. Browning saw, he smelt; where she wrote, he sniffed. . . . There are no more than two words and perhaps one-half for what we smell. The human nose is practically non-existent. The greatest poets in the world have smelt nothing but roses on the one hand, and dung on the other. The infinite graduations that lie between are unrecorded. Yet it was in the world of smell that Flush mostly lived. (138-39)

Both dogs and humans encounter the same sensory stimuli; however, their awareness and responses to them were separated by a rigid boundary.

Flush found no meaning in visual "beauty" and required no language with which to express his impressions. Writers privileged sight over the other senses and required words to make their ideas of "beauty" manifest. Thus, the primary difference between the human and nonhuman engagement with life was a visual-linguistic barrier that Flush was never to cross:

Now that they were established in Casa Guidi again, all had their avocations. Mr. Browning wrote regularly in one room; Mrs. Browning wrote regularly in another. The baby played in the nursery. But Flush wandered off into the streets of Florence to enjoy the rapture of smell. (138-39)
The word "rapture" seems to suggest that the biographer found the canine's direct and ephemeral perception of life at least equal with if not superior to the experiences of literate humans. However, the suggestion becomes colored with irony when considered within the context of the entire work. *Flush: A Biography* is itself a text, an experience that can be enjoyed only from the human side of the signifying boundary. Had Elizabeth Barrett Browning not written about her pet in her poetry and personal correspondences, had Woolf not drawn information from them to reconstruct in writing the facts about Flush's life, his existence would have been as ephemeral as the smells he enjoyed on the streets of Florence. And, in what is perhaps the greatest irony, had the dog been alive still when his biography was written, Flush and *Flush* would have existed on opposite sides of the signifying threshold. He would have looked at his "life" and seen only black smudges on white paper. Certainly, because Flush was a dog and not expected to be literate, he could be content with his lack of knowledge of lexical signs. However, if the question is reversed and asked in relation to human experience, it takes on serious -- and for Woolf, terrifying -- proportions: what if a person looks at written language and sees only marks that "blacken paper"?

All of the incidents in which Woolf's fictional characters cannot distinguish written signs from other
marks reflect her personal concerns about loss of literacy. She believed that, as the physical manifestation of her consciousness, only the visual images of written words protected her from insanity or death. Because bodily integrity was dependent upon textual integrity, the proper application of her medium became crucial. Woolf believed that she must correctly "form letters" (D 5: 239) and "put one sentence after another" (D 2: 59) so as to produce a readable text: "I held my pen this morning for two hours & scarcely made a mark. The marks I did make were mere marks, not rushing into life & heat as they do on good days" (D 2: 11). Thus, the mode of textual transmission bore great significance. In handwritten manuscripts Woolf's ideas first entered the physical world. But because script could become illegible at virtually any stroke of her hand, Woolf feared most for her own well being when writing manuscripts. No amount of penmanship exercises could correct all of the inconsistencies in her "too romantic pen." On the other hand, printed words in published books were far more uniform and "solid," and Woolf took pleasure in knowing that, if she employed her medium successfully, her texts might endure even beyond the life of her body.

Woolf overtly expressed her desire to apply her medium in a manner that would extend its signifying function
beyond the conventional styles she had encountered in so many texts. Her goal was a fresh use of language, one capable of expressing the plenitude of life's experiences. With her heightened awareness of the materiality of word objects, she was entirely capable of using visual effects to achieve this goal. But, she wished never to experiment beyond the point where words signified meaning because it became a life and death matter that she never cross the signifying threshold beyond which reading and writing words became merely seeing or drawing marks on a page. As a solution, she became especially skilled at manipulating the conventions of typeface and punctuation while maintaining the integrity of her text as a lexical sign system.

In Three Guineas, an unnamed woman letter writer addresses her comments to a male correspondent. She is writing in response to a request for suggestions on how to prevent war, and at one point, she explains that her efforts can be better spent helping women who seek professional careers:

> It is to help them to have a mind of their own and a will of their own with which to help you to prevent war. But . . . here again, in those dots, doubts and hesitations assert themselves [emphasis mine]. (58)

There is nothing particularly unusual about an ellipsis that signifies a break in text to indicate a hesitation. Nevertheless, what appears after the three dots, the dash and the subsequent comment, is highly unusual. The dash
indicates a second and different type of pause, not indicative of doubt or hesitation, but signalling the approach of an aside. And within the aside, we find the writer's admission of visual awareness of, not only the dots in the sentence immediately before our eyes, but of others ("here again") appearing previously in the text.

Woolf's typographical device (ellipsis and dash) in *Three Guineas* is far more sophisticated than it may seem, a device that would be conceived of only by a writer with a highly developed visual awareness of text. With the device, she visually created a circumstance that could occur no place other than in written language: it is impossible to maintain a linguistic silence and speak about it at the same time, a paradox only too familiar to a feminist writer. The aside functions as metatext in the woman's speaking voice, by which she calls attention to her own textual silence. Thus, in the case of *Three Guineas*, the omission of words is not a sign that Woolf's language had failed her. Rather, in service of Woolf's feminist agenda, the deliberate manipulation of the textual line was a strategy to undermine patriarchal discourse.

Woolf employed a similar undermining strategy in the "interludes" sections of *The Waves*. As Eric Warner explains, she filled the space denoting a silence in the narrative, a presence outside the realm of rational discourse, with text of a different sort:
Clearly one function of the interludes was to suggest the natural world outside the confines of human thought. The background to the human speech is "what we are not," her attempt to convey "what exists when we are not there." (57)

Howard Harper regards The Waves as Woolf's "search for the origins and nature of consciousness itself," pointing to her "awareness of language as both the instrument and the medium of the search" (204). The interludes are printed in italic typeface, most likely because Woolf believed that the slanting shape of the letters created a visual image not at all unlike the constant roll of waves, the prevailing image of the interlude text. Another name for italic typeface is "cursive," suggestive of handwriting. By printing the interludes in cursive, Woolf situated their poetic voice one step closer to the oral tradition and farther away from the "bookish" print medium. Thus, the italic typeface visually signifies Woolf's juxtaposing of two very different types of text. The voice in the interludes is poetic, uttering spontaneous words associated with purely sensory perceptions. The main narrative records six human intellects attempting to situate and define themselves within the signifying system of language.

Within the main text of The Waves, Woolf distinguished one character's consciousness from another by framing each character's text within quotation marks. The only words not set between quotation marks are the omniscient narrator's tags ("Bernard said"; "Rhoda said"). However,
Woolf did not use quotations and tags in the conventional sense, that is, to signal spoken words or isolated thoughts that intrude upon the narrative. Rather, she used them to create complete and solitary intellects, which are at once distinct and simultaneous within a given time frame. Within each passage framed by quotation marks, Woolf economized the text by enclosing in parentheses temporal and spatial shifts in point of view, asides, and material that seems inserted by the character's intellect particularly for the reader's benefit. In one instance, Woolf reversed the procedure, instead adding parentheses to enclose the entire quoted passages of Rhoda and Louis (226-227). This device united the two characters and at the same time set them apart from the other characters seated at the table. As Louis points out, they are bound by love and are "conspirators who have drawn apart to share some secret" (231). Thus, Woolf's creative use of punctuation eliminated the need for unnecessary authorial intrusions but effectively preserved readability.

In *Between the Acts*, Woolf's last novel, typeface and punctuation serve an important signifying function. With these devices, she incorporated into the narrative a visually distinct fictional "play script," written by one of the characters, Miss La Trobe. The interpolated text raises critical questions about the origins of the playscript, narrative voice, and point of view. In the
interpolated sections of the novel, dialogue markers ("Lady H.H."), a device normally associated with a page from a play script, distinguish the text from the main narrative. The most obvious conclusion is that we should treat this text as undeniably belonging to Miss La Trobe. However, the issue is further complicated by the fact that the lines of the play are printed in italics, not typical in script writing. This visual marker and the larger context in which interpolated material occurs (The play is being performed at that moment.) suggest that they are also the words spoken by the actors. Thus Woolf managed to achieve narrative simultaneity by creating the impression of both a written text and spoken lines. But, the interpolated text also contains authorial intrusions within the dialogue, enclosed within parenthesis.

When we consider the narrator's perspective in *Between the Acts*, we must remember that until the appearance of the interpolated material, the narrator had described the play script only from the appearance of its cover, as it could be seen in the hand of Miss La Trobe. When and how Miss La Trobe's "foolscap sheet" becomes visible to the eye of the narrator and the readers of the novel remains uncertain. However, the perplexing shift in perspective and the interweaving of conventional narrative and interpolated text are consistent with a central theme of the novel, Woolf's questioning of the physical and conceptual
boundaries separating individual works of art as well as those between the work of art and the "reality" of the natural world.

Woolf undoubtedly had the signifying threshold in mind as she worked on her last novel. In Between the Acts, numerous silences, hesitations, and interruptions of spoken lines are marked by ellipses. But Woolf's "dot dot dot" takes on particular significance because a major theme is the signifying and unifying functions of words and because the work was completed just before her death by suicide. At a crucial moment in the narrative, Miss La Trobe listens as the actors' speeches suffer a distortion which she finds a horrifying experience. The drama is being performed out of doors by villagers, and their words are no match for the atmosphere:

The words died away. Only a few great names . . . floated across the open space. Then the wind rose, and in the rustle of the leaves even the great words became inaudible; and the audience sat staring at the villagers, whose mouths opened, but no sound came. (140)

Translated into speech, Miss La Trobe's words apparently have come too close to the signifying threshold separating spoken language from noise or silence, either of which would result in a loss of her ability to communicate. And she, as fictional counterpart and spokeswoman for Woolf, pronounces what they both believe is the fate of a writer who cannot communicate: "'This is death,' she murmured, 'death'" (140). Readers witnessing Miss La Trobe's horror
may be convinced that the fate she predicts is inevitable, if Woolf had not put before their eyes the written play script itself. For, above all else, Woolf wished her readers to believe that books, the printed surfaces of language, are far more enduring than spoken words scattered to the wind. They are the threshold through which human consciousness takes its place as solid objects in the physical world, lasting monuments marking the activities of creative minds.

Notes

1 David Dowing, in Bloomsbury Aesthetics and Forster and Woolf, traces Woolf's "hierarchy of Muses," claiming that until 1904, painting "ranked a dismal third" (95) in comparison to music and literature. However, I argue that literature, not painting, was third in the young Virginia's thinking.

2 Both Panthea Reid in Art and Affection and Diane Filby Gillespie in The Sisters' Arts examine in depth the aesthetic relevance of the relationship between Vanessa and Virginia.
No object so consistently and abundantly filled Woolf's world and so attracted her attention as did paper: individual sheets or leaves gathered and bound into books, whole pages or scraps, blank pages or pages filled with handwritten, typed, or printed text. Paper, a physical object always before Woolf's eye, stimulated her creative imagination and aided her in acquiring patterns of thought that would become themes and narrative forms in her novels. With her habit of using the language of physical objects to express abstract concepts and with the accessibility of paper, Woolf naturally discovered correspondences between the space of individual sheets or leaves gathered into books and aspects of narrative form. The set of correspondences between textual space and narrative form did not occur to Woolf in a single moment of inspiration, however. Rather, she discovered them through extended experience with textual surfaces and prolonged contemplation of her page as she searched for solutions to problems of filling blank pages with written language. In other words, for Woolf, a textual surface became a paradigm for both the writer's task and the art it produced.

Woolf's interest in writing surfaces began at an early age and continued throughout her life. As a young writer, she developed a hunger for materials on which to practice
her craft. On February 16, 1897, when someone in the household purchased paper, the fifteen year old Virginia referred to it as a "large ream of foolscap of which I mean to appropriate some" (PA 37). And, when two days later there was another purchase of "some note paper--two packets from Lords for 6 1/2 each," she confessed, "The consequence is that I have done nothing but scribble ever since" (PA 38). A single sheet of paper is an enclosed space, defined by its dimensions, into which the writer must "fit" her text. Although the range is great, the number of words that can be inscribed within the space of a page is limited by the demands of readability; the graphic images of words must be neither too large nor too small if the reader is to recognize them as written language.¹

¹

A page of text written in standard prose format is interpreted according to a given set of conventions. The border of space at the top, bottom, right and left of the text are treated as neutral, as having no signifying function, and are disregarded during the reading process. Blocks of contextually related material (paragraphs) are visually marked by slight intrusions of the left margin (indentions). Lines left blank within the text usually signal thematic, temporal, or setting shifts. And blanks appearing between the last word on the page and the bottom border are considered unused space, signalling the end of the text. If the writer is allotted more than one sheet of
paper, the textual space is extended, and her words may "flow" onto a given number of sequentially arranged sheets. Thus, the physical properties of the textual surface and the conventions of reading at least partially define the writer's task.

Despite the restricting properties of writing sheets, Virginia's "ream" and "packets" of paper suggest that she thought in terms of an almost limitless textual surface, a more or less open space. And growing up in an environment where "scribble" was encouraged, Virginia could write with abandon, with little concern that her supply of paper would be exhausted. Moreover, because her sheets were drawn from a general household supply, she could not have regarded every unfilled sheet of paper as her personal failure to fulfill a writing task. However, at age fifteen, Virginia began keeping a diary, and suddenly the page before her eyes became a very different type of space.²

Virginia Stephen was beginning to enjoy aspirations towards a literary career in 1897, and her first diary, with its chronological format and blank pages, was itself an initiating encounter with problems of enclosed textual space. Diaries are by definition temporal in nature. Volumes usually bracket one or more years. Within each volume, textual space is divided into "blocks," each block marking a unit of time and all units arranged chronologically. Each block of space is reserved for a
text "about" a specific unit of time. Thus, units of textual space correlate with units of time, creating a spatial-temporal grid into which the written word must be placed. Additionally, the blocks of space also serve to control the time frame in which the writing task should be performed, usually daily. Filled blocks are a sign of completed tasks. Unfilled blocks following a filled one represent future tasks, while a block left blank between filled ones must be "read" as the writer's failure to complete a task.

The bibliographic features of Virginia's first diary, commercially made and conventionally designed, especially appealed to her. Comparing its appearance to her sister's ("Nessas"), she decided in favor of her own:

> It is a week today since I began this diary. How many more weeks has it to live -- At any rate it must and shall survive Nessas Collins and Penshaw [printers]. It has a key, and beautiful boards, and is much superior. (PA 10)

Gathered between Virginia's "beautiful boards" were sufficient blank pages for her to assign one leaf (recto or verso) per day in the calendar year, a practice she began with the first entry on Sunday, January 3, 1897. Because dates were not preprinted on the pages, the diary writer easily could have deviated from her "one page per day" format whenever she needed more or less space. Nevertheless, she struggled to remain faithful to her original plan throughout most of the year, even when the
spatial-temporal grid proved more of a burden than she had envisioned.

Virginia's attempts at keeping a diary began as she was "slowly recovering from a period of madness following her mother's death in May 1895" (PA xv). As Michael Leaska explains, "putting things into words and giving them deliberate expression had the effect of restoring reality to much that would otherwise have remained insubstantial" (PA xv) in the world of Virginia Stephen Woolf. However, the progression of entries in the 1897 diary demonstrates that she had not yet made an association between covering a page with writing and recovering her health. On the contrary, as Virginia's mental health improved throughout 1897 and she reengaged with the normal activities of living, the number of diary "blocks" that were to remain blank increased.

From the outset of her diary keeping enterprise, Virginia seems to have had concerns about filling every available space with writing, often violating the left and right margins and leaving no extra space at the top or bottom of her texts. Frequently, at the top of pages, her writing was evenly spaced between words and lines, but due to poor planning, as the writing progressed downward, the words and lines became more cramped, and the text widened so as to engulf the side margins. In almost every case, the final word of the text occupied the last available
space at the bottom right edge of the page. However, on February 26th, Virginia had difficulties thinking of her customary comments about the Stephen household. Apparently she had been aware of the problems as she started to write because throughout the text, words and lines are more generously spaced than usual. But despite this maneuver, Virginia eventually ran out of things to write with approximately one inch of space left on the page. Then, determined to reach the favored bottom rightmost spot on the page, she wrote down the first idea that came to mind: "This is written just before father calls for me to go out, and I can think of no sentence to fill the blank" (PA 43-44). Of course, with the added sentence, her page was filled.

While most of Virginia's problems with her 1897 diary concerned lack of material to fill her textual space, between April and July, she experienced the dilemma of having too much material to fit neatly into her spatial-temporal grid. On April 19th, the family was on vacation in Brighton, and she wrote, "We arrived [from a day's excursion] after many adventures, which unluckily there is no room here [page in diary] for" (PA 72). She encountered the same problem on the following day, which prompted her to compare space requirements for prose and poetry. Poetry, she concluded, takes less space: "If I was a poet... I should write something upon this way of travelling.
This diary is too small to allow very much prose, and this [her entry] is quite inadequate" (PA 73). While attempting to account for the events of May 22nd, Virginia interrupted her narrative to complain, "My space is gradually disappearing, & I cannot say in the shortest way all what we did -- However, briefly" (89). And, since she was not a poet who could condense time by condensing language, she condensed the size of her handwriting instead.

After the early summer months of struggling to "say everything in the shortest way," Virginia learned another lesson, the ill effects of not making timely diary entries. On July 6, 1897, she wrote:

I got into the bad practice of not writing my diary for two or three days and then I have forgotten what has happened. . . . This diary has been woefully neglected lately -- what with one thing and another -- Improvement must be made! (hear hear). (PA 112)

The young diary writer was remorseful about her neglected diary and determined to improve. Nevertheless, probably without realizing the significance, she had already discovered one possible solution to her problem. Diary entries cover a textual space by filling it with description of events occurring in the writer's recent past. But, on this occasion, Virginia had not written in the diary for several days (she seems unsure about the number). The tardiness of her writing would have presented no real problem, if her memory, a form of recovered time, had functioned appropriately. In that case, she would have
recorded the days' events, and the covered space would have successfully concealed the temporal lapse of "two or three days." But memory failed her. It went blank because she had allowed too much time to pass, the same reason that her diary pages had been left blank. Thus textual omissions (physical blanks) correlated both in cause (lapse of time) and effect (unfilled space) with cognitive omissions (mental blanks). Confronted with these double blanks, Virginia next made the same strategic move she earlier had made when she could "think of no sentence to fill the blank" on September 26th; she recovered the space by calling attention to its blankness: "This diary has been woefully neglected."

On August 9th, Virginia found her frequent diary omissions "strange" and "diarising" an unpleasant chore:

> This poor diary is in a very bad way, but strange though it may seem, the time is always so filled up here, that I get very little time for diarising -- even if I wished to, which I don't having taken a great dislike to the whole process. (PA 121)

Because her "time is always so filled up" (emphasis mine), her textual space in the diary remained unfilled. By the end of the month, her entries had become cryptic, and no matter how large and spaciously she wrote, attempts at covering either mental or textual space ended in failure: "We saw the cathedral there (I have quite forgotten how to write)" (PA 124). With the exception of two entries of one line each, the pages for October 4th through October 18th
are dated but blank. These are followed by two pages containing a list of dates (October 19th through November 13th) which she labeled "Blanks" and "Blank also." On November 28th, Virginia took time to count the few remaining pages in her diary; her reaction was one of relief: "I see that my pages give out -- wh[ich] is just as well. But if anything worth of writing down happens before 1898, it shall be entered in one of the remaining pages" (PA 133). With the exception of December 12th, there are no pages or lists of dates for the remainder of the 1897.

The dwindling number of diary entries may suggest a loss of interest in life, a return of Virginia's depression. However, a note she appended to the end of the 1897 volume, dated January 1, 1898, argues against disinterest: "Here is a volume of a fairly acute life (the first really lived year of my life) ended locked & put away" (PA 134). A more plausible explanation for the missing entries is that Virginia's diary had fallen into almost total disuse because life had become increasingly more "acute," more interesting. Whereas, formerly, engagement with life had caused her to forget how to write, on the last days of the year, she had so recovered life that she had forgotten to write at all. Virginia had marked a previous lapse of time or memory with blank space on the page or a remark that called attention to the lapse. But in the case of the missing periods at the end of the
year, she did not bother even to acknowledge the lapses with dated blank pages, a decided breach in her "one page per day" diary format. Because Virginia was so preoccupied with her immediate experiences, she set aside neither time nor space for her narrative of past events. Thus, the visual signifier of total engagement with life became a total absence of textual space.

After the close of her 1897 diary, Woolf did not attempt a second until she went on a summer holiday at the Warboys Rectory in Huntingdonshire in August of 1899. There she began keeping a journal. Visually, the pages of the Warboys Journal differ from the first diary. Most obvious is the increase in size of each page from 8 x 13 cm in the 1897 diary to 13 x 21.5 cm in the 1899 journal. Some entries are not dated, and in their stead, Virginia wrote descriptive titles. The titles suggest her growing awareness of thematic units. And at the head of one entry, she placed double stress on the bracketing function of textual divisions (as units of time, as thematic units) by including both date and title: "3 September A Chapter on Sunsets" (PA 155). Instead of a "one page per day" format, with each page dated at its head, Virginia allowed her writing to spill over several pages. But, despite the enlarged textual surface and the openness of the spatial-temporal grid, Virginia was concerned about a lack of space as early on as her second entry: "If I go on at this rate
methinks I shall soon have finished this book" (PA 136). In the entry, Virginia's "this rate" has no antecedent, leaving open two possible interpretations. On the one hand, she may have been moving her pen across the page more rapidly than she had in her first diary. On the other, the pace of her narrative may have slowed. Either possibility could lead to a greater amount of textual space covered with words. Whether Virginia was using her pen more rapidly we cannot know, but a significant change in her writing style is most evident.

Leaska notes the stylistic difference between Virginia's 1897 diary and the Warboys Journal:

During this period she [Virginia] began to keep a journal, quite unlike that of 1897. Her writing now became more detached, more self-conscious in style and manner. She was practicing the art of essay writing for the first time. (PA 135)

Whereas in the first diary Virginia had filled her page almost exclusively with brief narrative of events, her new "art of essay writing" often required that she compose fully developed scenes containing (temporal) narrative, (spatial) descriptive, and (atemporal and aspatial) expository/discursive passages. A short excerpt from each text serves as a comparison. In 1897, Virginia's narrative moved at a rapid pace, so rapid that an entire afternoon's events required very little space on her page:

After luncheon we went out in the gardens with father, & sat upon chairs near the Pond. After sitting there for some time, we got up & went for a little walk. Stella became suddenly giddy;
though only for a moment, so that we went straight home again. (PA 95)

Virginia's pace in the entry is decidedly brisk. Practically every clause refers to an action that pushes time forward, and temporal markers are plentiful: "after luncheon," "for some time," "suddenly," "for a moment." Descriptive words that would have slowed the succession of actions are minimal, and the passage contains no authorial intrusions of any kind. But by 1899, Virginia's pace had decreased dramatically because of the added descriptive and discursive elements. In this sample excerpt, a scene of a few minute's duration fills up the same amount of space as did the account of entire afternoon in the former passage:

After dinner we sit on our little terrace raised so as to overlook the garden & pond. The Pole star bright over our heads, & long black clouds floating in the pale sky. A bat swoops down, & circles over our heads. What attractive creatures they are! (PA 139)

The "after dinner" in the above passage hints of a sequential link of this passage to a former one. Likewise, the mention that the terrace is (already) "raised" refers to an action in the writer's past. However, Virginia's "sit" positions the narrative in her present, a time frame in which only two other actions, "swoops" and "circles," occur. Because the acts of sitting and circling can endure for some time, the passage takes on an almost static quality, very much similar to a still life drawing. The fragment describing the Pole star and black clouds contains
no main verb, and only the gerund "floating" gives a hint of action. But, like sitting and circling, floating suggests an act that can be sustained over time. Between the sitting and swooping actions, descriptions of objects specifically positioned within the scene (the terrace above the garden and pond, the clouds above the terrace) reinforce the spatial nature of the passage. But the final sentence contains exposition about the beauty of bats. As the writer's/narrator's interjected thoughts, the sentence is neither temporal (narrative) nor spatial (description). Rather, interrupting both, the authorial intrusion merely increases the flow of words down Virginia's page. And whereas in 1897, her flow would have been checked by the rigid temporality of a dated diary page, a turning of a leaf bracketing another day, in 1899, only a blank space between entries signalled closure of a thematic space.

Virginia's first published article appeared in *The Guardian* during November of 1904, and by 1905, she was regularly publishing literary reviews. These experiences of professional writing forced her to shape her text according to editors' demands, not the least of which was that she restrict her writing to a specific number of words. To train her mind to conform to these demands, Virginia apparently found it necessary likewise to train eye. She began by translating her manuscript page into the typewritten pages she would submit for publication:
But apparently at times she forgot the differences in sizes of the two types of writing surfaces. For example, while composing a book review, she must have mistaken her two typed pages (900 words) for two handwritten ones (800 words), causing her to underestimate the length of her article. Subsequently, she was forced to delete a substantial portion of her text. In her diary entry for the day, she described the revision as "cutting," meaning both a conceptual manipulation of ideas and a physical mutilation of the page:

So I set to work with literal & metaphorical scissors & somehow patched it [her article] together, having cut out all the [discussion of] plot and a good deal else, so that it wont take more than 800 words. (PA 237)

Apparently, she used a scissors to remove the unwanted material, but her scissors had come to serve as figurative language for the cognitive process of editing as well.

The young writer resented the restriction of her words and ideas, a sentiment she again expressed in physical terms:

Wrote like a little Printers devil I am, all morning at my Times Review. This has to contrive to review two books without saying a word about them -- as indeed they are the productions of a pair of scissors, & I am not a critic of dress making of this kind. . . . [F]acts & dates, all so carefully sifted & accumulated have cast a gloom into my soul. (PA 240)
However, the freedom to fill an unlimited amount of space could be equally as problematic for her:

It is a satirical fact that when I am allowed 1/2 a column I can always fill 2, & when I am to have as much space as I like, I cant screw out words at any price. So I labored -- & did two pages, which isn't half what I must do. (PA 252)

All these new demands of Virginia's first publishing efforts, the necessity of thinking about columnar space and numbers of words, reinforced the spatial-conceptual correspondences that were becoming an essential element in her art. She was learning to think spatially.

2

Already, on the pages of her first diary and journal and in her first publishing experiences, Virginia had encountered the type of spatial-temporal concepts that would become familiar to her in fiction writing. She would quickly recognize correspondences between the physical layout of her diary and narrative form. Of course, the discovery should have been nothing surprising, since the diary's spatial-temporal grid was the typical linear narrative arrangement found in most novels and history books: time moves from distant past towards the present (sometimes future) in a series of steps. Both of her first two novels, The Voyage Out, and Night and Day, follow this traditional narrative structure. But one of her earliest attempts at narrative, "Friendships Gallery," demonstrates that she was considering experiments that she was
considering experiments with textual space and narrative design.

Written in 1907, "Friendships Gallery" is a mock biography of Virginia's dear friend, Violet Dickinson, but, as Ellen Hawkes points out in her introduction to the published version, a second person, Nelly Cecil (Lady Robert Cecil), "also figures prominently in it" (TCL 271). Virginia intended "The Life, or Myth," as she called it in a letter to Cecil, for the eyes of these two readers only:

If you keep The Life, or Myth, dont quote it -- see my vanity! and dont show it: I cant remember now how bad it is . . . and I dont want immaturities, things torn out of time, preserved, unless in some strong casket, with one key only. (LVW 1: 304).

In Virginia's metaphor of "things torn out of time," the "things" is a reference to her own text, and the figure of speech reverberates with sounds of pages being removed from a diary. Perhaps because she did not feel herself under scrutiny of the public eye, the writer of "Friendships Gallery" allowed herself considerable license to experiment with the space on her page and to ruminate about its significance to her craft. The first section of the text brackets a time period beginning with Violet's birth and ending with her as a young school girl exclaiming, "How I love reading!" (TCL 279). At that point, Virginia drew a line across her page, left a block of space, and interrupted the narrative to discuss her work:
Now there should be here some more tremendous division than a blank space of white paper; and I suspect that my artistic skill would have been more consummate had I thrown these first pages into the waste paper basket or enclosed them [between] the arms of a parenthesis. For when you are writing the life of a woman you should surely begin

Her First Season

and leave such details as birth parentage education and the first seventeen years of life to be taken for granted. . . . But then this Biography is no novel but a somber chronicle; and if Life will begin seventeen years before it is needed it is our task to say so valiantly and make the best of it. (TCL 279)

Virginia's comments suggest that the biographer's task is very much like the diary writer's task, that both writers should record events in predetermined chronological sequence. As on the diary writer's page, the biographer's textual space could signify temporal lapses with blocks of "blank space of white paper." Moreover, the amount of blank space should correspond to the amount of time left unrecorded, a lapse of several years requiring a "tremendous division." Although she acknowledged that her task in "Friendships Gallery" is that of biographer, her thoughts seemed to be turning towards fiction, not surprising since by that time, she was just beginning work on Melymbrosia, the early version of The Voyage Out. As a fiction writer, she would be at liberty to remove from her text a number of pages representing the early years of a character's life, to "throw these first pages into the waste paper basket" and begin where she wished. And just as the removed pages at the end of her first diary had
signified the presence of unrecorded experiences in her own life, so too would the removed pages at the beginning of a fictional work represent the passage of time in a character's life. Another possibility suggested by Virginia was that the writer could bracket a segment of time within "the arms of a parenthesis," a narrative device that she later would put to good use in several of her novels.

Following Virginia's remarks about her task, the second section of "Friendships Gallery" contains a description of the seventeen year old Violet's first social season. When the writer came to a spot in the narrative where she wished to give the name of a prominent "Lady______ _________" (TCL 279), she paused parenthetically to reflect upon the practice of leaving blanks to signify names:

(I forgot to say that names can seldom be used in this narrative, for many are yet alive, in high places, and so on; I must beg my reader to believe that a blank means rather more than a full name for it is capable of feeling if you guess it aright.) (TCL 279)

After writing "Lady ______________ ____________" several times, Virginia again paused to comment within parenthesis, "(the blanks yawn like awful caverns as though the shield once withdrawn you might see all splendorous and glittering lights within)" (TCL 280). Although these authorial intrusions seem amateurish and disruptive of the narrative, they also reveal Virginia's rapidly developing belief that
space, properly manipulated, could signify meaning. Virginia "read" these lines drawn across a space within her text as paralinguistic signifiers, which "cover" or "shield" unwritten material. Spatially, these hidden "splendorous and glittering lights" are located below the linearly progressing narrative material, deep within "awful caverns." The material within the cavern is not entirely hidden from sight, however, because the visible marks on the page "yawn" for readers to see. Thus, the lines tear open the narrative form and reserve textual space for material that intersects the linear progression of time at right angles; at the point of intersection, the two textual spaces would exist simultaneously. By first calling attention to the naming device, Virginia opened out the rigid temporality of the narrative and subsequently allowed her to engage her readers in a name guessing game, which she did at least a dozen times more. Who is "Mrs M__x__e" (283) or "Lady R____t" (TCL 288), the page silently asks. And her readers, Violet Dickinson and Nelly Cecil, would have known the answers and enjoyed the game.

The two final sections of "Friendships Gallery" are prefaced with title pages identifying them as "CHAPTER TWO; The Magic Garden" and "CHAPTER THREE; A Story to Make You Sleep." In "The Magic Garden" we find the adult Violet entertaining guests in her English garden. Like Virginia herself, Violet has by then acquired the habit of journal
writing, and in the biographer's description, writing and the physical setting seem to merge: "[She] wrote in the perennial notebook which swings by her side, as though her path through life were full of notes, sometimes she drew mystic lines on the turf with her walking stick" (TCL 289).

The biographer's writing/living correspondences seem to flow in two directions. On the one hand, Violet's "path through life" (passage of time) was "full of notes" (written narrative). On the other, the woman's "mystic lines . . . [drawn] with her walking stick" (writing) was inscribed "on the turf" (the path of life). Thus, Virginia suggested that living life and writing about life are two experiences that come together within one physical and conceptual "space." While describing Violet's environment and its meaning, the biographer apologizes for "the very few examples I have given that Violets cottage stood for a symbol of many things; and indeed is the pitfall into which her biographer is forever pitching himself" (TCL 290). Then, following a short passage of elaboration on the symbol, the biographer breaks off with "the number of this page warning me that I have already attempted too much" (TCL 291), indicating that, like Virginia, "he" is concerned about limits of physical space.5

In Chapter Three, Virginia broke entirely with the temporal format of the biographer's narrative about the life of Violet Dickinson, offering instead "A Story to Make
You Sleep." This final chapter simultaneously functions on three levels. As a separate unit, it is structured as a narrative within a larger narrative framework. The rhetorical setting of the larger frame is a child's bedroom when it is time for the child to sleep. The storyteller addresses the child directly: "Once upon a time my child, before you were born. . ." (TCL 292). At this point begins the narration of a fantastic tale about princesses and monsters and "all the people of Tokio" (TCL 292).

When the tale has been told, the larger frame encloses it as the storyteller again addresses the child, promising that "if you are a good child and go to sleep, perhaps one day they will come again" (TCL 300). However, the story within a story is also tied to the overall framework of "Friendships Gallery" because the biographer introduces it at the end of the previous chapter: "In Japan they have a story, [which is] fast becoming a myth, which mothers tell good children" (TCL 292). The connection is thematic rather than chronological. Just prior to mentioning the mythical story, the biographer concludes the narrative of Violet's life by calling attention to the fact that "it all goes to prove that the life of Miss Violet Dickinson is one of the most singular as well as the most prolific and least notorious that was lived in our age" (TCL 292). Violet's "age" is Victorian England; the age from which the myth evolved is ancient Japan. Violet's life is "singular" but
"least notorious"; the myth is famous and long preserved. Thus, by juxtaposing the narrative of Violet's life with the life of the myth, the biographer invites comparisons. The mythical story extends the structural framework of "Friendships Gallery" beyond the spatial-temporal grid of biography or the linear form of traditional fiction.

From her early diary writings and in the privately circulated "Friendships Gallery," evidence is strong that Virginia felt restricted by linear narrative design and already was searching for answers to problems of too much or too little space and too much or too little time for writing. The practical lessons she learned from her own page contributed notions of correspondences between physical and conceptual space. Although Virginia suspended her "diarising" between 1909 and 1915, the correspondences were not forgotten. Her 1915 diary includes entries for only January and half of February, but in 1917 she began a diary writing venture that would last the remainder of her life. Within the "beautiful boards" of her mature diaries, the correspondences Virginia had discovered earlier crystallized into a concrete language with which she could express abstract concepts regarding her task as a novelist. In general, the concepts polarized around two related problems. The first problem was conceptual: how to fit "time" (description of life) into an enclosed "space" (narrative form). The second was physical: how to fill a
physical space (page) with written words while time (writer's life) passes. Equipped with her spatially oriented language, Woolf set out to resolve these problems. And in so doing, she found new structures for her narrative creations.

3

By 1917, Woolf regularly was publishing reviews for the Times Literary Supplement. Also during that year, the Woolfs purchased the Hogarth Press. Leonard Woolf's reason for suggesting that they buy the press was "that it would be a good thing if Virginia had a manual occupation of this kind which, in say the afternoons, would take her mind completely off her work" (Beginning 233). Of course, printing is hardly "off her work" when the typesetter is also an author; however, it was as far as Woolf ever was content to stray. While other hobbies might have provided more diversion from hours of writing, typesetting and printing allowed her to do something, anything, with words, and therein resided the appeal. Working with the press, Woolf interacted directly with her medium, which forced her to think creatively about the appearance of a textual surface: "We took off a proof of 2 pages, on paper of the right size & liked the looks of it immensely. Our paper will be soft & yellow tinted" (D 1: 66). And, as with her diary writing, press work provided new correspondences between time and space. While her husband ran the press,
Woolf set or dismantled type, and she could count the days devoted to printing by the number of pages they managed to process:

A day of gigantic effort of L. [Leonard] Eight pages printed off. He went at 1.30 & is still (6 p.m.) at the printers, standing in the cellar & slipping page between the pins, having had only a short time off for tea. By tonight I shall have 8 pages to diss. [dismantle] & then to set up; though the type runs to 9 pages. (D 1: 142)

After much practice, Woolf could boast in 1918 that she was "setting up" a page in one afternoon (D 1: 104). As with her "one page per day" diary format, Woolf had acquired yet another unit for marking time. Meanwhile, she was torn between the pleasures she found in printing and her desires to write.

By 1918, Woolf was at work on her second novel, *Night and Day*, whose progress she also watched by counting words: "We both [she and Leonard] notice that lately we've written at a terrific pace: L. 40,000 words & as yet hasn't touched the book itself; I'm well past 100,000" (D 1: 127). Thus, Woolf's two markers of time's passage, numbers of typeset words and numbers of handwritten words, seemed to compete in a race to fill her pages. Eventually, as she watched her typeset and manuscript pages fill with visible blocks of written language, she would come to think of life itself in terms of textual blocks. The segments of life, Woolf's "scenes," corresponded to *blocks of time*, which themselves corresponded to *blocks of text* on a page:
I keep thinking of different ways to manage my scenes; conceiving endless possibilities; seeing life, as I walk about the streets, an immense opaque block of material to be conveyed by me into its equivalent of language. (D 1: 214)

But, "life," as Woolf wished to explore it on her page, was "immense," too large to fit neatly into traditional narrative form. To solve the problem, she continued to search for a more flexible design.

Woolf's notions of time and space raised questions in her mind about how to fit an "immense opaque block" (narrative time) into the form of a novel (conceptual space), especially since she had no desire to produce anything resembling the Victorian "unwieldy triple decker" (D 2: 54). However, on Easter Sunday of 1919, Woolf made a discovery as she amused herself by reading over her year's diary, "with a kind of guilty intensity" (D 1: 266). What struck her immediately was her "rough & random style":

To the point is my belief that the habit of writing thus for my own eye only is good practice. It loosens the ligaments... During the past year I can trace some increase of ease in my professional writing which I attribute to my casual half hours after tea [her time for diary writing]. Moreover there looms ahead of me the shadow of some kind of form which a diary might attain to. I might in the course of time learn what it is that one can make of this loose, drifting material of life; finding another use for it than the use I put it to, so much more consciously & scrupulously, in fiction. (D 1: 266)

Gone in these comments is the hesitant and apologetic tone of the young diary writer struggling to fill her textual space. In its place, we hear the confident voice of Woolf,
the professional author. Having just that month submitted *Night and Day* for publication, she was searching for fresh ideas for novels she had yet to begin.

Woolf's "own eye" was keen, trained as it had become at both reading and looking at her page. While reading her entries, Woolf recognized new subject matter for her fiction, not reportage of a series of events in characters' lives but a "drifting material of life" that might include a totality of human consciousness. And while looking at her writing, she also discovered possibilities for a form that might incorporate such a totality, a form which "a diary might attain to." Content and form, both came together on the textual surface of her page:

Something loose knit, & yet not slovenly, so elastic that it will embrace anything, solemn, slight or beautiful that comes into my mind. I should like it to resemble some deep old desk, or capacious hold-all, in which one flings a mass of odds & ends without looking them through. I should like to come back, after a year or two, & find that the collection had sorted itself & refined itself & coalesced, as such deposits so mysteriously do, into a mould, transparent enough to reflect the light of our life, & yet steady, tranquil composed with the aloofness of a work of art. (D 1: 266)

Although Woolf described her new design in terms of "What sort of diary should I like mine to be?" she also quite accurately was describing what it already had become, a "loose knit," "elastic" spatial-temporal grid that served as both a "capacious hold-all" and a "mould." The diary format provided for "steady, tranquil" progression of
narrative events. Additionally, Woolf's use of the textual surface of her diaries had become quite unconventional and flexible enough to "embrace any thing."

The physical properties of Woolf's mature diaries constituted a very different type of enclosed space from her first diary and journals. To begin with, Woolf had again increased the size of her pages by several centimeters. Until 1919, she wrote her daily entries in purchased note or exercise books containing various numbers of leaves. The covers of these diaries no longer served as temporal brackets because, instead of restricting her year's writing to what would fit between a single set of "beautiful boards," Woolf allowed it to spill over into two (1917) or three (1918) books. Planning her diary for 1919, she decided to abandon the covers entirely in favor of individual sheets. She recorded the idea in her diary:

> Suppose I buy a block [of paper], with detachable leaves, I think I shall snare a great number of loose thoughts. No doubt this is pure fancy, but then so much of one's mental affairs are controlled by fancy. (D 1: 228)

Woolf's implied punning on "detachable leaves" (loose leaf paper) and "loose thoughts" attests to the physical quality of her reasoning and her desire to free herself of the confines of enclosed space. In all likelihood, she followed through with her "fancy," since the 1919 diary seems to have been written on loose sheets that Woolf gathered and bound together at the end of the year (D 1:
This means that Woolf probably had loose sheets in her hands as she speculated about her diary as a model for fiction in April of 1919.

Generally, Woolf wrote her diary entries on recto leaves only. Individual entries were dated, with small spaces marking divisions between them. Her alternative method was to place the date in the margin adjacent to the entry. She left no dated but unfilled spaces. Her use of the page frequently ignored both the format of diary writing and the conventions of reading in order to sustain the sequential progression of entries while opening out and transgressing the spatial-temporal brackets separating "blocks" of material. A vivid example of this strategy appears in her entries at the end of 1917 diary. On December 17th, while writing her last entry for the year, she broke off her discussion of Mary "Molly" MacCarthy with: "I'm not sure that her deafness doesn't lend her a kind of piquancy (like a stammer); she ----." The next entry begins, "I forget who it was that came in at this moment; & I have excuse for forgetting, since it is now Thursday, 3rd Jan. 1918. & we're just back from Asheham. . Walter & Molly as I began to relate -- She has sent her novel to Chatto & Windus" (D 1: 93). Thus, with the device of mirror-imaged dashes ("she ----" in the former entry and "-- She" in the latter), Woolf united what would have been the subject ("she") and predicate ("has sent . . .") of a
single sentence had she not been interrupted by someone entering the room. More than merely breaching the spatial-temporal brackets separating the two blocks of text, the dashes reach over a blank or lapse of several days and unite visually and thematically two different years, 1917 and 1918.

Although Woolf recognized the advantages of her deviations from a conventional use of space in 1919, she would need another year to discover means for applying them to her narrative design. On her 38th birthday, January 26th, 1920, she recorded the moment of creative insight in her diary:

This afternoon [I] arrived at some idea of a new form for a new novel. Suppose one thing should open out of another -- as in An Unwritten Novel -- not for 10 pages but 200 or so -- doesn't that give the looseness & lightness I want: doesn't that get closer & yet keep form & speed, & enclose everything, everything?... I figure that the approach will be entirely different this time: no scaffolding. ... Then I'll find room for so much.... What the unity shall be I have yet to discover: the theme is a blank to me, but I see immense possibilities in the form. (D 2: 14)

Practically from the first mention of her new form, Woolf thought in terms of numbers of pages, her language the language of physical space. The plan for a new form that would "find room for so much" became the design for Jacob's Room. Beginning with its title, Woolf's third novel revealed the profound influence of spatial concepts upon her art. The story line of Jacob's Room follows the
chronology of Jacob Flanders' life from childhood to maturity; therefore, the conceptual frame encloses a specific unit of time. As a textual surface bracketed by its covers, the novel also serves as an enclosed space in which Woolf "fit" a block of opaque material, written language on a page. But, Woolf named this conceptual and textual space a room, which suggests a third type of enclosure, in this case a physical area defined by the four connecting walls. Thus, the title, Jacob's Room, suggests a system of correspondences, her new form, that unifies temporal, textual, and physical space.

The system of spatial-temporal correspondences is further emphasized within the novel, as when the narrator discusses an ordering principle for the plenitude of life:

> The observer is choked with observations. Only to prevent us from being submerged by chaos, nature and society between them have arranged a system of classification which is simplicity itself; stalls, boxes, amphitheatre, gallery. The moulds are filled nightly. (69)

Although the "moulds" or forms that instill order can be understood as seating arrangements ordered by class and privilege, they are also are enclosed spaces very much like rooms. And the omniscient narrator's point of view, thus the reader's as well, is such that "we hang vibrating" (73) above them. For instance, while describing a conversation between Jacob and Richard Bonamy, the narrator looks down upon a "room" that is both physical and conceptual:
So Jacob thought and spoke. . . . [But] there remains over something which can never be conveyed to a second person save by Jacob himself. Moreover, part of this is not Jacob but Richard Bonamy -- the room; the market carts; the hour; the very moment of history. (72-73)

In the above two excerpts, correspondences between time and physical space are emphasized. But the narrator reminds us that we have before our eyes a textual space and suggests that we stop reading and begin looking directly at the printed pages of Jacob's Room. The suggestion is explicit when the narrator later compares a London street scene to illustrations or pictures:

[R]ude illustrations, pictures in a book whose pages we turn over and over as if we should at last find what we look for. Every face, every shop, bedroom window, public-house, and dark square is a picture feverishly turned -- in search of what? It is the same with books. What do we seek through millions of pages? Still hopefully turning the pages -- oh, here is Jacob's room. (97)

Although the problem is never resolved, the words "feverishly" and "hopefully" cast doubts that pictures serve as perfect representations or natural signs. The narrator next equates pictures with books, thereby extending the questions and doubts onto what we find in them as well. Once the subject of discourse turns to books, the narrator's comments function as metatext on Jacob's Room, reflections upon what readers should hope to find while "turning the pages." Readers must understand the word "here" as reference to a specific place in a book, to which the narrator points. Thus, they are to imagine
themselves examining an illustrated book. The "--- oh" is performative discourse, which lends an element of immediacy to the narrative and unites the writer, readers, and textual surface in the present. As the narrator turns the pages of the novel, readers look on. Together they explore the "rooms" and discover that one of them is Jacob's.

Conceptually and stylistically, the pages of *Jacob's Room* strongly resemble the pages in Woolf's diary. The novel's 14 chapters are episodic and chronological, similar in their bracketing function to her diary volumes. Divided across the chapters are 132 segments or "blocks" of material. If Woolf had adopted the design of her two previous novels, each block in *Jacob's Room* would have been a scene containing a relatively balanced mixture of narrative (uniformly paced), description, and (at times) exposition. However, from the pages of her diary, Woolf had discovered that individual blocks, her individual entries, need not contain the same blending of the three types of discourse. Some segments in the novel are temporal, containing narrative of events. The remaining segments either contain rather static description of places (spatial) without specific reference to Jacob's life or serve primarily as speculative discourse (atemporal, aspatial), apparently reflecting the narrator's reasoning and philosophy. Individual blocks of text are not uniform in length or in the amount of time they bracket.
The pages of *Jacob's Room* also visually resemble Woolf's diary pages, where small spaces serve as brackets around blocks of text. The textual units at times support the notion of an overhead view of "rooms," each block corresponding to a different enclosed physical space. Woolf employed the blocks in this manner at the end of the first chapter, where a sequence of blocks represent separate rooms in Mrs. Pearce's house: front room (11-12), bedroom (12), sitting room (12-13). In the chapter's final block, the narrator describes an overview of the entire house and yard. However, the visually distinct blocks also follow the narrator's invitation that we browse along as the pages of an illustrated book are turned. In this scenario, the blocks represent what we would see in such a book: blocks of printed text (narrative), juxtaposed with pictures or illustrations (description), and immediate, spoken comments to onlookers about what they see and read (narrator's exposition). Although the blocks of text in *Jacob's Room* are visually bracketed, thematic breaches of the space resemble those in Woolf's diary. Chapter Two begins with a brief block of text containing only snatches of conversation, gossip from the citizens of Scarborough. Following the bracketing space, the narrator comments, "Elizabeth Flanders, of who *this* [emphasis mine] and much more than this had been said and would be said, was, of course, a widow in her prime" (15). The pronoun, "this,"
points across the expanse of textual white space, directly toward its referent, the gossip about Betty Flanders in the preceding block.

In Chapter Four, the narrator breaches a blank space between blocks by use of both a pronoun and a question and answer. Referring to an "overpowering sorrow," the narrator ends a segment with, "And what can this sorrow be?" The next segment begins, "It is brewed by the earth itself" (49). Again, the pronoun points to a referent in a previous block. Additionally, the sentence serves as an answer to the narrator's question in the previous block, as if the blank space between the two blocks represents a time lapse in which the narrator must have paused to reflect before responding. The novel's final chapter is brief, but it effectively unifies the three types of enclosed space. It is a single block of text (no spaces creating segments), a single unit of time (only a few moments) as experienced in single physical space (Jacob's room). 8

In her diaries, Woolf made use of margins and verso pages, which she transformed into a textual space juxtaposed with the blocks of entries. The texts she wrote in these marginal spaces frequently were supplementary to the diary entries. Often, two texts represented different but contiguous temporal units. For instance, on April 17, 1921, she recorded a failed attempt by the Triple Alliance (railwaymen, transport workers and miners) to organize a
general strike, which meant that "presumably the miners will have to give in*" (D 2: 111). Woolf's asterisk after the word "in" refers the reader to the adjacent margin, in which is written, "They haven't given in yet. May 9th." The two texts refer to two stages of the affair. Woolf also wrote a main diary entry for May 9th, and she easily could have recorded the miner's refusal to "give in" there. By instead placing the May 9th comment in the margin adjacent to the April 17th entry, she managed to breach a time lapse of several weeks in the diary chronology, thereby creating a separate and unified time frame for the narrative of the strike. This and other marginal comments in the diaries may have suggested to Woolf a spatially oriented intratextuality: physically or conceptually juxtaposed, two texts could supplement, extend, or intersect. The notion of juxtaposed textual spaces would have proved useful to Woolf in designing the structure of Jacob's Room. Because of nonconventional use of space in this novel, the "scaffolding" of a traditional spatial-temporal grid disappears. Isolation of the temporal portions of the novel allowed her to sustain "speed & form" in narrating the events of Jacob's life. At the same time, juxtaposition and linkage of the blocks provided the "looseness & lightness" she required to "enclose everything, everything."
The pages of Woolf's diary helped her to resolve problems of fitting time into a narrative form and led her directly to a design for *Jacob's Room*. During the same period, a second problem, recorded as a theme running across the pages of her diaries, was suggesting other possibilities. Amidst a flurry of personal and professional activity, Woolf's "diarising" frequently suffered from neglect just as it had in the earlier attempts. In 1915, the year *The Voyage Out* was published, she noted difficulties of keeping pace with time: "Shall I say 'nothing happened today'. . . . [I]t wouldn't be true" (D 1: 30). She expressed the same idea in 1917: "If I don't cover the next 10 pages with family gossip & detail of all sorts its not for want of it" (D 1: 87). With so much effort being spent on filling typeset or manuscript pages with words, Woolf's diaries often suffered the effects. And where she had found omissions or late entries in her 1897 diary merely "strange," in 1918 she regarded them as far more devastating: "It is fatal not to write the thing one wants to write at the moment of wanting to write it. Never thwart a natural process" (D 1: 198).

However, the "natural process" of writing "at the moment of wanting" was not always possible because the other "natural process," time filled with life's events,
continued to pass. On one such occasion, Woolf acknowledged a "grave defect" in her thinking:

There is a grave defect in the scheme of this book [her diary]. . . . When people come to tea I cant say to them, 'Now wait a minute while I write an account of you'. They go, & its too late to begin. And thus, at the very time that I'm brewing thoughts & descriptions meant for this page I have the heartbreaking sensation that the page isn't there; They're spilt upon the floor. Indeed its difficult to mop them up again. (D 1: 140)

She then listed a number of "unrecorded visitors" and commented:

Each [visitor] deserves something to mark their place, & I did mark it at the time. But how recover the impressions? . . . I don't see how to put 3 or 4 hours of Roger [Fry]'s conversation into the rest of this page. (D 1: 140)

By "mark," she meant both the graphics upon her page and a "remark" or acknowledgement of her visitors. As with the device of underlining blanks instead of using names in "Friendships Gallery," her associations again depended upon a spatial-temporal connection. By covering her page with marks, Woolf hoped to "recover" impressions that she had experienced in her past. And, facing the prospect, on that day, she managed only to lament, "I don't see how."

Finally, in 1919, after making no diary entries for a week, she looked at her blank diary page and interpreted its significance: "This gap can easily be accounted for by recalling the old saying (if it is one) that when things happen, people don't write" (D 1: 313). Only a moment of self awareness, her parenthetical "if it is one," prevented
her from turning her interpretation of the blank into a maxim, and clearly she "read" its meaning as "things happen."

Once Woolf recognized and verbalized the meaning of the lapses in her diary, the idea became a theme running across its pages. Conceptually, the diary page served as a site, a physical space in which the writing process is performed. A page filled with entries marked the writer's presence within the space, while a lapse in the chronology, a silence, marked an absence. The writer could be absent from one site because of her work at other textual sites: "10 minutes to eleven a.m. And I ought to be writing Jacob's Room; -- I can't, & instead I shall write down the reason why I can't" (D 2: 106). When Woolf became involved in several tasks, absence from her diary site proportionately extended:

Really, really -- this is disgraceful -- 15 days of November spent & my diary none the wiser. But when nothing is written one may safely suppose that I have been stitching books; or . . . or . . . The day before this I wrote the last words of Jacob -- on Friday Nov. 4th [1921] to be precise, having begun it on April 16 1920. (D 2: 141)

Regardless of the cause, the periodic lapses on the pages of her diary became a silent record of Woolf's engagement with life and its rapid passage: "My diary dwindles, perversely enough, when the stuff for it is most abundant" (D 2: 149). On some occasions, brief lulls in activity brought Woolf to her diary, as when she went there "to fill
in an awkward space between Russian & dinner I take up this book" (D 2: 13) or when she had "half an hour over, & may as well spend it here. 'Here' I always write about writing" (D 5: 106). Woolf's "here" pointed directly at her diary page. At other times, she could extend the "here" so as to include her immediate surroundings, a specific location in time and space where the act of writing occurs: "I'm not in the mood for writing, but feel superstitiously that I should like to read something actually written in Cornwall" (D 2: 105).

Five years after Woolf read the gap in her diary as "things happen," she would find a direct application for the idea in her fiction, namely in the "Time Passes" chapter of To the Lighthouse. The novel is divided into three sections, each prefaced by a page bearing only a subtitle. Traditionally, such a textual arrangement would represent three episodes in the story, with a smooth transition between them. Given Woolf's experiments with shifts from one character's point of view to another, we might expect the three sections to correspond to three perspectives on a single event. But neither of these possibilities is exactly what we find in To the Lighthouse, where only the first section, "The Window," and the last section, "The Lighthouse," represent episodes in the story. The two episodic sections do not constitute an uninterrupted temporal flow; ten important years have
lapsed between the sections, a period in which a war has taken place and a central character has died. The textual space that represents this lapse is not the customary blank page but an additional segment, the "Time Passes" chapter.

In the unique "Time Passes" section, nearly all customary narrative functions cease. Characters go to sleep and do not reappear. "But what after all is one night?" the narrator asks; "A short space," is the reply (192). As she had done in Jacob's Room, Woolf associated this "short space" in time with an empty physical space: "the emptiness indicated how once they [rooms] were filled and animated" (194). Lacking most of the elements we find in traditional stories, the "Time Passes" section seems to represent a narrative absence, a linguistic silence, an empty space. However, the lapse in narrative is not empty because Woolf "filled" it with text. To understand the function of the chapter within the overall design of the novel, we must remember Woolf's own reading of lapses as "things happen." We must also interpret the presence of writing on the page as a sign of the writer's presence at the textual site. Thus, we can "read" the chapter as a visual marker: The narrator is here (page and room), describing what can be perceived directly by the senses (furniture, clothing, sunlight, sea airs, passing sounds), while elsewhere, things happened in the lives of her characters. Time passes, and some events go unrecorded.
In deciding on subject matter to fill her "Time Passes" chapter, Woolf may have had in mind the similarities between textual silence and textual space, particularly as understood by a woman who is both a writer and a typesetter. In Jane Marcus' feminist reading of To the Lighthouse, she maintains that the "Time Passes" section is Woolf's "lament" for her mother:

The figure of the empty house . . . is a portrait of the dead mother's body and the daughter's appalling sense of loss. For women are their dead houses . . . time is experienced according to the mother's presence or absence. (6)

However, the physical space described by the narrator is not entirely empty; furniture remains:

So with the house empty and the doors locked and the mattresses rolled round . . . nothing in bedroom or drawing-room . . . but hangings that flapped, wood that creaked, the bare legs of tables. (194)

As a typesetter, Woolf was prompted to think of another kind of furniture, a kind directly associated with writing. To a writer or reader, linguistic silence is associated with white space on the page, empty space. But to a typesetter, space is never represented by an absence of matter. Instead, "blank spaces" in the typeset page are filled in with smooth-surfaced blocks of the appropriate size, the typesetter's "furniture." Without such blocks, the lines of typeset words would slide out of place during the printing process. Likewise, the narrator in Woolf's page tells us that, as time passes in the presence of only
furniture, "Nothing it seemed could break that image, corrupt that innocence, or disturb the swaying mantle of silence . . . in the empty room" (195).

It is not difficult to imagine how Woolf might make the conceptual leap from typesetting "furniture" to her mother's furniture, particularly since within the traditions of amateur printing, typesetting was a woman's role (Cave 200), which Woolf fulfilled while seated at her own dining room table. To Woolf the typesetter, it would have been a simple operation to remove the "furniture" that creates a blank space and to replace it with text that marks her mother's absence. In so doing, Woolf was able both to include a "lament" for her mother in To the Lighthouse and textually to figure her feminist concerns about the silences in or silencing of women's texts. None of these strategies would have occurred to Woolf if she had not learned to think concretely about the space on her page.

In the final years of Woolf's life, the approach of World War II threatened her textual surface in ways it had never been threatened before. Because paper was scarce during the war, Woolf was forced to write her drafts on whatever spaces she could find in old notebooks or on "an assortment of different sheets of paper" (Silver, TCL 362). Perhaps also to save paper, she at times drafted directly at the typewriter instead of on manuscript sheets (Silver,
Her awareness of a dwindling supply of paper is recorded in her diary entry for January 15, 1941:

Parsimony may be the end of this book. Also shame at my own verbosity, which comes over me when I see the 20 it is -- books shuffled together in my room. Who am I ashamed of? Myself reading them. (D 5: 352)

Woolf's "shame" at taking up too much space on her textual surface was a symptom of her growing depression and sense of guilt over her inadequacies to deal with the pressures of war and the prospect of future writing projects. The shame Woolf expressed contributed to her disgust or revulsion when she and Leonard visited the Hogarth Press at its wartime location in Letchworth. There she noted with distaste the difference between the making of books by hand and the dehumanized mass production of "perfect" books:

Then at Letchworth -- the slaves chained to their typewriters, & their drawn set faces, & the machines -- the incessant more & more competent machines, folding, pressing, glueing & issuing perfect books. They can stamp cloth to imitate leather. Our Press is up in a glass case. (D 5: 356)

However, despite the immediate necessity of wartime paper rationing and the disturbing image of her glass encased press, Woolf continued to believe in the importance of the written language, especially the printed word and the making of books.

Woolf's diaries and some of her novels, such as Jacob's Room and To the Lighthouse, stand as examples of what Max Nanny defines as "iconic" structures, in which the
"text as a whole may be an icon of what is [sic] is about" (200). In each of these texts, the overall structure functions as "a global icon of its theme" (200) by "means of the spatial order of a . . . temporal principle" (200). Additionally, most of Woolf's writing contains isolated examples of "specific literary devices of iconic representation" (201), such as parenthetical comments, spatial gaps, and features that "function as primarily or exclusively visual icons" (201) that reinforce semantic content. Nanny emphasizes that to design iconic structures or employ iconic literary devices, writers first must be aware of the correspondences between textual space and semantic content. Then they must be capable of manipulating the correspondences so as to take advantage of the "surplus of meaning" (200) always present within written language but seldom explored. Such was the mind and the artistry of Virginia Stephen Woolf, for whom the textual surface served as an icon of life.

Throughout the "pages" of Woolf's life, we see her creative use of textual space. The simple act of filling pages with written language taught Woolf to think spatially, and by 1919, she had discovered connections between seeing and writing that would contribute significantly to her thought and art. By experimenting with spatial-temporal grids, bracketing devices, and blank spaces, she discovered strategies for making her narratives
flexible enough to incorporate a plethora of material. Moreover, she had discovered a means of breaking free of the confines imposed by traditional linear narrative. Thus, on March 17, 1930, after many years of thinking spatially about her writing tasks, Woolf could claim that "A test of a book (to a writer) [is] if it makes a space in which, quite naturally, you can say what you want to say" (D 3: 298).

Notes

1 Karl Gerstner demonstrates this range of readability in his wonderfully graphic Compendium for Literates. He explores ways in which typographical effects can remain readable yet can distort or enhance lexical functioning of the text. Many of his examples are of the type we are accustomed to seeing in the language of advertising or in visual (concrete) poetry.

2 Virginia once mentioned an earlier diary, supposedly written in 1896. However, Leaska explains that it has not survived (PA 16).

3 Leaska accounts for some of these dates as if the pages were dated but blank (PA 132-133). However, this does not accurately describe the bibliographic features of the original diary (Research Publications International, Reel 1).

4 Because it is the only accessible text of "Friendships Gallery," I will refer to Hawkes' version throughout.

5 This page in the original is numbered 34. Hawkes tells us that Woolf numbered only the first 39 pages but continued writing for 13 more (TCL 273). Therefore, the biographer's claim comes somewhat prematurely; the text was only two thirds written at that point.

6 Hawkes reads the goddess as "a playful portrait of Nelly Cecil." She notes that this character also resembles Woolf, the result of "Woolf's tendency to describe the women of whom she was fond in terms that hold a mirror up to herself" (TCL 272).
As a metaphor for the reading process, this phrase is an important one in Woolf's figurative language. It will be discussed at length in the final chapter of this study.

This brief passage in Night and Day, published three years prior to Jacob's Room, may have been the seed of Woolf's idea about the connection between time and rooms: "[Any] room in which one has been used to carry on any particular occupation gives off memories of moods, of ideas, of postures that have been seen in it; so that to attempt any different kind of work there is almost impossible" (101).

In the final chapter of Art and Affection, Panthea Reid traces Woolf's brave struggle to overcome waves of depression in the final year of her life. See also, Quentin Bell's Virginia Woolf: A Biography, pp. 211-26.
Behind every page of Virginia Stephen Woolf's private and professional writings is her awareness of the madness of written language and the process by which it is created. Having its genesis in childhood as sensory encounters with appliances for writing and word objects, this awareness at first provided Woolf with brief images and motifs for some of her early stories and novels. However, as Shiv K. Kumar points out, time, not images or themes, was Woolf's principle concern as a novelist (68). And, again awareness of the process of filling pages with images of words served Woolf's needs. By associating the writing of biography (her diary designs) and the writing of fiction, Woolf discovered a means of conceptualizing narrative time in terms of textual space, the first result being *Jacob's Room* in 1922. It was at this stage in her life that Woolf attained a level of thinking about her art that I call "visual literacy," a hyperawareness of the materiality of written language and the creative process that functions as an essential component in reading and writing practices. Finally, in her maturity, Woolf's visual literacy so colored her thoughts as to become an important element in her reading of literature and her writing of literary history itself.
None of Woolf's fictions more engagingly demonstrate the creative potential of her visual literacy than does her sixth novel, *Orlando*. Published in 1928, this mock "life" of Vita Sackville-West (*Orlando*), with whom Woolf had an erotic relationship, offers for scrutiny the writing practices of two authors. One author is the self-referential Biographer; the other is Orlando, the central character who lived for 300 years and in the process, experienced a change in gender. The rhetorical premise of the work is that readers look over the shoulder of the Biographer during the writing of *Orlando*, a process that requires approximately one year. And in so doing, they learn that the Biographer's subject, Orlando, was a British poet who worked on a single poem, "The Oak Tree," for hundreds of years. Despite the differences in their writing projects, the Biographer and Orlando complete their respective works almost simultaneously in the year 1928, the same year in which Woolf herself completed the novel *Orlando*. Thus, the covers of *Orlando* effectively frame three different writing processes, one producing a poem, another a biography, and the third a work of fiction.

In shaping her fictitious authors, Woolf drew heavily upon her own reading and writing experiences, allotting to each character a certain measure of her personal powers of visual literacy. *Orlando* seems most closely aligned with Virginia Stephen's pre-professional writing, and this
character's visual literacy centers on direct sensual encounters with word objects and writing appliances. The Biographer reflects Woolf's concerns as a professional author, and his (evidence suggests a male biographer)¹ awareness of the materiality of written language and the tools of the writing process guides his selection and arrangement of material for the "life" and colors his use of imagery and figurative language.

The Biographer claims that Orlando is a work from his own hands and maintains that because his book is biographical and supposedly based upon fact, it is the reality, the truth, that constitutes Orlando's life. The notion of a scholarly biography is supported visually by the textual conventions of that genre, occasional footnotes and a concluding index of important names. However, the Biographer's claims are merely the illusionary trap of the rhetorical premise, the lure of the fictional text.

Literally, what readers of Orlando hold before their eyes is Virginia Woolf's published book, which she would regard as the physical manifestation of her own consciousness. The "reality" behind the pages of the work is that the combined experiences, thoughts, and language of Orlando and the Biographer demonstrate the range of own Woolf's visual literacy, the overall controlling force in the production of the text. Nevertheless, to appreciate such a force, it becomes necessary to participate in the illusion of the
book's premise and discuss the writing processes of Orlando and the Biographer as if the fictional characters were themselves "real."

The Biographer's writing process is one involving reflection, problem solving, and discovery. Both his direct comments to readers and his methods reflect ideas expressed elsewhere by Woolf herself. As early in her career as 1909, she was considering what she found to be "the weakness of modern biographers" (CE 3: 86), especially those who were attempting to write about the lives of authors. The weakness, she explained, was a tendency to separate the events in the author's life from his or her aesthetics: "It is easier for them [biographers] to draw distinctions than to see things whole" (CE 3: 86). Using the example of Laurence Sterne, Woolf maintained that the life of a writer might be treated more successfully in fiction because "the traditional form is far less definite in the case of novels than in the case of biographies," and "there are certain scenes upon which, were one writing a novel, one would like to dwell" (CE 3: 88), namely those biographical moments that contributed significantly to a writer's creative impulses. The Biographer in Orlando seems to have heard Woolf's call for "certain scenes" as he continually interweaves his subject's developing aesthetic sensibility with more conventional biographical details, such as the acquisition of property, title and public
acclaim and various romantic involvements. Woolf later elaborated on the conventions of biography in "The New Biography," an essay published in the New York Herald Tribune on October 30th, 1927, just prior to Orlando. In the essay, she maintained that traditional biography had been merely a craft, in which authors restricted their text to documented facts about the subject's achievements (CE 4: 229-231). But biography became art once authors turned their attentions to their subjects' internal experiences, where documentation was seldom possible. In describing the emotions and thoughts of their subjects, twentieth century biographers engaged in speculation and interpretation, which in turn allowed their own personalities to become evident in the text. Thus, Woolf asserted that modern biographical works revealed as much about the authors as they did about the subjects' lives, that the printed words in a biographical book embodied both the subject's "life" and the author's "mind" (CE 4: 231-235). The universal changes in biographical writing that Woolf described became the model for the personal experiences of the fictional Biographer in Orlando, her illustration of the process by which the genre changed from craft to art form.

At the beginning of his writing task, the Biographer seems quite traditional in his thinking. Like "every good biographer," he plans to ignore the "thousand disagreeables" (15) about his subject and any "confusion of
the passions and emotions which every good biographer detests" (16). He worships "Truth, Candour, and Honesty, the austere Gods who keep watch and ward by the inkpot of the biographer" (134). He attempts to hide behind "the immunity of all biographers and historians from any sex whatever" (220) and refers to himself with the plural "we." Additionally, he blatantly rejoices in his choice of subject:

Happy the mother who bears, happier still the biographer who records the life of such a one! Never need she vex herself, nor he invoke the help of novelist or poet. From deed to deed, from glory to glory, from office to office he must go, his scribe following after, till they reach what ever seat it may be that is the height of their desire. Orlando, to look at, was cut out precisely for some such career. (15)

Orlando's life of public acclaim will lend itself readily to a factual account (no need to fictionalize or embellish with poetic language). As a subject, Orlando will appeal to the tastes of readers and assure the author his own share of fame.

The Biographer's initial optimism about his writing task is short-lived, however, and his plans begin to unravel as he discovers that Orlando is not typical of the subjects in traditional biography. Where in the second chapter he can ignore some of Orlando's "disagreeables," he later must come to terms with the fact that his subject defies calendar time and thus the conventions of biographical narrative. Having been born in the sixteenth
century, Orlando nevertheless is only 36 and apparently still alive when the Biographer completes the final sentence of his work. Facing the challenge, the Biographer quickens his narrative pace. He omits descriptions of scenes familiar to readers, refers them to other texts for further information, and summarizes with "etc. etc." and brief lists. These strategies cannot solve the problems completely, however, and the Biographer eventually must admit, "Altogether, the task of estimating the length of human life ... is beyond our capacity" (99). His problems are compounded by difficulties while researching facts about Orlando's life, a problem which he openly admits to his readers. Echoing Woolf's concerns about the vulnerability of textual objects to destructive forces, the Biographer reports that several crucial documents were damaged in a fire during the reign of King Charles. The documents are now unreadable in some places:

Often the paper was scorched a deep brown in the middle of the most important sentence. Just when we thought to elucidate a secret that has puzzled historians for a hundred years, there was a hole in the manuscript big enough to put your finger through. We have done our best to piece out a meagre summary from the charred fragments that remain; but often it has been necessary to speculate, to surmise, and even to make use of the imagination. (119)

The holes in the textual surface create a narrative gap. But to salvage the life of Orlando, to give his subject immortality by reconstructing a series of documented
events, the Biographer apologetically inserts sketchy or questionable information from various other sources.

Soon the Biographer must deal also with Orlando's sex change, which he at first attempts to manage by fitting his subject into a traditional female mold. But Orlando resists such characterization, and "to give an exact and particular account of Orlando's life . . . becomes more and more out of the question" (220). However, the Biographer's most difficult challenge is Orlando's writing career. The problem, he explains, is that poets regrettably spend too much time thinking:

> Life, it has been agreed by everyone whose opinion is worth consulting, is the only fit subject for a novelist or biographer; life, the same authorities have decided, has nothing whatever to do with sitting still in a chair and thinking. Thought and life are as the poles asunder. (267)

While engaged in his art, Orlando sat in a chair for considerably long periods, and the Biographer must ask his readers, "What can the biographer do?" (267).

In the course of solving problems associated with so unusual a subject as Orlando, the Biographer manages to revise his traditional ideas about biographical narrative and its ability to reflect life. "Life," he realizes, cannot be viewed from a single perspective because such a myopic focus misses the multitudinous experiences of human existence:

> For everybody can multiply from his own experience the different terms which his
different selves have made with him. . . . For she [Orlando] had a great variety of selves to call upon, far more than we have been able to find room for, since a biography is considered complete if it merely accounts for six or seven selves, whereas a person may well have as many thousand. (308-09)

In the past, biography followed a linear pathway along which event marched after event in a uniform cadence. However, Orlando forces the Biographer to devise a new narrative strategy, one that calls to mind Woolf's discovery of the relationship between clock time and textual space in her diary writing. Taking a cue from the patterns of Orlando's life (when s/he is thinking, time moves slowly, and the Biographer has difficulties filling pages with words; when s/he is doing, both time and words flow rapidly), the Biographer adopts a fresh approach incorporating "the two forces which alternately, and what is more confusing still, at the same moment, dominate our unfortunate numbskulls -- brevity and diuturnity" (99).

To foreshorten the slow passage of time when Orlando was thinking, the Biographer employs the conventions and devices of his medium to their fullest. For example, facing a description of Orlando as he sat for "day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year" (97) under his favorite oak tree, the Biographer decides that narrative time can be forced to move "more quickly by the simple statement that 'Time passed' (here the exact amount can be indicated in brackets) and nothing whatever
happened" (98). The "simple statement" sits in the shadow of Woolf's own "Time Passes" chapter in To the Lighthouse, published the year prior to Orlando.

The suggestion of a bracketing device is reminiscent of the Ur-text of visual literacy, Tristram Shandy. Like Shandy, who puts before readers paralinguistic devices at the turn of every page, the Biographer uses brackets and many other marks throughout his narrative, indicating an acute awareness of his printed medium. For example, he visually encloses a list of rejoicings that followed settlement of a lawsuit against Orlando. Referring to the bracketed material, he then adds, "all of which is properly enclosed in square brackets, as above, for the good reason that a parenthesis was without any importance in Orlando's life. She skipped it [the celebrating]" (255-256). Elsewhere, the Biographer explains that a visual device is warranted by the tastes of "our modern spirit [which] can almost dispense with language" (253). Because the modern spirit places value only on the blandest language, he says he must "leave a great blank here, which must be taken to indicate that the space is filled to repletion" (253) with poetic dialog. And, in true Shanty fashion, leave a space he does.

Although Orlando's writing career proves troublesome, it also provides the means by which the Biographer manages "diuturnity" or a sense of continuity of time. No matter
how Orlando otherwise changed, his/her wish to become a poet was enduring. Meanwhile work on "The Oak Tree" progressed in a series of events suitable for linear narrative. In relating the events in the life of Orlando, the Biographer seems always to have one eye on the early diaries of Virginia Stephen as a source, so similar are the subject's experience to hers. Additionally, the Biographer's own language and vision takes on Woolfian awareness of the tools of textual production, visible language and word objects as he attempts to explain the workings of his subject's mind. Indeed, he adopts Woolf's habits of concretizing abstractions about reading and writing in a series of images involving pens, writer's hands, paper, and the visual properties of written language.

The Biographer describes Orlando's writing experiences in terms of failures and successes of his/her pen. The narrative opens with Orlando, a boy at age 16, living and writing in Elizabethan England: "[He] sat down at the table, and with the half-conscious air of one doing what he does every day of his life at this hour, took out a writing book" and marked its surface using "an old stained goose quill" (16). Woolf must have smiled watching the Biographer's description flow from her pen, for the scene closely resembles one of her most charming memories from childhood. Referring to writing, she once confessed, "I
think its been absorbing ever since I was a little creature, scribbling a story in the manner of Hawthorne on the green plush sofa in the drawing room at St. Ives while the grown ups dined" (D 5: 192 ). However, unlike little Virginia, Orlando was unable to complete his task on the day in question. The Biographer indicates the boy's failure to write by reporting that he dropped his pen and, leaving the room, he caught his foot on a painted chest, for "Orlando was a trifle clumsy" (17). Again, Woolf's presence behind the text is evident as the dropped quill and Orlando's clumsiness match her diary complaints about writing tools and foreshadow Mrs. Manressa's stubborn imaginary pen and clumsy handwriting in *Between the Acts*.

Another scene of failure occurred when the young Orlando, sparked with the desire to write, once "approached the ink horn, fingered the quill, and made other such passes as those addicted to this vice begin their rites with. But he pauses" (77). The Biographer regards Orlando's pause to be of "extreme significance in his history" (77). His explanation is that the ordinary act of "sitting down at a table and pulling the inkstand towards one, may agitate a thousand odd, disconnected fragments" of memory, which in Orlando's case raised "a million questions" about his past (79). In such a reflective mood, Orlando could not produce "a single, downright, bluff piece of work of which no man need feel ashamed," and,
symbolizing his failure, the ink-dipped pen was replaced by imaginary "arrows dipped in gall" (79). When Orlando reached 30 years of age, his creative aspirations were further hindered by demands of public service, again evident, the Biographer notes, in the tools of Orlando's trade when he was appointed Ambassador Extraordinary to Constantinople at age 30: "Orlando was kept busy, what with his wax and seals, his various coloured ribbons which had to be diversely attached, his engrossing of titles and making of flourishes round capital letters" (122), any activity save using his pen to write poetry.

While living with a band of gypsies, Orlando [by then a woman] was inspired to write after contemplating Beauty and Truth. The reflective mood "made her long as she had never longed before, for pen and ink" (145), of which she unfortunately had none at the time. Nevertheless, Orlando's creative impulse remained undaunted:

> She had no ink; and but very little paper. But she made ink from berries and wine; and finding a few margins and blank space in the manuscript of 'The Oak Tree,' managed, by writing a kind of shorthand to describe the scenery in a long, blank verse poem, and to carry on a dialogue with herself about this Beauty and Truth. (145)

So intense was Orlando's inspiration and so strong were her creative skills that she managed to produce not only a poem but first the needed appliances as well. As for Orlando's writing in the margins of her own text, the idea would have seemed quite natural to Woolf, who so frequently used the
same strategy in her own texts. Both the fictional poet and the author of Orlando treated textual space as a precious commodity and regarded the filling of each space to capacity with words as part of their authorial tasks.

Until Orlando began to write, her stay with the gypsy tribe had been harmonious. But as soon as she took up her pen, "the gipsies became suspicious" (145) and fearful. Comparing the unfamiliar activity of Orlando's hands to their own, the illiterate tribespeople doubted the merit of their crafts, their basket weaving and pottery making:

It [the gypsies' doubt] sprang from the sense they had . . . that whatever they were doing crumbled like ashes in their hands. . . . [H]ere is someone who does not do the thing for the sake of doing; nor looks for looking's sake; here is someone who believes neither in sheep-skin nor basket; but sees . . . something else. (146)

With the "vague but most unpleasant feeling" at work, the tools and hands of the gypsies became ineffectual: "They broke their withys; they cut their fingers" (146). Thus facing alienation in an illiterate society, Orlando then fled with her manuscript in search of an audience with which "words written are shared."

The image of the gypsies' cut fingers is part of a larger motif in Orlando. Like Woolf, the Biographer conceptually links human hands to the writing process, beginning with his account of an incident when young Orlando caught his first glimpse of a poet at work:

But there, sitting at the servants' dinner table with a tankard beside him and paper in front of
him, sat a rather fat, rather shabby man, whose ruff was a thought dirty, and whose clothes were of hodden brown. He held a pen in his hand, but he was not writing. He seemed in the act of rolling some thought up and down, to and fro in his mind till it gathered shape or momentum to his liking. . . . Orlando stood gazing while the man turned his pen in his fingers, this way and that way; and gazed and mused; and then, very quickly, wrote half-a-dozen lines and looked up. (21-22)

Shortly after seeing the poet at work, Orlando found himself in the presence of "the great Queen [Elizabeth I] herself" (22). As he offered her a bowl of rose water, his attention was drawn once more to the hand:

He saw no more of her than her ringed hand in water; but it was enough. It was a memorable hand; a thin hand with long fingers always curling as if round orb or septrre; a nervous, crabbed, sickly hand; a commanding hand; a hand that had only to raise itself for a head to fall; . . . And in truth, his mind was such a welter of opposites—of the night and the blazing candles, of the shabby poet and the great Queen . . . that he could see nothing; or only a hand. (22-23)

While the hand of a poet and the hand of a queen seemed "opposites" to Orlando, the Biographer supplies an historical connection:

And it was that same night, so tradition has it, when Orlando was sound asleep, that she [Elizabeth I] made over formally, putting her hand and seal finally to the parchment, the gift of the great monastic house that had been the Archbishop's and the King's to Orlando's father. (23)

Both the poet and the queen used their hands for writing. However, the tasks of the two writers, and thus their texts as well, differed significantly. In the poet's hand, a pen
was moved by creative instincts; in the hand of a queen, it was a tool for administering power, status, and wealth.

The "hands" motif continues as the Biographer recounts Orlando's visit to the family tombs, where he came upon the skeletal hand of an ancestor. The discovery prompted him to speculate upon the identity and occupation of its deceased owner. Supplying what Orlando may have been thinking, the Biographer tells his readers that since no one in Orlando's family had been a writer, he would have concluded "Nothing remains of all these Princes . . . except one digit" (71). Putting the skeletal hand with the other useless bones, Orlando shifted his thoughts to "a writer called Thomas Browne, a Doctor of Norwich, whose writing upon such subjects took his fancy amazingly" (72). At age 30, Orlando recalled the episode in the family tomb and his admiration for Browne's writing achievements. Again he colored the nonliterary histories of his relatives in shades of death:

But of all that killing and campaigning, that drinking and love-making, that spending and hunting and riding and eating, what remained? A skull; a finger. . . . Orlando, comparing that achievement [Browne's] with those of his ancestors, cried out that they and their deeds were dust and ashes, but this man and his words were immortal. (81)

Thoughts of Browne's career convinced Orlando that it was possible to write himself into immortality: "standing upright in the solitude of his room, he vowed that he would
be the first poet of his race and bring immortal lustre upon his name" (81).

As if to lend credence to Orlando's life-writing associations, the Biographer adopts his subject's theme while explaining his own reluctance to quote "the divine melody" of words from Browne's book: "We will leave [them] where they lie entombed, not dead, embalmed rather, so fresh is their colour, so sound their breathing" (81). But where Orlando believed that an author's immortality was "luster upon his name," a reputation that lasted forever, the Biographer maintains that authors themselves can be found "entombed" and "breathing" within the text. If authors gain immortality, it is because their consciousnesses have become words on a page: "Every secret of a writer's soul, every experience of his life, every quality of his mind is written large in his works" (209).

Another motif that defines Orlando's creative process is his/her experiences with paper. Beginning with a lust for paper in childhood, Orlando's need for a textual surface increased proportionately with his/her desire to write. Before he was 25, he had filled "some fifty drawers of cedar wood," each with "a document of considerable size all written over in Orlando's hand" (76). Among the "forty-seven plays, histories, romances, poems" was "one thin one, called simply 'The Oak Tree'" (77), which was the only page to survive when Orlando later "burnt in a great
conflagration fifty-seven [of his own] poetical works" (96). The destroying of manuscripts was for Orlando a gesture of disillusionment when a poet named Nick Greene wrote an unflattering portrait of him after the two supposedly had become friends. Although disappointed by Greene, Orlando for some time afterwards had continued to regard the poet as his "Muse in person" (103), and driven by a desire for fame, he had written as Greene would wish him to, in the Classical style. But this too he soon came to resent, and in an act fraught with symbolism, he rejected Greene, Classical style, and hopes of fame in favor of artistic independence:

"Bad, good, or indifferent, I'll write, from this day forward, to please myself"; and here he made as if he were tearing a whole budget of papers across and tossing them in the face of that sneering loose-lipped man. . . . For when he tore the parchment across, he tore, in one rending, the scrolloping, emblazoned scroll which he had made out in his own favour in the solitude of his room appointing himself . . . the first poet of his race. . . . Eloquent as this all was, he now tore it up and threw it in the dust-bin. (103-04)

Following the tearing frenzy, the destroying of his own word objects, Orlando began his writing afresh.

The Biographer explains that as a result of Orlando's new-found independence, "he had changed his style amazingly" (113). To underscore the change, he notes that Orlando likewise adopted a new writing surface, inscribing his words in "an old writing book, stitched together with silk stolen from his mother's workbox, and labelled in a
round schoolboy hand, 'The Oak Tree, A Poem' (113). When Orlando subsequently left home to become Ambassador to Constantinople, "he still carried with him, in the bosom of his cloak, a much-scored manuscript" (124), where it was to remain for hundreds of years. By the time Orlando had become a woman, "it might have been a talisman that she kept" (164) safely hidden about her person, and it was the margins of this manuscript that provided the only surface on which she could write while staying among the gypsies.

As Orlando grew in wisdom and understanding, reaching the point where she could proclaim "I am growing up" and "I am losing my Illusions" (175), the thin manuscript likewise had grown into twenty-six volumes. Despite the increased number of pages, Orlando continued to conceal her manuscript, but whereas formerly the masculine Orlando had hidden his words as a gesture of independence, the woman Orlando did so because of "her modesty as to her writing" (187). And, the Biographer reports, upon entering the Victorian Age, Orlando carried near her bosom "a roll of paper, sea-stained, blood-stained, travel stained -- the manuscript of her poem. She turned back to the first page and read the date, 1589, written in her own boyish hand" (236).

The Biographer calls attention to Orlando's "boyish hand" to emphasize the extremely personal quality of a handwritten manuscript, as compared to the more public
status of a printed book. In tearing up his manuscripts and returning to a handstitched writing book, Orlando had rejected the notion of publishing his work. As a young boy, he had proclaimed that "there was a glory about a man who had written a book and had it printed" (82), but the grown Orlando who tossed away his own work had come to believe that the poetry of such men "was scribbled down on the backs of washing bills held to the heads of printer's devils at the street door" (91). From that time on, just as s/he kept the manuscripts close to the heart, so the graphic images of words remained close to the hand. Pen and ink (or if necessary, juice of berries), not typeset, were to be Orlando's tools of choice.

Progressively, the Biographer acquires the attributes of a modern biographer as he attempts to relate not only factual details from Orlando's life but also the subtle emotional and aesthetic shifts acting upon his subject's personality. "Remember," he pauses in the narrative to say, "we are dealing with the most obscure manifestations of the human spirit" (265). To this end, he skillfully weaves together his previously established images of pens, writer's hands, and textual surfaces. As the narrative of Orlando's 300 year life approaches the Biographer's present, readers are told that there occurred a series of episodes during which she gradually lost control of her pens and writing surfaces. In the first of such scenes,
Orlando's freshly dipped pen caused a blot on her manuscript page:

It was some infirmity of the quill, she supposed; it was split or dirty. She dipped it again. The blot increased. She tried to go on with what she was saying; no words came. Next she tried to decorate the blot with wings and whiskers, till it became a round-headed monster, something between a bat and a wombat (238).

Unable to form the graphic images of letters and words, Orlando watched while "to her astonishment and alarm, the pen began to curve and caracole with the smoothest possible fluency. Her page was written in the neatest sloping Italian hand with the most insipid verse she had read in her life" (238). Orlando found "nothing more repulsive . . . than to feel the ink flowing thus in cascades of involuntary inspiration" (239). Although she narrowly escaped the "repulsive" experience when a sudden movement of her hand tipped the inkpot, destroying the text entirely, the Biographer adds that "all this agitation seemed at length to concentrate in her hands" (239).

Orlando's "agitation" persisted as a tingling sensation in her left ring finger, which she further associated with the fact that contrary to the "spirit of the age," she was unmarried. All of her subsequent attempts to write were failures, and often "the pen made one large lachrymose blot after another" (243). Finally, she reluctantly concluded that the only remedy was to "yield completely" and "take a husband." However, the
Biographer points out to readers that Orlando was mistaken, that a wedding ring on her finger was not the solution: "We write, not with the fingers, but with the whole person. The nerve which controls the pen winds itself about every fibre of our being, threads the heart, pierces the liver" (243).

In a second episode in which Orlando lost control, the manuscript of "The Oak Tree," by then completed, acquired a life of its own:

The manuscript which reposed above her heart began shuffling and beating as if it were a living thing, and what was still odder, and showed how fine a sympathy was between them, Orlando, by inclining her head, could make out what it was that it was saying. It wanted to be read. It must be read. It would die in her bosom if it were not read. (272)

Soon after the manuscript confessed its need to be read, Orlando ventured into twentieth century London, where she was overcome by sensory perception: "Her eyes, so long used to the look of a plain sheet of foolscap . . . ears, attuned to a pen scratching" (274) were not prepared for the sights and sounds of the city streets. In London, she once again met the poet Nick Greene, by then a knighted scholar. Sir Nicholas' position and appearance suggested to Orlando that "literature was an elderly gentleman in a grey suit" (280).

Suddenly, as if in opposition to Orlando's disillusionment, the manuscript hidden at Orlando's breast assumed charge of the situation; the buttons of her dress
opened, and "The Oak Tree" fell before Sir Nicholas' critical eye. Sir Nicholas was amazed immediately by Orlando's poem, praising it in terms that she did not fully understand. Finally, despite her disappointment in the changes in the old poet and in the extreme care she had always taken to safeguard the personal and private qualities of her text, Orlando ultimately was forced to submit to "the fervent desire of the poem itself" (281) for a public audience. Agreeing that her work must be published, she turned the manuscript over to Sir Nicholas, watching as he "made the blood-stained packet into a neat parcel; flattened it into his breast pocket" (281). Thus, in a single gesture, Orlando's writing career passed from private to public, her manuscript now residing at the bosom of literary tradition.

The Biographer uses a second series of events to account for Orlando's confusion as she entered the modern world and faced the prospect of becoming a published author, events which center on her habits of reading and the visual properties of written language. In the early chapters of the narrative, the Biographer had described the young Orlando's love of books as a "disease" from which he would never recover (76). Later, he told readers that the female Orlando's passion for reading had combined with an appreciation of the materiality of word objects. When she
discovered a prayer book once belonging to Mary Queen of Scots, its first appeal was to her eye:

It was a little book bound in velvet, stitched with gold, which had been held by Mary Queen of Scots on the scaffold, and the eye of faith could detect a brownish stain, said to be made of a drop of the Royal blood. . . . In the Queen's prayer book, along with the blood-stain, was also a lock of hair and a crumb of pastry; Orlando now added to these keepsakes a flake of tobacco, and so, reading and smoking, was moved by the humane jumble of them all--the hair, the pastry, the blood-stain, the tobacco. (172)

The Biographer makes much of the fact that the book in Orlando's hand was a religious text, suggesting that "the eye of faith" saw something on the page that readers who lack either sensory awareness or religious conviction might not. However, Orlando's reaction to the prayer book attested more to her visual literacy than to any strength of faith. So aware of the physical nature of the book was she that written words merged with other objects (hair, pastry, blood-stain, tobacco) visible on the page, and together the many objects became a "humane jumble" of text; reading required perception of "them all" (172). As Orlando continued to gaze at the prayer book, she discovered that the visual qualities of letters underscored the lexical function of words: "The letter S, she reflected, is the serpent in the Poet's Eden" (173). The graphic image of an "S" suggested to her the curving body of a snake as it moves. Additionally, the sound associated with the "S" mimicked a snake's hissing. Thus, the first
letter in both "snake" and "serpent" exactly replicated the idea associated with the words.

Despite Orlando's visual response to the prayer book, she nevertheless reflected that "the ear is the antechamber to the soul" (173). The Biographer then immediately responds to her comment by suggesting that the shape of letters, not the sound, is most important: "We must shape our words till they are the best integument for our thoughts" (173), offering a clue to a major difference between the author and his character. However, the Biographer does not reveal the significance of the ear/eye difference until the final chapter of his narrative.

Having convinced readers that his character possessed a talent for comprehending written signs, the Biographer then provides in his final chapter scenes in which Orlando's capacities are diminished.

Orlando's first response to the sudden end to her 300 year writing task and loss of the constant companionship of her manuscript was to wander alone in the London streets. Perhaps subconsciously hoping to remain "connected" to her soon-to-be-published work, she found her way into the shop of a book seller. But once inside, she had difficulty adjusting to the sight of so many printed texts:

All life long Orlando had known manuscripts; had held in her hands the rough brown sheets on which Spenser had written in his little crabbed hand. . . . She had owned, indeed, a fair number of quartos and folios often with a sonnet in her praise in them and sometimes a lock of hair. But
these innumerable little volumes, bright, identical, ephemeral, for they seemed bound in cardboard and printed on tissue paper, surprised her infinitely. (283)

It is at this point in the narrative that the Biographer calls attention to the fact that all of Orlando's reading experiences had been with handwritten manuscripts. And although Orlando could see the writer seated behind the pages of such manuscripts, although s/he could find a direct and very personal connection between writer and text within the cursive marks, printed pages seemed too remote and inhuman. Orlando was surprised to discover in the modern world a society whose taste was for "identical," thus impersonal, word objects. However, surprise quickly turned into admiration for published books, and Orlando naively assumed that any text bound and printed must be a work of great merit. Succumbing to a desire to appropriate such greatness, she then gave an "astounding order to the bookseller to send her everything of any importance in the shop" (284). But "accustomed to the little literatures of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, Orlando was appalled by the consequences of her order" (290) when the immense stacks of books later arrived at her home. The Biographer sums up her situation most succinctly when he notes, "Orlando's reverence for print had a tough job set before it" (290). Her powers of literacy, Orlando learned, were no match for the speed at which words poured from every modern press.
Life in the modern world, with its proliferation of technology and racing pace, was for Orlando a constant challenge, which the Biographer figures as a test of her ability to read. While glancing at her shopping list in a bustling department store, Orlando had the sensation that she was "holding the words . . . under a tap of many-coloured water," causing them to lose their lexical function and become merely images on a page: "Bath and boots [words] became blunt, obtuse; sardines [another word] serrated itself like a saw" (300). Struggling to read her list, Orlando had approached the threshold between seeing and reading, resulting in confusion about her purpose for being in the store. Like Woolf's Septimus Smith in Mrs. Dalloway before her or Rhoda to later appear in The Waves, Orlando faced fear and danger associated with inability to read, and she was able to escape the fates of Smith (madness) and Rhoda (death) only because she could recall one of the needed items without consulting the list.

Orlando's reading problems resurfaced as she later sped in a car down Ket Road. The date, the Biographer notes, was Thursday, October 11, 1928:

Here [was] a procession with banners upon which was written in great letters "Ra--Un," but what else? . . . Amor Vin -- that was over a porch . . . Applejon and Applebed, Undert--. Nothing could be seen whole or read from start to finish. (307)

It is at this point in the narrative, when Orlando was closest to losing her literate capacities that the
Biographer comes closest to voicing Woolf's word/flesh and writing/life associations. He explains that Orlando's "body and mind were like scraps of torn paper tumbling from a sack," an experience which "resembles the chopping up small of body and mind, which precedes unconsciousness and perhaps death itself" (307). However, the associations lead the Biographer into a narrative dilemma.

Faced with the task of reporting that language had failed his subject, the Biographer questions "in what sense Orlando can be said to have existed at the present moment" (307). But, if the Biographer writes that Orlando died, he has reached the end of his own text. And if he writes that Orlando slid into madness, he faces the impossible task of describing a dysfunctional mind. In either case, his text is coming dangerously close to extinction. Undoubtedly aware of his own precarious state, the Biographer has no choice but allow his subject to recover:

Indeed we should have given her over for a person entirely dissembled were it not that here, at last, one green screen was held out on the right, against which the little bits of paper fell more slowly; and then another was held out on the left so that one could see the separate scraps now turning over by themselves in the air; and then green screens were held continuously on either side, so that her mind regained the illusion of holding things within itself and she saw a cottage, a farmyard and four cows, all precisely life-size. (307)

The falling scraps of paper figure both the "dissembled" person of Orlando and the falling apart of the Biographer's narrative. Seeing the scraps against the green screens,
Orlando was able to "regain the illusion," thereby escaping madness or death. Symbolically, the "holding of things within itself" signals the Biographer's regaining of control over his narrative and its illusion of reality. Once again safe from a disastrous experiment with figurative description, the Biographer momentarily seeks safety in such concrete words as "farmyard" and "cows."

As related by the Biographer, Orlando's transition into the modern world seems never complete. In the last pages of the narrative, he describes a scene in which Orlando was once again in the presence of both her poem "The Oak Tree" and the living oak tree from which s/he had drawn inspiration for 300 years. And once again Orlando had difficulties comprehending the "meaning" of a printed text. The tree itself, the Biographer tells his readers, was "still in the prime of life" (324), and he goes on to describe it in language that suggests an animal morphology: "Flinging herself on the ground, she felt the bones of the tree running out like ribs from a spine this way and that beneath her. She like to think that she was riding the back of the world [emphasis mine]" (324).

As soon as the Biographer mentions that Orlando "liked to attach herself to something hard," he thinks of another solid object, the poem "The Oak Tree" in its published form, "a little square book bound in red cloth" (324). This particular copy of the book happened to be a first
edition, and because it was "signed by the author and artist," some traces of human hands (Orlando's own) remained, making it possible for her to once again carry it in the breast of her jacket. Nevertheless, for the most part, she was unable to see her own presence in the printed words, which led her to assume that the poem in its present state was lifeless, dead. Questioning its value, she had carried it with her merely to bury it at the base of the oak tree: "What has seven editions (the book had already gone into no less) got to do with the value of it? Was not writing poetry a secret transaction, a voice answering a voice?" (325). But Orlando was forced to admit that her plan to bury her book would end in failure because "The Oak Tree" by then belonged to the public domain, and "the dogs would dig it up" (324). Finally, unable to hear a voice within her published poem, unable to see either herself within her word object or the book's status within literary tradition, Orlando lost all interest in her work: "So she let her book lie unburied and dishevelled on the ground" (325). As a reader and writer, Orlando now lived in a world in which written words suggested to her little or no meaning at all.

2

In designing Orlando, Woolf once again solved her problems of narrative time in terms of biographical writing. However, in this particular work, she added
another type of narrative, historical. In so doing, she pointed directly to concepts central to her own theories concerning literary history, theories in which biography, bibliography, and history intersect. Consistently throughout his narrative, the Biographer attempts to demonstrate that Orlando's poetics had been guided by the "age" in which s/he happened to be living at the moment, thereby arguing that writers are inescapably products of their society. When Orlando was no longer able to respond appropriately to the written word, her literacy and creative powers ceased to exist. These are the same ideas about society and the artist that Woolf earlier expressed in her "Life of the Novelist" (1926) and would later develop in "The Leaning Tower" (1940).

To explain the significance of the "spirit of the age," the Biographer frequently employs the language of visual literacy. For example, he describes the Victorian literary aesthetic as a dampness that "gets into the inkpot as it gets into the woodwork -- sentences swelled, adjectives multiplied, lyrics became epics, and little trifles that had been essays a column long were now encyclopedias in ten or twenty volumes" (230). Taken at face value, such descriptions seem merely figurative, and readers may be tempted to dismiss the damp inkpot and swelling sentences as the Biographer's attempts to sound poetic. However, readers should not forget that they are
looking at a page in Orlando, authored by Virginia Woolf, and that her own visual literacy served as its controlling force. Behind the pages of Orlando, Woolf herself suggested quite literally that stylistic changes in a text are evident in its physical appearance:

With the twentieth century, however, a change came over biography. . . . The first and most visible sign of it was the difference in size. In the first twenty years of the new century biographies must have lost half their weight. Mr. Strachey compressed four stout Victorians into one slim volume; M. Maurois boiled the usual two volumes of a Shelley life into one little book the size of a novel. (CE 4: 221)

Also, in her "Modern Letters" where she blamed the fountain pen for stylistic changes in personal correspondences, Woolf described corresponding differences in the appearance and quality of stationary and handwriting (CE 2: 260). And in "The Decay of Essay-Writing," she offered the flood of magazines and pamphlets daily arriving at the hall door as evidence of the insatiable modern appetite for printed matter (EVW 14-17). The ideas, images, and language in all of these texts had set the stage for Woolf's later theories about the importance of the printing press in her "new" narrative of literary history.

Woolf shared with the Biographer in Orlando a vision of the creative process that intrinsically linked together textual production, the writer's personal experience, the prevailing social conditions, and universal trends in literary aesthetics. Frequently in her discussions of
literature, she created scenes of the individual writer at work as a device for explaining universal literary practices or tastes. A well known example is "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," in which Woolf asked readers to consider how Edwardian authors, Mr. Bennett included, might describe an imaginary character, Mrs. Brown. Woolf's narrative of the scene served as a rhetorical device for demonstrating differences between narrative conventions of Edwardian writers and those of the "younger" Georgians, whom she named as "Mr. Forster, Mr. Lawrence, Mr. Strachey, Mr. Joyce, and Mr. Eliot" (CDB 95). We find the same device in Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, in which she posited the career of the imaginary sister of Shakespeare in support of her feminist reading of literary history. By creating a Biographer who narrates the personal history of an individual creative consciousness in terms of a universal literate experience, Woolf opened out her narrative strategies in a manner that would later facilitate her plans to write a history of literature, a history whose guiding force once again would be her ever increasing sense of visual literacy and the emphasis it placed upon writing tools and word objects.

Speaking of Woolf's career as a literary critic, Mark Goldman explains that her practices increasingly were guided by her aesthetics as a novelist:

Though she was conscious of her own role as a critic and of the formal demands and legitimate
aims of literary criticism, there is a growing tendency in her writing to suspect the fallibility of critics and criticism resulting from a too-great dependence upon abstract rules and principles. Her artist soul became skeptical of her critical brain. (116)

Woolf's "artist soul" led her to speculate on March 16, 1939, about a new type of literary criticism, one that incorporated her notions of biographical writing as she had used them in fiction: "I'm thinking of a critical book. Suppose I used the diary form? Would this make one free to go from book to book -- or wd it be too personal?" (D 5: 210). Within the year, she also began a notebook, Reading at Random/Notes, in which she jotted down ideas for a more artistic version of literary history that she was never to complete. The notes outlined Woolf's plan to compare in depth the various art forms, to develop "A book explaining lit. [literature] from our [all artists'] common standpoint" (TCL 375) and the "universality of the creative instinct" (TCL 376). Her intention was to begin with the artists' media, "Stone, wool, words, paint" (TCL 376). She seemed particularly interested in how artists proceed in "making thoughts visible" (TCL 377), a question for which she would seek an answer through "the ear, the eye; the senses" (TCL 377), with special emphasis on "the connection between seeing & writing" (TCL 376), "the thing seen" and "the difference between reading & seeing" (TCL 376). Woolf managed to compose two chapter drafts for her work-in-progress, an early version of the first chapter, "Anon,"
and a fragment of the second, "The Reader." Together with the notes, these drafts document the extent to which Woolf's visual literacy had come to influence her critical thinking.

The focus of "Anon" is on writers, where Woolf traced the disappearance or "death" of the anonymous, universal voice "that broke the silence of the forest" (TCL 382) with an oral text and the appearance or "birth" of the author of books. In this chapter, Woolf pointedly associated personal identity with the written word. She explained that "For many centuries after Britain became an island" (382), when Anon first sang his song, "the audience was not interested in his name" (TCL 382). No one knew or cared to know the creator of oral legends because they were forever changing and had no one source. The voice had no identity apart from the audience: "Every body shared in the emotion of Anons song, and supplied the story" (TCL 382), and "there is no name to that song" (TCL 383). However, as civilization developed into a complex society, the anonymous voice became distinct from its audience. Distinctness brought with it alienation, and the voice was both "despised" and "feared" (TCL 383). Although the audience still did not know who Anon was, they knew he was not themselves.

Woolf explicitly juxtaposed the disappearance of the anonymous voice with the appearance of the printed word:
"it was the printing press that finally was to kill Anon" (384). Superseding speech as the primary mode of textual transmission, the printed word at first merely preserved and fixed the past: "Caxton's printing press foretold the end of that anonymous world; It is now written down, fixed; nothing will be added" (TCL 385). By "it," Woolf was referring to old oral legends, such as Morte D'Arthur, which cannot be associated with any one individual. But, before long, two factors changed. First, the texts appearing in print were not drawn from the well of oral tradition but from the inkwells of living persons. Second, each new author had a recognizable personality and a name:

It [the printed word] brought into existence the man who is conscious of the past the man who sees his time, against a background of the past; the man who first sees himself and shows himself to us. The first blow has been aimed at Anon when the authors name is attached to the book. The individual emerges. . . . The present is becoming visible. (TCL 385)

According to Woolf, as authors emerged into the public sphere via the printed word, they consequently became more personally identifiable. Moreover, literary history itself had become objectified. As stackable, sortable objects, books served as physical reminders of each author's work in relation to works by other authors, and the visible
"present" could be compared readily with the past. The concept of public visibility stirred both excitement and fear in Woolf. There for all to see in a book, words embodied the thoughts of a single person, a unique consciousness. But, for the individual author, who saw herself figured within the graphic images of words on a page of a book, identity brought with it a danger as well: "His [the author's] is no longer a wandering voice, but the voice of a man practicing an art, asking for recognition, and bitterly conscious of his relation [to] the world, of the worlds scorn" (391).

The fragmented draft of Woolf's second chapter begins with reference to the writing experiences of Lady Anne Clifford. In the process of describing Lady Clifford, Woolf brought together what she considered the two most important properties of written language. The first is its ability to make ideas "solid and entire in the pages" (TCL 427). The second is the manner in which the written word documents the existence of a writer's body and mind, as in Lady Clifford's texts, where "the sense of the body permeates her pages . . . she is for ever asserting her identity" (TCL 427). However, the Lady Clifford passage does not fit neatly with the remainder of the text, and Woolf very likely would have moved it in subsequent revision. Her real concern in "The Reader" was the
distinction between speech and writing, which she regarded as an important one in the history of literature.

In "The Reader," Woolf explored the movement from orality to literacy, identifying the end of the sixteenth century as the turning point:

> It was when the playhouses were shut presumably that the reader was born. The curious faculty of making houses and countries visible, and men and women and their emotions, from marks on a printed page was undeveloped so long as the play was dominant. (TCL 428)

The "birth of the reader," as Woolf termed the change, occurred simultaneously with a shift in the sensory faculties required to process a text. So long as the text was drama, the audience "had to draw in the play with their eyes and ears" (TCL 428). They saw the stage and actors but merely heard the words as dialog. Because the stimulus was immediate and transitory, "They could not deepen and revise the impressions left by the play" (TCL 428). However, books did not require the faculty of hearing. As a result, the readers' attention was focused on language that could be seen on the page, allowing them to develop a richer "sense of words and their associations" (TCL 428). Echoing her diary entry about the orthographical joke on the old tombstone, Woolf offered the example of the importance of spelling, a feature not present in speech: "A word spelt in the old spelling brings in associations" (TCL 428). Additionally, unlike the spoken language of drama, the written word appeared as an object within the physical
world, which readers could examine however and for so long as they so wished:

He [the reader] can pause; he can ponder; he can compare; he can draw back from the page and see behind it a man sitting alone in the centre of the labyrinth of words. . . . He can read directly what is on the page, or drawing aside, can read what is not written. (TCL 429)

Thus, written language "gives a different pace to the mind" (TCL 429) of the reader, a pace that Woolf attributed to the tangible nature of the visible word. Written language endured where speech was fleeting, and the texts of "immortal" word objects could be compared regardless of the date of their origin. But, Woolf emphasized, the simultaneous presence of texts should not blind readers to the fact that behind every page in a book there is a writer waiting to be found.

Within her notes for her unfinished work and the two early chapter drafts, Woolf touched upon themes about written language that she had pondered throughout her life. Clearly, her intention was to write a history of literature, beginning with the oral traditions and progressing to her present, in which authors published original works under their own names. As Brenda Silver explains, Woolf struggled to discover a structure that suited her vision of literary history: "The question was, as always with Woolf, how to create a form that would convey the underlying forces of historical process as she perceived them, how to capture the more evanescent growth
of human consciousness" (TCL 359). Woolf's original title for her history was Reading at Random suggesting a rather arbitrary arrangement of material. However, she later changed the title to Turning the Page, reflecting her intention to treat the process of literary history as a series of pages in a book. The structural concept is not unlike the pages of Woolf's one-page-per-day diaries, in which the space of a leaf represented a specific calendar unit and the sequencing of pages represented the passage of time. In the drafted chapters, her version of the historical narrative posited a process by which language became increasingly more "solid," more "visible," and more "permanent" with each turn of the historical page. Simultaneously, the artists became more "self-aware," more "identifiable," but also more susceptible to "the worlds scorn." As a narrative framework, this series of changes can be lifted from the context of literature in general and used to describe the creation of a single literary work, a process during which its mode of textual transmission changes from manuscript to published form. Likewise, the narrative framework can be applied to the developing aesthetic of an individual author, who is first a private writer and then becomes a publicly acknowledged professional. The similarities and interrelationships among the three versions of the narrative -- historical,
bibliographical, biographical -- were anything but coincidental or new to Woolf. In fact, a concept had been taking shape in her theorizing over many years. Like so much of Woolf's thinking, the idea was once again spatial, and the model was a word object: behind any "page" in literary history were books, as the works themselves and as the "book" of their process of becoming an object. Behind every page in every book/"book" was the writer at work. And to "read" any book or any one page, Woolf believed she must considered them all.

3

The treatment of the two writers in Orlando and the notes and drafts for Turning of the Page stand as an open invitation for readers to look behind the pages of Woolf's own texts and to ask the question that she herself would raise: To what degree can it be said that Virginia Woolf's visual literacy was characteristic of her age? By "age" I mean specifically the age of the printed word. If Woolf had lived to complete her literary history, she may have been among the first to define the "connection between seeing and writing." Most certainly, her attention to authors and the tools of textual production foreshadowed Elizabeth Eisenstein's The Printing Press as an Agent for Change (1979) and Walter Ong's Orality and Literacy (1982), both of which identify the printed word as the most significant element in literary history. Woolf accurately
placed herself and her contemporaries solidly within what Ong terms the age of "Typographical Man" in his studies of the evolution of literacy. He argues that the printed word changed forever our thinking about language by forcing a gradual shift in the "sensorium" from oral to visual perception. According to Ong's account, authors had come to regard the printed word as their medium long before Woolf published her first sentence.

If, as she would have us do, we attempt to place Woolf's literary achievements within the "Typographical Age," her ambivalence about the printed word becomes quite obvious. While many of her modern contemporaries were experimenting overtly with the graphic shapes of letters and the conventions of reading, Woolf limited her innovations to narrative design and themes about the consequences of a destroyed text or loss of literacy. However, Woolf's reluctance to experiment visually does not mean that she was unaware of the artistic opportunities inherent in the printed medium; evidence proves quite the contrary. For instance, as a child, she had been introduced to the work of the great author-typographer William Blake. Indeed, Blake's name was among those she subsequently listed in her Notes for Reading at Random as useful illustrations of the "connection between seeing and writing" (TCL 377). She very likely had seen and enjoyed
George Herbert's shaped poem "Easter Wings." As a woman of letters in the first quarter of the twentieth century, Woolf most certainly was aware of the visually unique work of avant-garde artists -- Guillaume Apollinaire, F.T. Marinetti, and Stéphane Mallarmé, for example. However, these artists just as certainly regarded her as a prime example of the literary establishment they challenged with their visual experiments. As a member of the "Bloomsbury Group," Woolf found herself in an adversarial relationship with the Vorticist painter, poet and critic Wyndham Lewis. Although suffering harsh criticism for what he regarded as her lack of originality, Woolf nevertheless would have been aware of the visual experimentation in Lewis' Vorticist poetry and on the pages of Blast, the Review of the Great English Vortex, which he and Ezra Pound edited between 1914 and 1915.

While most of the visual experimentation Woolf may have seen was in poetry, some of the works were prose fiction. As a girl, she had enjoyed the visual antics in Tristram Shandy and as an adult held Laurence Sterne's work in high esteem. In 1918, Woolf's eyes were among the first to examine James Joyce's manuscript for Ulysses when she and Leonard Woolf were asked to consider printing it at the Hogarth Press, an offer which they rejected. Woolf came to admire Ulysses for its innovative design, as is evident from her diary comments on the occasion of his
death: "I bought the blue paper book [published edition of *Ulysses*] & read it here one summer I think with spasms of wonder, of discovery" (D 5: 353). However, her comments about the novel end with "& then again [I read] with long lapses of intense boredom." More telling are her reflections about the Woolfs' reaction to the original manuscript and the proposal that they publish it: "Would we devote our lives to printing it? The indecent pages looked so incongruous" (D 5: 353). Apparently, the complicated and unusual typesetting Joyce required troubled Woolf's belief in the necessity of textual conventions. Moreover, to do justice to the text's visual effects would have required purchase of cases of new type and typesetting skills far more professional than the Woolfs' own.

Despite the flurry of interest in the status and function of the printed word that surrounded her and despite the importance she placed on the presses, Woolf seemed always to look over her shoulder, glancing longingly at a time when handwritten words were an author's primary or only choice of medium. The cause of her longing was twofold. On the one hand, she was acutely aware that the publishing of her works immediately rendered her ideas visible and vulnerable to public scrutiny; she feared rejection, the "inksplash" of critics. On the other, she reasoned that if words could be the manifestation of an author's consciousness (her word/flesh and writing/life
associations), then all the more so if the shapes of letters were uniquely the author's own. She believed that she was more visible in her handwritten manuscripts and literally more "in touch" with her own thoughts and emotions; she feared loss of self. Neither Woolf's dread of public criticism nor her concerns about self-identity suggest that she was any less aware of the materiality of her texts than were her contemporaries. In fact, her ambivalence about the printed medium reveals the intensity of her visual literacy.

Woolf's appreciation of handwritten words may seem incompatible with her typesetting and bookbinding activities, but during the several years that the Woolfs personally operated the Hogarth Press, she actually was able to alleviate some of her sense of loss of self that she usually experienced when her pen was no longer touching her page. Typesetting and bookbinding brought her into direct tactical contact with the printed word. In his history of the Hogarth Press, J. H. Willis, Jr. explains that the Woolfs' developed a "physical bond" (3) with their printing equipment: "Print was earnest, skilled play. . . . It was undeniably manual. . . . It was messy and inky, and thoroughly satisfying to body and mind" (4). While arranging type, selecting papers for covers, sewing bindings, and making hand corrections to printed copies whenever necessary, Woolf must have imagined herself in
kindship with William Blake. Donna Rhein, who studied the opus of hand printed books from the Hogarth Press, maintains that "there are not many sensible reasons for buying a printing press and going into the publishing business" (57), especially when the owners were Virginia and Leonard Woolf. As Rhein points out, the Woolf's had no intention of producing books in the fine arts tradition of William Morris (58), nor were their skills adequate for the task if they had wished to produce beautiful, expensive editions typical of the Cuala and Kelmscott Presses (Willis 41). Rather, it was Roger Fry's Omega Workshops that furnished the "formative influence on the Woolfs' interest in printing" (Willis 10). The Omega rejected notions of skilled craftsmanship in favor of "an air of the playful and improvisational. . . . Anyone could try his [or her] hand at anything" (Willis 10). In fact, if the goal of the Hogarth Press had been to publish art books, Woolf may not have found the enterprise worth her efforts. As it was, every imperfect mark, every space, every stitch, every cover in the Hogarth's amateurish presswork attested to the presence of a human hand, often Woolf's own.

The privately owned press offered freedom for experimentation, and Woolf could have incorporated into her texts visual innovations that challenged literary tradition and its institutions. However, never intentionally did she cross the threshold of signification so as to make the
images of words unreadable or extremely unconventional, for to do so was a personal risk she was unwilling to take. Conformity to the conventions of reading at the expense of originality was preferable always to loss of literacy, a sign of madness or the approach of death.

In her fiction and theoretical writings, Woolf insisted that writers are influenced by direct sensory contact with their "thousand appliances." She argued further that as readers, historians, and critics, a truly literate audience is one that possesses the ability to see behind the pages of writing authors seated in a labyrinth of words, busily operating the tools of their trade. Werner Senn examines the use of the labyrinth as a literary theme or image, focusing on its form as a signifer (219). Finding the use of labyrinth imagery widespread, Senn explains that it offers the writer possibilities for both a structural (an enclosed space) and procedural (movement through a maze) themes or metaphors. Thus, Woolf's description of an author seated in a "labyrinth of words" suggests a space enclosed by written language and a maze-like creative process of discovery.

Woolf's scene of writing in relation to literary history differed from those of some of her well-known contemporaries. While she imagined a creative setting as a scene of necessary isolation, her friend E. M. Forster posited in Aspects of the Novel that writers from all ages
are seated together in a single room: "We are to visualize the English novelists . . . as seated together in a room, a circular room, a sort of British Museum reading-room -- all writing their novels simultaneously" (9). Forster's discussion of the novel was colored in the language of visual literacy. Like Woolf, he mentioned that the authors' pens are "vivid to them" and "their sorrows and joys are pouring out through the ink" (9). However, he remained unconcerned that some hands hold quills and others dip pens with steel nibs. Also unlike Woolf, he discounted the importance of the social fabric in which the act of creation occurs, "the history of its time" (13), which apparently would include the history of print technology. Another of Woolf's acquaintances, T. S. Eliot, imagined "the whole of the literature . . . [which] has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order" (43) in his "Tradition and the Individual Talent." Despite her admiration for Eliot's work, Woolf must have wondered how he could attempt an explanation of literary tradition without mentioning the shift from quill to pen and the profound influence of printing presses. Woolf could have pointed out that the printed word had made possible the very sense of simultaneity Eliot described. Books, not authors, she could have told him, can exist in the same time and place.
In that she was visually literate, Woolf shared a sensibility with her contemporaries. The tools and products of textual production were common ground. Her fiction was conventional in its physical properties, yet the narrative designs often were spatial in concept. However, the italicized "interludes" and marks of punctuation in *The Waves* and the visually distinct playscript in *Between the Acts* suggest that Woolf may have been moving towards more innovative bibliographic devices. The handmade books from the Hogarth Press overtly called attention to their own materiality, their madness. Woolf's belief that word objects draw together reader and writer within a rhetorical setting propels her through the volumes of critical pages in which seldom if ever were writers mentioned and "literature" became pure concept disconnected from its textual surfaces, left to float weightless, shapeless, impossible to grasp with the hands or study with the eyes. Only very recently have critics once again paused to look at the textual surface. For instance, Jerome McGann summarizes the dominate vein of critical thinking:

Our interest in theory of art has been dominated for so long by the conceptual forms of Enlightenment and romantic thought that we have forgotten the revolutionary character of his [Morris'] basic insight: that if we wish to understand art and poetry we have to approach them as crafts, as practical forms of making. (xiii)
In light of McGann's emphasis on the madeness of texts, a comment in Woolf's 1918 diary seems prophetic of the remainder of her own career and the future of literary criticism as well: "[I am] trying to define my own particular search -- not after morality, or beauty or reality -- no: but after literature itself" (D 1: 214). Reading the "page" of a critical future she did not live to see, she would recognize much that is familiar in recent textual scholarship which calls attention to the textual surface and examines the signifying potential of visual devices. She would applaud comparative studies such as Wendy Steiner's *The Colors of Rhetoric*. However, Woolf also would be disturbed to learn that to date most critical attention has been placed upon only radical experimentation with visual devices. "Your criticism is concerned only with oddities, never with conventionalities," she would say. Indeed, her judgement would be correct.

Critics have yet to examine fully what can be found behind and on the surface of materially conventional texts. The charge is especially true in the case of prose fiction, although Woolf's visual literacy can teach us that the shapes of letters and words and paralinguistic devices and the conventions or print are always the writer's medium, always an essential part of "literature itself." Consider for instance, George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, not generally treated as visually innovative. However, by
looking at the text instead of reading it, we come to realize that Orwell put to use many devices possible only with a written text (a footnote, a visually distinct "second text," an appendix), all of which contribute significantly to the fictional narrative. Seldom do we consider how changes in the mode of textual transmission (i.e., from handwritten to typed to printings and reprintings) change a particular work. Do we really believe that the text we read in the conventionally printed editions of Virginia Stephen Woolf's diaries is the same text we read on her original handwritten pages? Woolf would think not. Finally, we do not customarily look behind the page and allow the scene of writing to inform our reading of it, the importance of which I have attempted to demonstrate by analysis of Woolf's fiction in this and the previous chapters.

Woolf has shown us how to look afresh at individual literary works and how to "read" the history of the art. She reminds us that we are all products of the "Typographical Age." She has given us characters like Mrs. Manressa with her stubborn pen, Septimus Smith and Rhoda and Flush who see shapes but cannot read words, and Orlando whose pen and handwritten manuscript have a life of their own, while her printed book lies dead but unburied. With these characters, Woolf urges us to look behind the page, to consider the creative scene, where a writer sits alone
in a labyrinth of words. "O the thousand appliances," she exclaims. And those of us who have acknowledged our own visual literacy will look where she points and see exactly what she means.

Notes

1 Although the Biographer claims to "enjoy the immunity of all biographers and historians from any sex whatever" (220), the use of pronouns alone suggests a male author. When comparing genders, pronouns referring to women are third person and those for men are first person plural (213, 214, 219).

2 The exact wording in this passage is that she had "scratched out twenty-six volumes" (175), and it is tempting to compare the image to Woolf's own "scribbled" thirty diary volumes, also taking a lifetime to complete.

3 Brenda Silver points to a September 12, 1940 diary entry as Woolf's first recorded ideas for a "Common History book" (TCL 356). She does not mention the March 16, 1939 entry.

4 An important text, one that should be examined more closely, is Woolf's essay "Reading." The language, design, and theme of this essay suggests a strong connection to both Orlando and Turning the Page, perhaps serving as a link between the two. However, as yet, the date of composition for "Reading" has not been determined, and it was published after her death in The Captain's Death Bed, 1950.

5 Woolf mentioned "a little volume of George Herbert" in her essay "Reading" (CDB 170). Since Herbert published only one book of poetry, The Temple, which included "Easter Wings," we can safely concluded that Woolf saw it at some time in her life. The collection contains other shaped poems as well, but not all of them explore the relationship between line arrangement and lexical function of the words as artfully as "Easter Wings".

6 See Marjorie Poggioli's The Theory of the Avant-Garde and Perloff.

7 See Rosenbaum (331-52) for details of the Lewis-Bloomsbury controversies. See also Lewis' chapter on Virginia Woolf in Men Without Art.
Her admiration is evident in her review of Wilbur Cross' *The Life and Times of Laurence Sterne*. In this essay, published August 12, 1909, Woolf also took the opportunity to express some of her views about the writing of biography, producing a strange telescoping effect: a fiction writer (Woolf) writing about a biography (Cross') about a writer (Sterne) who created a fictional autobiographer (Tristram Shandy) who comments about writing (CE 3: 86-93).

These observations are from my unpublished analysis of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, part of my series of bibliographical and rhetorical "readings" of literary works.
WORKS CITED


Reid, Panthea. *Art and Affection: A Life of Virginia Woolf.* (book manuscript, 10 chapters).


VITA

Janice M. Stein is a native of New Orleans, Louisiana. She is the eldest daughter of Elaine Veale May and John Victor May, both deceased. She has four grown children from her first marriage and two grandchildren. She currently lives with her husband, Daniel W. Broe, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Janice is an assistant professor of English at Our Lady of the Lake College of Nursing and Allied Health in Baton Rouge. She especially enjoys working with "nontraditional" students and serving as faculty advisor for the college's Cultural Arts Association.
DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate: Janice M. Stein

Major Field: English

Title of Dissertation: The Thousand Appliances: Virginia Woolf and the Tools of Visual Literacy

Approved:

Major Professor and Chairman

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

Anna R. Nardo

James Bolmer

Susan E. Ryan

Adelaide M. Russo

Date of Examination: November 3, 1994