Breaking the Mould:

The Voyage Out by Virginia Woolf

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Introduction

The Voyage Out was Virginia Woolf's first novel. Growing out of the English novel tradition it at first glance appears to comply with the rules and standards of that tradition. The plot of *The Voyage Out*, apart from the death of the heroine, is not significantly different from something Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë or George Eliot might have written, nor would many eyebrows have been raised had Henry James or E.M. Forster made use of it. Rules of character development and chronological sequencing of events are also complied with. Virginia Woolf is very much aware that she is working within the tradition. But in *The Voyage Out* she is using the established form of the novel to question that same form. Woolf is entering into dialog with the traditional narrative.

There has been a tendency to regard *The Voyage Out* as an unsatisfactory novel, a novel unable to achieve its goals. Frederick P. W. McDowell, in "*Surely Order did Prevail": Virginia Woolf and The Voyage Out,* complains: "The book is too long, however, and many episodes and characters are extraneous to the main action or expanded at too great length" (74). James Naremore, in *The World Without a Self,* says: "I believe the treatment of sexuality in the novel is inadequate or at least mismanaged" (47). Phyllis Rose, in *Woman of Letters: A life of Virginia Woolf*, finds that: "It is more uneven than Woolf's later works, and its charms are the charms of the first novel (50), While David Daiches, in *Virginia Woolf,* "is tempted at this stage, to ask whether fiction is really this writer's métier" (22). There is a general feeling that *The Voyage Out* can in no way measure up to the sparkle of Virginia Woolf's subsequent successes. Compared with the innovation of *The Waves*, the ingenuity of *To the Lighthouse*, the wonderful flow of *Mrs. Dalloway*, *The Voyage Out* remains the ugly duckling. As Rachel Vinrace is judged against the standard of her mother faulted for who she is not, rather than for who she is, so the novel is weighed and found wanting.

The Voyage Out has been studied in a number of ways. It has been examined in order to throw light upon Virginia Woolf's later works, a reading back from the perspective of the later novels in order to grasp the development of Woolf's method. Certainly it is possible to find a number of similarities between *The Voyage Out* and for instance *To the Lighthouse*. Helen and Ridley Ambrose share some of the characteristics of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay: she tends to mother the people around her, while he likes quoting poetry aloud to himself. St. John Hirst could be regarded as an early draft of Charles Tansley. In both novels two of the minor characters get engaged. The link between *The Voyage Out* and *Mrs. Dalloway* is even more apparent. There is a Clarissa and Richard Dalloway in *The Voyage Out* as there is in *Mrs. Dalloway*.

Another approach to the novel has been to read it in search of clues to Virginia Woolf's personality. Is the beast-man from Rachel Vinrace's dream perhaps an allusion to Virginia Stephen being molested by her half-brothers? Could St. John Hirst and Terence Hewet be regarded as literary portraits of Lytton Strachey and Clive Bell? Is Rachel Vinrace's illness and death a consequence of the mental breakdowns that Virginia Woolf suffered while writing the novel? I will not be answering any of these questions. Although I am sure that a number of parallels can be found between Virginia Woolf's life and the novel, I do not think that reducing *The Voyage Out* to a list of symptoms would be very useful.

In my opinion *The Voyage Out* should be regarded as a work complete in its own right. I do not want to read it as a first draft, or as an exercise piece that Virginia Woolf made while waiting to develop her method, nor do I want to contemplate whether it provides a deeper understanding of Virginia Woolf's mental state. I want to look at what the novel actually does, what it achieves. Closely examining the text, looking at how the novel deals with the topics of communication, patriarchy, The British Empire and literature, will in part throw light upon the multi-layered, surprising complexity of the novel, but more importantly

it will show the way that the novel is constantly questioning itself. In the chapter on communication I look at the way the narrative often strays from Rachel's story, in order to observe the way the characters communicate. Communication is revealed as being extremely difficult. In the chapter called The British Empire and Patriarchy, I examine what is the novels' main political concern. The novel takes a critical view of the British Empire and Patriarchy. In the last chapter I consider the way the novel is exploring the concept of literature. I will show that this division into three chapters is really an artificial divide, as all three themes are part of *The Voyage Out*'s discussion of the traditional form of the novel. In *The Voyage Out*, as she is constructing a fictional text that fits into the novel tradition, Woolf is simultaneously subverting and rejecting the traditional form of the novel.

Communication

The Voyage Out was written and rewritten in its entirety a number of times, and there may have been as many as seven drafts of this novel (Louise DeSalvo, *Virginia Woolf's First Voyage: A novel in the Making*: 9). A possible consequence of this careful planning is that the structure of the novel has become like a carefully laid mosaic: its pattern on the surface deceptively simple, but consisting of a myriad of individual tiny pieces.

A casual glance at the novel's plot places it firmly within the English novel tradition. It is quite easy to find a number of parallels between this novel and for instance Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*. In *The Voyage Out* Rachel Vinrace leaves her home and comes under the protection of her aunt and uncle. In *Sense and Sensibility* the Dashwood sisters and their mother are forced to leave their home after the death of the father. The Dashwoods come under the protection of distant relatives. Rachel Vinrace meets three potential suitors; Hewet, Hirst and Dalloway, Marianne and Elinor Dashwood also meet three potential suitors; Edward Ferrars, Willoughby and Colonel Brandon. Rachel Vinrace and Marianne Dashwood are both skilled at playing the piano. In *The Voyage Out* Hewet invites everyone to a picnic on Monte Rosa. In *Sense and Sensibility* Colonel Brandon hosts a picnic at his Delaford estate, but is called away at the last minute. In *The Voyage Out* a ball is held to celebrate Arthur and Susan's engagement. In *Sense and Sensibility* Marianne is told of Willoughby's engagement at a ball. After a journey into the jungle Rachel Vinrace contracts a fever and falls dangerously ill. After a journey to London Marianne Dashwood contracts a fever and falls dangerously ill. Helen Ambrose is a pillar of strength during Rachel's illness. Elinor Dashwood is a pillar of strength during Marianne's illness. In both instances the men are unable to be of much help during the illness. Hewet sends Hirst to fetch a different doctor, while Colonel Brandon fetches Marianne's mother.

In *The Voyage Out* a prostitute is evicted from the hotel after a complaint by the would-be respectable character Hughling Elliot. In *Sense and Sensibility* Colonel Brandon's former love's daughter is pregnant by the would- be respectable character Willoughby. Evelyn Murgatroyd is an illegitimate child but is still proposed to frequently. Edward Ferrar's fiancée is of undesirable background, but is still proposed to by both Edward Ferrars and his brother.

This kind of listing similarities might not be terribly useful. It could be argued that between any two books, when examined closely, there will be certain similarities. However, I think that the similarities between these two novels strongly suggest that Virginia Woolf is operating within the traditional form of the novel. It is quite a common plot; a young woman ventures out into the world, falls in love, experiences some obstacle to this love, overcomes it and triumphantly marries. This kind of plot is found in many Victorian novels, and variations on this theme is found in the works of George Eliot, Charlotte Bronte, Jane Austen plus a number of less famous novelists. The pattern is not followed through in *The Voyage Out*: There is very little opposition to Terence and Rachel marrying except for her illness, and she does not overcome it she dies. Still, this kind of plot has been subverted before. Rachel dying is not enough to conclude that this novel breaks out of the traditional form, and so stands alone as something new. Henry James rejected the happy ending in *The Portrait of a Lady*. Anna's suitor commits suicide at the end of Arnold Bennett's *Anna of the Five Towns*. If we are to suggest that there is something more to *The Voyage Out* than meets the eye, then we need to venture deeper.

In this chapter I am going to look at the way that communication is a central topic of *The Voyage Out.* I will look at the way communication is described in the novel, and consider what significance the exploration of communication has for the book. I propose that through its dealing with communication the novel is rejecting the traditional form of the novel.

That is not to say that communication is not central to a novel like *Sense and Sensibility*. The many twists and turns of the plot often stem from the character's inability to say what they feel or think. In this respect *The Voyage Out* can be seen as carrying on a traditional pattern, and the reader might feel securely within familiar territory. However, whereas Edward Ferrar's failure to mention to Elinor that he is already engaged is a central device for carrying on the action and adding intrigue to the plot, the failures to communicate in *The Voyage Out* have quite a different function. Rather than being obstacles to be overcome before the happy final conclusion the failures to communicate are treated as worthwhile in their own right. The novel lingers to explore the ways that people communicate because that in itself is what is seen as interesting. What is even more significant is that the novel is very much aware of what is done; attention is continually being drawn to the fact that the novel is exploring the way that people communicate, often stealing attention away from the novel's plot.

From the very beginning of the novel when Helen and Ridley Ambrose are singled out from the crowd of office clerks and young lady typists making their way from the Strand to the Embankment, it seems clear that the novel is going to revolve around communication. Helen Ambrose feels overcome by grief at the thought of leaving her children, so she pauses by Waterloo Bridge to cry. "Mr Ambrose attempted consolation: he patted her shoulder; but she showed no signs of admitting him, and feeling it awkward to stand beside a grief that was greater than his, he crossed his arms behind him and took a turn along the pavement"(3). While his wife is crying, Ridley Ambrose passes the time quoting Greek poetry aloud to himself. There is a gap between the two: "He came up to her, laid his hand on her shoulder, and said 'Dearest'. His voice was supplicating. But she shut her face away from him, as much as to say, 'you can't possibly understand'"(4-5). The conflict between the two is not resolved: no understanding is reached. Helen surrenders her feelings to Ridley's will and walks along with him.

In the beginning of the novel Rachel is described as a silent girl, given to being absent minded (14). Helen observes of her that "Moreover, a hesitation in speaking, or rather a tendency to use the wrong words, made her seem more than normally incompetent for her years (13). Rachel has been brought up by her maiden aunts in Richmond in an atmosphere of enforced silence. One instance where Rachel attempted to speak with her Aunt Lucy about love is recounted. This conversation leads Rachel to conclude that "To feel anything strongly was to create an abyss between oneself and others who felt strongly perhaps but differently. […] It appeared that nobody ever said a thing they meant, or ever talked about a feeling they felt, but that was what music was for" (29).

Rachel's position, both in her home and onboard the ship has been defined not by who she is, but rather by who her mother was. Rachel's Aunt Lucy declares: "But you know I care for you, don't you dear, because you are your mother's daughter if for no other reason, and there are plenty of other reasons" (28). Ridley Ambrose sighs, "Ah! She's not like her mother!" (8). Mrs Chailey, the housekeeper has stayed with the family out of loyalty to the late Mrs Vinrace, and is unhappy with the way that Rachel runs the household (21-22). Helen observes of Rachel " She was like her mother, as the image in a pool on a still summer's day is like the vivid flushed face that hangs over it" (18). Rachel's father on the other hand sees Rachel much as his property, he speaks of her in the third person while she is in the room, and he has no doubt that she will function as a Tory hostess to promote his political ambitions (77).

There is a certain cold indifference in the way that Rachel has been treated. She has been deprived of a voice of her own. The people around her have been unable to see her, because she has been in the shadow of her mother. Rachel has relinquished her voice in favour of the piano, because it enables her to express what she feels, without causing offence. "Music, you see […] music goes straight for things. It says all there is to say at once" (195-

196). Placed within her protected sphere, surrounded by her family and their friends, Rachel has no voice. A change begins when the Dalloways arrive onboard the ship.

The change is first manifested when Rachel sits staring into her mirror and deciding that: "her face was not the face she wanted, and in all probability never would be" (33). Rachel has begun to consider herself as a person, but is still not ready to break her silence. "Rachel followed. She had taken no place in the talk; no one had spoken to her; but she had listened to every word that was said" (38).

The Dalloways did not know Rachel's mother, so that when they look at her they see merely Rachel. They are able to speak with her without comparing the conversation with conversations they have had with her mother. Rachel desires to break free of her loneliness and her silence. " 'Please tell me everything'. That was what she wanted to say. He had drawn apart one little chink and shown astonishing treasures. It seemed to her incredible that a man like that should want to speak with her" (48). It is telling that when Clarissa Dalloway enters Rachel's room "Bach's fugue crashed to the ground" (49). Faced with Clarissa Dalloway Rachel's music becomes insufficient. Clarissa has already stated that she does not feel that music is altogether good for people (39), and that it is desirable that Rachel should be rescued from the arts before it is too late. "She has quite nice eyes and hair, only, of course she'll get funny too" (41). Clarissa makes Rachel wish to tell her things. "She was overcome by an intense desire to tell Mrs. Dalloway things she had never told anyone – things she had not realised herself until that moment" (52).

Speaking together Rachel and Richard Dalloway develop a certain intimacy.

> D'you know Miss Vinrace you have made me think? How little, after all, one can tell anybody about one's life. Here I sit there you sit, both I doubt not chock-full of the most interesting experiences, ideas, emotions; yet how communicate? I've told you

what every second person might tell you.' 'I don't think so', she said. It's the way of saying things, isn't it, not the things' (59).

This admission of sympathy between them makes Richard desire to disregard conventions and speak to Rachel about love, but his wife interrupts him (60). After having recovered from seasickness Richard seeks out Rachel and kisses her. The kiss causes Rachel great emotional turmoil and she goes to her Aunt Helen for advice on how to sort out the confusing emotions. Helen makes the glamour of the Dalloways fade and Rachel is able to conclude: "It is very difficult to know what people are like.' […] I guess I was taken in" (73). The conversation also makes Rachel realise that men desire women, and that this is the reason why she has never been allowed to walk alone. "By this new light she saw her life for the first time a creeping hedged-in thing, driven cautiously behind high walls, here turned aside, there plunged into darkness, made dull and crippled forever – her life that was the only chance she had – a thousand words and actions became plain to her" (72). Richard's kiss seems to have broken a spell, but Rachel has been kissed by a middle-aged, married former MP, not by a handsome prince, and the reality she wakes up to initially terrifies her. "Because men are brutes! I hate men!" (72). Helen is able to smooth away these fears, and what Rachel is left with is the realisation that she can be her own person. "So now you can go ahead and be a person on your own account" –Helen encourages (75). Rachel's sudden awareness that she is entitled to a self is the climax of the first part of the novel. It creates an expectation that this is what is going to be the novel's main concern, that Rachel is going to be developing her sense of self and claiming a voice of her own.

Rachel comes under the protection of Helen, and Helen believes in communication. Christine Froula, in "Out of the Chrysalis: Female Initiation and Female Authority in Virginia Woolf", observes of Helen that "For the rest Helen sees no reason why women should not be

as satisfactory as men if properly educated, and to that end she gives Rachel a room of her own: She desires that Rachel should think, and for this reason offers books and discourages too entire dependence upon Wagner and Bach" (148). In the text it is said of Helen, "Talk was the medicine she trusted to, talk about everything, talk that was free, unguarded and as candid as a habit of speaking with men made natural in her case" (113). This description of Helen highlights the importance of communication. If Rachel is going to be able to become a person in her own right, then she has to be free to speak. Rachel has been cut off from the world, and in a sense she has been on the outside looking in. This is clearly shown when she and Helen sneaks about the hotel in the dark, looking through the windows. This is an example of what she and Helen calls "seeing life". "We're going to see life. You promised" (88). Also on the trip up the Monte Rosa Rachel is on the outside looking in. She sits apart looking at the others, and when Hewet asks her what she is looking at, she answers plainly, "human beings" (123).

On the Monte Rosa, Hewet, Helen, Hirst and Rachel for the first time form their little group. Helen and Hewet are in accord that even though they have spoken quite freely, there are still things that can perhaps never be said. Disregarding her former resolution to play the piano and forget the rest, Rachel forces the issue. "Rachel who was very slow to accept that only a very few things can be said even by people who know each other well insisted on knowing what he meant" (132). Rachel here abandons her previous solitude and accepts her right to her own opinion.

This newfound self is still quite fragile, and is shaken by an encounter with Hirst at the ball. Their dancing indicates that they are bound to have problems communicating. "A single turn proved them that their methods were incompatible; instead of fitting into each other their bones seemed to jut out in angles, making smooth turning an impossibility"(139-140).

Having failed at dancing, Hirst attempts conversation instead: “You see, the problem is, can one really talk to you? Have you got a mind, or are you like the rest of your sex? You seem to me absurdly young compared with men your age?” (141) Rachel feels at once excluded from the world, and seeks refuge in fantasies of solitude. Hewet relays Rachel’s anger, and shows her instead that it is possible to laugh at Hirst, and she is able to reject even his favourite historian, Gibbon: “It goes round, round, round like an oilcloth” (184).

Having acquired a voice and a self Rachel goes on to consider the truths that she has based her life upon. She rejects the idea that her father as a person is far more important than she is (201), and she rejects religion. “All round her were people pretending to feel what they did not feel, while somewhere above her fleeted the idea which they could none of them grasp, which they pretended to grasp, always escaping out of reach, a beautiful idea, an idea like a butterfly” (215). Rachel rejects religion, or at least organized religion. Expectation is built up: What will Rachel do now that she has a voice of her own? Having a voice, however, does not ensure success at communication. “Why did they not kiss each other simply? She wished to kiss him. But all the time she went on spinning words” (203). At the hotel she walks from room to room, speaking with the women inside, attempting to reach some understanding, and at the end feeling that she has achieved nothing. “All day long she had been tantalized and put off”(244). Rachel complains to Helen: “ The lives of these people,’ she tried to explain, ‘the aimlessness, the way they live. One goes from one to the other, and it’s all the same. One never gets what one wants out of any of them” (249).

Throughout the novel the characters are seen moving towards each other, attempting to bridge the gap between them, but they are unable to do so. The reasons why the characters are unable to fully communicate are many. It is partly that language is insufficient as a means of communication, partly that social restrictions make communicating difficult, and also in some instances a character’s personality gets in the way. That language is unable to create

successful communication is seen in many instances. The novel often suggests that understanding between people happen somewhere beyond language. As Rachel says to Richard Dalloway: “It’s the way of saying things, isn’t it, not the things?” (59) Another instance where an understanding is reached somehow aside from language is when Helen and Rachel decide that they like each other. “That fact, together with other facts, had been made clear by their twenty minutes’ talk, although how they had come to these conclusions they could not have said” (75). Most of the characters experience difficulty with communicating, but it is most prominent with the characters who are outside or in opposition to patriarchal society. Hence, Mrs. Dalloway seems quite adept at communicating, because she never desires to say anything very profound, or in opposition to the rules of polite society. Rachel Vinrace on the other hand experiences difficulty with expressing herself throughout the novel. St. John Hirst has a personality which makes it hard for him to communicate. “To be simple, to be able to simply say what one felt, without the terrific self-consciousness which possessed him, and showed him his own face and words perpetually in a mirror, that would be worth almost any other gift, for it made one happy” (294).

Patricia Ondek Laurence says in “The Reading of Silence”, speaking in general about Virginia Woolf’s writing:

> Woolf confronts the narrativity of silence and the cultural constraints of her time. Distinctions are made between what is left ‘unsaid’, something one might have felt but does not say; the ‘unspoken, something not yet formulated into voiced words, and the ‘unsayable’, something not sayable on the basis of Victorian propriety or something about life that is ineffable (1).

It is easy to see how this relates to *The Voyage Out*. Communication often comes to a crashing standstill when faced with any of these obstacles. The 'unsaid' comes between Rachel and Helen when Rachel does not confide about her feelings for Terence. "Having detected, as she thought, a secret, Mrs Ambrose respected it carefully, but from that cause, though unintentionally, a curious atmosphere of reserve grew up between them" (208). An example of something left 'unspoken' is found when Rachel thinks of Hewet. "Although these moods were directly or indirectly caused by the presence of Terence or the thought of him, she never said to herself that she was in love with him, or considered what would happen if she continued to feel such things" (211). An example of something "unsayable" is seen when Helen Ambrose asks Clarissa if she thinks Ridley looks like a gentleman. "The question seemed to Clarissa in extremely poor taste. 'One of the things that can't be said', she would have put it. She could find no answer but a laugh" (40). However, the novel does more than reveal these different problems of communicating. The novel explores the way that the characters attempt to overcome the silence that is created by the 'unsaid', the 'unspoken' or the "unsayable".

Michael Leaska does in the book "The Novels of Virginia Woolf" quote Constance M. Rourke:

> It is the fact of human relationships which first and always seems to engage Mrs. Woolf …She is constantly aware that anything like complete understanding between people is rare and transitory, but she always knows that the establishment of such understanding is the perpetual human concern …what she cares about is entirely the train of the impulse to create relationships, the lapses back, the sterile recessions; and she has her clear sense … of how they all sum up (12).

Rourke here points out what is central to *The Voyage Out*: the attempt to bridge the gap between people and reach a complete understanding. The social event takes precedence throughout the novel, from the ship named after one of the social graces (joy), to the tea parties held by the English under a baking South American sun. Rourke also points out that it is the personal relationship that is foremost in the author's mind. Certainly in *The Voyage Out* this seems to be a question about the chicken and the egg: Does Woolf focus on communication because she wishes to throw light upon the personal relationship, or does she focus on the personal relationship because it throws light upon communication? The two seem quite inextricably linked, and so answering the question is not easy. The setting, first onboard the ship, then at Santa Marina, both safely away from England, children, obligations and circles of friends, certainly facilitates putting a select number of friends and strangers under the microscope to study their behaviour. The setting is a form of estrangement: removing the characters from their everyday backgrounds brings their characteristics out more clearly. Hermione Lee does in The *Novels of Virginia Woolf,* suggest, " The exotic setting, which might seem rather perversely chosen and was certainly not to be characteristic, provides the basis for a satirical contrast between Rachel's private needs and the public world she must inhabit"(Lee 34-35). It does as Lee observes leave room for satire, as the English take their afternoon tea in the blistering sun, or reject foreign newspapers in favour of the Times, but most importantly it provides the opportunity to focus on the way that the characters communicate.

One of the reasons why *The Voyage Out* might seem unsatisfactory is its tendency to abandon Rachel Vinrace and her story entirely, in order to dwell on minor characters and minor events. The retelling of conversations between minor characters often does not add to the forward drive of the narrative, but rather causes it to come to a temporary standstill. One

example of this is the chatter between the guests of the hotel over breakfast. The conversation revolves around the Queen of the Netherlands, and it is Miss Allan who speaks first: "'I always envy any one who lives in such an excessively flat country,' she remarked. "'How very strange!' Said Mrs Elliot. ' I find a flat country so depressing.' 'I'm afraid you can't be very happy here then, Miss Allan', said Susan. 'On the contrary ' said Miss Allan, I am exceedingly fond of mountains'" (101). Nothing much is actually said in this passage, so the content can be seen as far less significant than the form. It serves in part to shed light on the characters gathered, and in part it is an example of the kind of conversation that polite strangers would have. Another example of this kind of conversation is found onboard the *Euphrosyne*, when the Dalloways realise that it falls upon them to provide the conversation at dinner. 'What I find so tiresome about the sea is that there are no flowers in it. Imagine fields of hollyhocks or violets mid-ocean! How divine!' 'But somewhat dangerous to navigation!' boomed Richard, in the bass, like the bassoon to the flourish of his wife's violin" (34). When the narrative makes these kinds of departures it is to make an observation about the way that people communicate. The focus continually seems to be on the difficulty of communicating. A passage that might have been scrapped in its entirety had it not been for the light it throws upon communication is that between Mrs Chailey, and Rachel. The housekeeper comes to Rachel to complain about the state of the sheets, though in reality she wishes permission to sit in a different room than the one she has been given. The conversation has Rachel storming off exclaiming, "Lies! Lies! Lies! [...] What's the use of telling me lies?" (22) As it turns out Rachel has misunderstood Mrs Chailey's intentions. Mrs Chailey attempted to make Rachel care for her, the way that Rachel's mother had once cared for her. This is revealed as the focus stays on Mrs Chailey and her thoughts. "The world no longer cared about her, and a ship was not a home" (22). The communication between the two has failed.

The novel is constantly aware that reaching a genuine understanding is extremely difficult. Terence Hewet observes after a conversation with Evelyn Murgatroyd: "Why was it that relationships between people were so unsatisfactory, so fragmentary, so hazardous, and words so dangerous that the instinct to sympathise with another human being was an instinct to be examined carefully, and probably crushed?" (179) Here Terence Hewet is voicing a central concern of the novel. The reason that the novel takes time to recount seemingly insignificant chatter between different characters is to throw light upon the way that relationships work. In the same way that the narrative can seem unsatisfactory and fragmentary, so the relationship between the characters is experienced as unsatisfactory and fragmentary. The narrative reflects the difficulties that the characters have with communicating. The novel continually suggests that the chatter and conversations between the characters fails to grasp what is real. Reality is seen as something removed from the characters, and what they can win if only they find the right way of expressing themselves. "What really goes on, what people feel, although they generally try to hide it? There's nothing to be frightened at. It's so much more beautiful than the pretences – always more interesting – always better" (150). It is Helen Ambrose who is making this remark when she is enlisting Hirst to help her make Rachel a reasonable person. Rachel herself realises early on in the novel that language is unsatisfactory, and that people fail at communicating. "It appeared that nobody ever said a thing they meant, or talked about a feeling they felt, but that was what music was for" (29). Hewet is also aware of the split between what people say and what they think and feel. "We want to find out what's behind things, don't we?" (206) St. John Hirst contemplates the nature of reality:

> 'Cows', he reflected, draw together in a field; ships in a calm; and we're just the same when we've nothing else to do. But why do we do it? – is it just to prevent ourselves

> from seeing to the bottom of things' […] 'making cities and mountains and whole universes out of nothing, or do we really love each other, or do we, on the other hand, live in a state of perpetual uncertainty, knowing nothing, leaping from moment to moment as from world to world" (116).

Hirst suggests that communication is what prevents people from "seeing to the bottom of things", and that the personal relationship gets in the way of a genuine understanding of reality. He also creates an image of reality as something impressionistic and transitory, "leaping from moment to moment as from world to world." This echoes Woolf's own ideas of art, influenced by Roger Fry which holds that art should be "not illusion, but another reality; not imitation, but equivalence" (Lee: 16). Lee goes on to point out that "The idea of life and character presented in the Edwardian novel is, to Virginia Woolf, a fraudulent attempt to sustain a fixed idea of reality under inappropriate conditions" (18).

Reality, Woolf is saying throughout the novel, is found not in the clutter of everyday events, not in the conversations, but hovering somewhere just out of reach, waiting for someone to chance on the right way to express it, in order that it might be perceived clearly. In this way Woolf is rejecting the traditional form of the novel, by shedding light on its inadequacy. By pointing out that communication is perpetually difficult, and that it generally fails to grasp what is genuine and real Woolf is able to draw attention to the fact that the novel in its traditional form, describing reality in a chronological, linear manner is inadequate. Throughout *The Voyage Out* Woolf is suggesting that this image that she has created of the English, sitting drinking tea and reading *The Times* in a hotel in South America, is false. Constantly claiming that reality is located somewhere else, somewhere beyond the everyday events, Woolf is undermining the value of the image she is creating. At the same time as she is creating her characters she is rejecting them. Woolf is creating a text, which is rejecting

itself. As Daiches pointed out, although he did it to shed light on what he perceived to be the failing of the novel, “there seems to be a struggle between the form of the book and its content.” (*Virginia Woolf:* 21)

Terence Hewet desires to write a book about silence, the things people don't say, but he admits that the difficulty is immense (204). Hewet's desire to write such a book is significant because it draws attention to what the novel itself is doing. The preoccupation that the novel has with silence, or rather with the breaking of silence is highlighted when Terence speaks of his book. Laurence suggests, “Terence Hewet's project – to write a novel about silence –reflects Woolf's own preoccupation with rendering the mind itself both conscious and unconscious, on the page” (13). I agree with this up to a point; there is in the novel a desire to grasp all of reality, and so the mindless conversations contrasted with the silent desires could be an attempt at simply rendering all of reality, all of experience. Still, Hewet's desire to write about silence interacts directly with the novel’s ambition to reveal why communication so often fails. The focus of the novel is on all the small and great obstacles between people that make the forming of friendships, and achieving genuine understanding, so difficult.

Rachel’s death is extremely significant in the novel. Lee writes of Rachel’s death that it seems unfortunate that it is not more foreshadowed in the book.

> Presumably Rachel’s death is intended from the start of the novel, though the reader sometimes feels, with Strachey, as though he has read only the beginning of an enormous novel, which had been – almost accidentally cut short by the death of Rachel. If one shares this feeling then the death could be seen as an arbitrary stroke of force dooming Rachel’s chances of Happiness, rather than as the inevitable climax to the book. That there should be a difficulty in deciding whether the death is inevitable

> or arbitrary suggests a weakness in the book, Daiches was perhaps right in wishing that the death had been definitely anticipated throughout (50).

I do not agree with the argument that the difficulty of deciding whether the death is arbitrary or inevitable suggests a weakness in the book. If the novel is read as a *Bildungsroman,* or even a love-story, then Rachel's death constitutes a massive break with the traditional pattern. Foreshadowing the death throughout the novel would diminish or even extinguish this effect. David Daiches suggests that Rachel's death is more or less completely arbitrary: "Rachel Vinrace is sent to her death because for the moment Virginia Woolf can see no more of the quality of life by meditating on her further" (*Virginia Woolf*: 18) As did also W.H. Hudson in " A Letter to Edward Garnett, June 1915", a review written when the novel was first published: "On Rachel she has spent most care and thought and for this reason perhaps is less successful. She cannot finish the portrait, and so without rhyme or reason takes this, the youngest and healthiest of the whole crowd, and puts her to death. A rather brutal way of bringing the work to an end. I mean from an artistic point of view" (62). I agree that on the surface the death seems arbitrary, but if it is read in light of the novel's preoccupation with communication then the death is not only planned, but also necessary.

The way that the novel's action builds up towards the ending might make the death surprising. In the first part of the novel Rachel has an epiphany. Being kissed by Richard Dalloway has suddenly made her aware of her own self. "The vision of her own personality, of herself as a real everlasting thing, different from anything else, unmergeable, like the sea or the wind, flashed into Rachel's mind, and she became profoundly excited at the thought of living" (75). This is the climax of the first part of the novel, and its conclusiveness leaves the reader expecting this to be the foundation that the rest of the novel is built upon. An expectation is created in the reader that the novel is now to focus upon a journey of self-

discovery. This is also hinted at in the novel's title, as most critics are quick to observe. The voyage out stands not only for the voyage to South America, or the voyage up the river into the jungle, but also for the voyage the heroine undertakes out into life, and away into death. To some extent the journey of self-discovery is followed through in the next part of the novel. Rachel leaves her father to come live with her aunt and uncle, she expands her mind by reading what she pleases, and she starts to assert her self in relation with other people. The three most important instances of Rachel's development as her own person is when she is playing the piano at the ball, when she is rejecting organized religion, and when she decides to go on a trip up the river. There is a climax in the jungle, when Hewet asks Rachel to marry him and she accepts. Still, Rachel agreeing to marry Hewet contradicts all that the novel has been moving towards in terms of Rachel's self-discovery. Rachel as a complete person is rejected when she agrees to become one half of a union. Rachel's illness and death does not bring back any feeling of Rachel as triumphantly independent. Rachel's death rejects not only the marriage plot, but also the bildungsroman, the "Rachel as her own self" plot. Rachel's death may seem arbitrary if read from either of these perspectives, but there is an undercurrent in the narrative, which requires her death in order to be completed. The way that the novel deals with the topic of communication reveals that the death is by no means arbitrary, but required in order for the argument to be brought to its conclusion.

Throughout the novel the characters are attempting to communicate, but the efforts usually fail. Death represents the ultimate breakdown of communication. When Rachel falls ill she is again plunged into silence. She loses a sense of time, she loses her grasp of literature, and she loses the understanding of language. Her world collapses in on itself. As she earlier chose silence, because it seemed easier than attempting to overcome the gap between people, she now has it thrust upon her. All that the novel has been building up towards falls apart. This is, as Rashmi Gaur observes in *Virginia Woolf: The Poetic Strain in her Novels*, also

reflected in the time setting: "Rachel going out from the misty cold London to the dazzling sunlight of South America symbolizes her growing from her cool and unsensuous girlhood to warm and sensuous maidenhood" (22). Rachel leaves London in October, spends the winter in seclusion, almost hibernation in the villa, before spring comes with love. She dies in May, at the brink of summer, suggesting that Rachel fails to flower. Rachel's development into her own person, the expectation that the difficulties of communication will somehow be overcome, even a hidden hope that Rachel may throw it all aside to devote herself to a career as a pianist, all of this collapses and vanishes as Rachel dies. Froula writes of Rachel's illness:

> 'curled up at the bottom of the sea,' she awaits the speech, the script, the plot, that would make hers an *initiatory* death, redeeming it by a rebirth into a new language. In these scenes, Woolf advances the plot of the female-artist novel, representing not the death of the body but the symbolic death that her heroine undergoes when she finds no language in which to live (159).

Froula's suggestion that Rachel dies because she cannot find a language with which to communicate has some merit. The novel has claimed throughout that communication is difficult, and that it can only be successful through conscious effort, and by disregarding the rules set up by society. Rachel and Hewet are unable to transcend these rules of society, and end up instead complying with them. When Rachel and Terence have become engaged, the very thing Helen desired to save Rachel from when she enlisted Hirst's assistance, takes place. Hewet desires to go to the hotel for tea, and Rachel does not immediately wish to come with him. Terence jokingly mocks her "Helen you ought to have taught her by this time that she's a person of no conceivable importance whatever- not beautiful, or well dressed, or conspicuous for elegance or intellect, or deportment" (291). This is exactly the kind of

flirtatious nonsense that Helen criticises when she asks Hirst to help Rachel see what people are really like. “She nodded her head at a table near them, where two girls and two young men were chaffing each other very loudly, and carrying on an arch insinuating dialogue, sprinkled with endearments, about, it seemed, a pair of stockings or a pair of legs” (150).

The novel ends in silence. Hirst lies listening to the chatter of the other characters as they are making their way to bed. Rachel’s death collapses the novel’s own communication. Rachel and her story have escaped. In the same way that Rachel is tantalized and put off, so the reader has been tantalized and put off, again and again throughout the novel. Rachel’s death collapses the novel’s own communication. In the same way that communication between people is hampered by the rules enforced upon it, so the novel collapses in this way because of the rules that the traditional narrative imposes on it. Rachel Vinrace becomes a metaphor of the novel itself. As Rachel is struggling to transcend the demands and restrictions of patriarchal society, in order to speak freely and express herself in her own voice, so the novel is attempting to break free of the restrictions placed upon it by its traditional form.

Empire and Patriarchy

> Implicit within the formal instability of *The Voyage Out* is its major political concern: the collapse of imperial power. Not only do the crumbling of the literary structure and the repeated references to literature and its failings reveal the atrophy of the British Empire: the trifling nature of life abroad, the failure of the British to fully understand the nature of Rachel's illness, and the references to the campaign for female suffrage against an insensitive establishment are aspects of the novel's narrative and conceptual frame that are revealed and reinforced by its structural decay (Stuart Sillars, *Structure and Dissolution in English Writing*: 29).

Sillars is making a very interesting claim: could the novel be seen as dealing primarily with the decay and fall of the British Empire? Could this be an underlying topic hiding within the very framework of the novel? At first glance it may seem an odd claim. The story of Rachel Vinrace's voyage out into the world, into love, into death, does not seem to hold this kind of political agenda. However, when the novel is examined more closely it is possible to find a great deal in support of such a claim. In this chapter I am going to explore the way the novel looks at the British Empire and patriarchy. I will argue that the novel is taking a critical stance against the Empire and patriarchal society, and that the two may be considered aspects of the same thing.

That references to The British Empire would appear in the novel does not seem all that surprising, seeing as the novel revolves around English people abroad. Even so, these are more than mere random remarks. Not only places, but also characters can be defined as being part of or being outside the Empire.

The voyage out starts in London, and on page two we encounter the first comparison between the British and the Roman Empire. It is observed that "Sometimes the flats and churches and hotels of Westminster are like the outlines of Constantinople in a mist". A comparison is drawn between London and the capital of the longest lasting part of the Roman Empire. Shortly after, on the same page, Ridley Ambrose is quoting from Macauley's poem "Horatius", which tells the story of a failed attempt at sacking the city of Rome. The attempt failed because three men took on the entire enemy army, defending a bridge (Macauley: 301-318). Ambrose is quoting this next to Waterloo Bridge, a bridge named after a battle in which the English were victorious. Several implications can be drawn from this: London holds the same position in the British Empire as Constantinople did in the East Roman Empire and Rome did in the Roman Empire. Neither city was able to maintain its position of power, and in the same way London will eventually fall.

Gibbon's *The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire* is continually brought up throughout the novel. It is according to St. John Hirst the measure of anyone's mind if they can appreciate Gibbon (141). Again there is the suggestion that Empires, no matter how great they were at one time, do always crumble in the end. Hirst's fascination with the book might suggest that he himself is in opposition to Empire, as he promotes a work regarding one Empire's downfall.

The London that is described in the opening pages is a rather bleak and dreary place where it is "the ordinary thing to be poor" (6). Helen Ambrose observes that London seems to be a great manufacturing place, and the West End its finished product. "It appeared to her a very small bit of work for such an enormous factory to make" (6). This is a criticism of the system of society, which has the many poor working to support the few rich. By expansion it can be read as a criticism of the colonial system, which has many poor countries producing goods for a wealthy one. In the description of London the fighting power of the Empire can

also be discerned: “The wide Embankment which had had room for cannonballs and squadrons, had now shrunk to a cobbled lane” (6), The cannonballs and squadrons most definitely suggesting aggression and warfare.

The greatness of the capital is brought into question with the line “It seemed dreadful that the city should blaze for ever in the same spot; dreadful at least to people going away upon the sea, and beholding it as a circumscribed mound, eternally burnt, eternally scarred” (11). Hermione Lee suggests that the description of the city indicates that the journey the characters are embarking on will be a liberating one. “We imagine that it will provide opportunities for the twenty-four year old Rachel Vinrace, to move away, at last, from the sheltered background provided by her aunts and her ship owning father Willoughby Vinrace, and to discover under the protection of her aunt Helen Ambrose, adventure and self-fulfilment” (35).

That there is a sense of escape in leaving London behind is clear. “They were free of roads, free of mankind, and the same exhilaration of freedom ran through them all” (20). What is it that London represents to make it so oppressive? It does not seem to be a happy home that the characters are leaving behind. It seems dreadful that London should last forever. The reason is that it seems tortured. A little further on it is said, “From the deck of the ship the great city seemed a crouched and cowardly figure, a sedentary miser” (11), and a couple of pages on it is said that: “They had left London sitting on its mud” (20). Both these passages are interesting. The image of London as a “sedentary miser”, suggests that it is perhaps unwilling to pay back to its workers what they deserve, and only concerned with hoarding possessions for itself, without regard for others. This can be seen as a comment on the relationship between the mother nation and the colonies. “Sitting on its mud” is more ominous, reminiscent of a giant on clay feet, or of something sinking. It suggests that London is at risk, that London will not “blaze forever in the same spot”.

It is also worth noting which London buildings are referred to in the text. As the Ambroses are making their way out to the ship, at the beginning of the novel, their ferryman begins speaking about Tower Bridge: "'They want bridges now', he said, indicating the monstrous outline of the Tower Bridge" (7). The Tower Bridge was built in the Victorian Gothic style in 1886-1894, a time when the Empire was strong. The choice of the word 'monstrous' to describe it is worth noting, since it has a negative connotation. A little further on in the novel Clarissa Dalloway speaks of the light burning over the house, meaning the light burning over the Parliament building when the house is in session. She exclaims, "It's what one means by London!" (42) The Parliament was built in the period 1840-1888. When the old Palace of Kensington burned down, a contest was held to determine what the new building would be like. "The result would ' in great measure determine the rank which the Arts of this country must take in relation to other civilized states'" (Port, *The Houses of Parliament*: 23). The rules of the competition decreed that the plans had to be made in either the Elizabethan or the Gothic style. "Gothic, commonly thought to be a British invention, struck a note of national assertiveness pleasing to the age" (Port 30).

The Parliament as well as the Tower Bridge can be seen as physical manifestations of the strength of the Empire. These are massive constructs, in Victorian Gothic style, which seems to be a secularisation of the Gothic style, in itself testimony to the arrogance of the age. What was once created in tribute of God is now created in tribute of the Empire. It also reveals a reluctance to have faith in the value of the present. The Industrial Revolution had opened up for Engineering feats such as the Crystal Palace, but this is not to any extent reflected in the buildings of the age. Resorting to the past can be regarded as an attempt to legitimise and bring weight to the Empire's claim for world domination, its glorious past vouching for its future. The description of the Tower Bridge as monstrous, as well as letting

the rather ditsy Clarissa Dalloway declare that the Parliament is what is meant by London, is an indirect criticism of the British Empire.

London makes up a very small part of the novel, whereas the ship, the *Euphrosyne*, plays a far more central role. The ship is set up as a world unto itself. "She was a bride going forth to her husband, a virgin unknown of men; in her vigour and purity she might be likened to all beautiful things, for as a ship she had a life of her own" (25). The ship is immensely civilised, filled with books and learning. It has its very own class-system, there are servants, upper working class, and upper class represented. There is even a piano. For the duration of the voyage the ship becomes a miniature Britain. As Hermione Lee observes, "Both on the ship and in Santa Marina, Rachel's development takes place within a microcosm of the upper-middle-class conventional way of life which has ensured her ignorance and her inexperience" (34). Whatever relief was involved in escaping London seems to have been premature as the characters carry Britain with them. There is no escaping the influence of the British Empire. The novel deals with the question of Empire and Patriarchy both straightforwardly with its many references to the Empire and female suffrage, but also in far more subtle ways. One example of this subtlety is found in the name of the ship, the *Euphrosyne* and the name of its destination, Santa Marina. Saint Euphrosyne was a Greek saint who may have lived in the fifth century. She is called in Greece "Our Mother". Euphrosyne was eleven when her mother died. Later her father finds her a husband, and although she first does not object, she soon after refuses. In secret she disguises herself as a man and joins a monastery under the name Smaragdus. In this disguise she becomes her father's confessor, but she does not make herself known to him until she is upon her deathbed. After her death her father takes her place at the monastery (Thurston, *Butler's life of the Saints:* 4). Santa Marina's father went to live in a monastery after his wife's death. However, he was unwilling to leave his daughter behind, and by pretending that she was a boy she could come and live with him at the monastery.

Under the name Marinus, Marina grew up as a monk. She was then accused of having impregnated an innkeeper's daughter and rather than revealing her sex took responsibility for the child. Both the story of Saint Euphrosyne and of Santa Marina may be fictitious, and merely part of popular myth (Thurston 313-314). Lee suggests that the name Euphrosyne was a private joke. "In 1909 she was calling the ship the *Mary Jane* and the heroine Cynthia, a name that dissatisfied her. Clive and Vanessa Bell suggested, among alternatives, Barcelona, Apricot and Euphrosyne – the last being the name of an ephemeral book of poems, much ridiculed by Virginia which Clive Bell, Leonard Woolf and others published in 1905" (32). DeSalvo on the other hand does observe the link between the saints and the ship and place (59-61). The names and the story behind them create a link between Rachel, who also lost her mother at a young age, the ship and Santa Marina. It is even more striking that these are tales of androgyny, and of women who rioted against the destiny that Patriarchal society had imposed upon them. The implication is that Rachel's story too will be one of opposition to patriarchy. The stories of Saint Euphrosyne and Santa Marina further indicate that Rachel may need to abandon her femininity and become like a man, in order to achieve freedom from the restrictions placed upon her. The fact that the hotel at Santa Marina used to be a monastery further strengthens the allusion. As the saints became like men in their monasteries, so Rachel becomes more like a man through her contact with Hewet and Hirst. In this way the allusion to the saints sheds light on the novel's discussion of Patriarchy and Empire. I will look at the significance of the many literary allusions in the next chapter.

W. H. Hudson says of the choice of setting: "somewhere in S. America it is supposed to be and once or twice 'natives' are mentioned. The scene might just as well have been in some hotel on the south coast of England" (61). I do not agree with this assessment. In addition to the link suggested in the names a further link between Rachel and Santa Marina is given when it is revealed that Santa Marina in Elizabethan time was and English colony. The

Spanish later replaced the British, and the Portuguese in turn replaced them (79-80). Earlier in the novel it has been said of Rachel that "Her mind was in the state of an intelligent man's in the beginning of the reign of Queen Elizabeth" (26), and it is said of Santa Marina that in spite of buying their ploughs from Manchester, "in arts and industries the place is still very much as it was in the Elizabethan days" (80). Hermione Lee touches upon this point in her analysis: "The analogies are not firmly drawn. We are not being forced to think of Santa Marina as symbolic of Rachel's virginal state of mind, liable to be impressed by the physical and political onslaught of a man like Dalloway. Nor do we imagine Rachel as a naive, adventurous settler" (33). In my opinion the comparison between Rachel and Santa Marina that is drawn here, enables us once again to see Rachel as a colony that has been held back, and stunted in its growth. In a sense Rachel has come home, she has come to a place that is at the same stage of development that she is. The fact that Santa Marina was a British colony in Elizabethan times is interesting. It was the Elizabethans who laid the foundation of the British Empire; the English returning to the same place now as tourists suggests that the Empire has come full circle. Travelling to the distant shores has changed from being something new and adventurous, which was reserved for only the bravest men, into a thing that old maids, virgins and scholars can do to pass the time. As Sillars pointed out, the trifling nature of life abroad suggests the atrophy of the British Empire (29).

The reason why the Ambroses have the opportunity to come to Santa Marina is Helen's brother, who was sent there in order to keep him away from gambling (81). It was quite common at the time to send young men who had made themselves disagreeable at home, or were simply not considered able to hold down a proper job at home, to the colonies with the hope that even if they fared no better there, at least they would not embarrass their families. Another such embarrassing brother is revealed later in the novel as belonging to Miss Allan (163). Miss Allan's brother is attempting to make a go of a fruit farm in New

Zealand, but the crops continually fail, with the result that he is thinking of coming home again, causing his sisters much worry. It is not explicitly stated but hinted at, that the support of the unsatisfactory brother would fall upon the sisters to provide (163-164). This is again a reference to the British Empire, which was sending out its young men to all corners of the globe. The fact that both men fail to fit the idealised image of the brave and strong man sent out to tame and educate the savages, again suggests a weakness in the Empire. In the same way as it is later seen in the character of Richard Dalloway, it suggests a corruption at the centre of the Empire. If the men of the Empire are weak, then the Empire is weak.

There is an adventurous streak in Rachel, which reveals itself on several occasions. It is first seen when she decides to go with her father up the Amazon, then again when she agrees to come on the excursion to the top of Monte Rosa. Helen is reluctant to go, but Rachel makes her mind up easily: “We must certainly go” (115). After the ball Rachel goes for a walk carrying with her Balzac and Gibbon. She is brought to a halt by the beauty of a tree and sits down under it, attempting to read Gibbon. The beauty surrounding her distracts her, and battling with a butterfly for her attention Gibbon loses (161). Later Hewet suggests a walk to some cliffs, and Rachel is the only one who agrees to come (187-188). When the Flushings suggest a trip up the river it is Rachel who decides that she would very much like to go. Helen is far more reluctant, dreading the prospect of spending time on a boat with people who have fears about being seen naked (248). Rachel is seen continually moving towards nature, away from civilisation.

The imagery used when describing the first encounter between the British Empire and Santa Marina is fierce, and sheds light on the brutality of the colonising process. “The Spaniards bloated with fine living upon the fruits of the miraculous land, fell in heaps; but the hardy Englishmen, tawny with sea-voyaging, hairy for lack of razors, with muscles like wire, fangs greedy for flesh, and fingers itching for gold, despatched the wounded, drove

the dying into the sea, and soon reduced the natives to a state of superstitious wonderment" (79-80). The description of the colonising men echo the image of the beast-man found in the nightmare Rachel has after being kissed by Richard Dalloway. In the dream she finds herself "alone with a little deformed man who squatted on the floor gibbering, with long nails. His face was pitted like the face of an animal" (68). Rachel's confusion and fear of sex is mirrored in the natives' state of superstitious wonderment. The colonising process is mirrored against the act of sexual conquest. It is also significant that the English failed to colonize Santa Marina for any length of time. The Indians and the Spanish drove them all away. "English history then denies all knowledge of the place" (80). Santa Marina can now serve as an example to Rachel that it is possible to oppose the British Empire.

Lee claims that "the exotic setting, which might seem rather perversely chosen and was certainly not to become characteristic, provides the basis for satirical contrast between Rachel's private needs and the public world she must inhabit." (33) I propose that the choice of the remote Santa Marina holds another significance. Santa Marina does in itself represent a rejection of the traditional, proper education of a young woman of means. To see Rome, Paris, perhaps also Athens, was more the sort of thing that was expected. We find many literary examples of this; the most famous perhaps is Henry James' *The Portrait of a Lady*, which has the young American woman, Isabel Archer, travelling Europe. Another example is found in George Elliot's *Middlemarch* where Dorothea Brooke accompanies her husband on a journey to Rome, and in E.M. Forster's *A Room with a View* the young ladies travel through Europe to educate themselves. Virginia Woolf did herself undertake such a journey through Europe (DeSalvo 3).

The fictional Santa Marina is placed in Brazil, which was first a Spanish colony, then passed on to the Portuguese, before obtaining independence around 1823. If Woolf desired to say something about the fall of the British Empire, might she not have placed it in an

environment where the contrast coloniser – colonised might appear more striking? India springs to mind. On the other hand by making Santa Marina a former colony, she is again drawing attention to the fact that Empires tend to collapse in the end.

The link between Rachel and Santa Marina is repeated on the journey up the river:

> Since the time of Elizabeth very few people had seen the river, and nothing had been done to change its appearance from what it was to the eyes of the Elizabethan voyagers. The time of Elizabeth was only distant from the present time by a moment of space compared with the ages which had passed since the water had run between those banks, and the green thickets swarmed there, and the small trees had grown huge and wrinkled in solitude (250).

In part the passage revolves around discovery, in that it completely disregards the natives who have seen the river every day since the time of the Elizabethans. More significantly the passage disparages the Empire, as it seems merely a ripple on the surface of the river of time. Rachel's movement towards nature culminates with this journey into the jungle. Each time Rachel has been pushing towards nature, she has been pulled back to civilisation. Helen prevents her from going up the Amazon (77), on their walk together Hewet speaks of England and makes Rachel tell him about her life there (194-207), and in the jungle Hewet proposes marriage (265-267). Froula suggests:

> Rather than simply being *perceived* as being closer to nature than men, women were *instituted* as subjects who are closer to nature by means of initiation / education that excluded them from symbolic activity except in the domestic arena. [...] Thus female initiation institutes women's *absence* from the culture of the public sphere, which

> becomes “male” insofar as the male and female rites of passage succeed in preserving a dichotomy between “male” culture and “female” nature (138).

This suggests that rather than being drawn to nature, Rachel is forced to nature, and consequently her likeness with the virgin land is not based on choice. As a colony does not have much choice when it comes to being colonised, so Rachel has not much choice in giving up her natural state, and giving herself in marriage.

The locals are not very central to the novel. The focus is not on experiencing this exotic new world, but rather on the day-to-day life of the English. The first local introduced in the novel is the Spanish servant-girl Maria. Mrs Chailey’s initial reaction to meeting her is “Poor creature […] no wonder you hardly look like a human being” (82). During the expedition to the top of the Monte Rosa, Mrs Elliot says to one of the guides. “These little donkeys stand anything, n’est-ce pas?”(118). In each of these instances it is the English who come across as a little ridiculous. Maria simply smiles at Mrs Chailey’s well-meaning insult. Mrs Elliot is speaking French to a man who has no French background. This behaviour is quite typical for tourists, equivalent to simply speaking louder to a person who does not share your language. During the excursion up Monte Rosa, Hughling Elliot buys a cotton print from one of the guides (134). This action hardly constitutes more than purchasing a souvenir, but it foreshadows the arrival of the Flushings.

Mr. Flushing owns a small shop in London, and during their stay he and his wife make a point of purchasing arts and crafts from the natives. Whether this is the only reason for their trip, or if it is merely a way of financing their holiday, is not explicitly stated. Their intention to buy cheap and sell at a high price, however, is. Mrs. Flushing showing off their purchases to Rachel chuckles; “ My husband rides about and finds ‘em; they don’t know what they’re worth, so we get ‘em cheap. And we sell ‘em to smart women in London”(222). This clearly

sets the Flushings up as part of the negative side of the Empire, the exploitation of the poor and ignorant natives. The Flushings' desire to go up the river to buy more native art is the reason for the expedition into the jungle. When Rachel falls ill and dies from a fever that she contracted on this trip it can be seen as punishment for going along with this exploitation of the natives.

The encounter between the English and the natives upstream is interesting. " Mr. Flushing advancing to the centre of the clearing, was engaged in talk with a lean majestic man, whose bones and hollows at once made the shapes of the Englishman's body appear ugly and unnatural" (269). The tribe takes no real notice of the English, which causes Hewet to remark, "it makes us seem insignificant, doesn't it" (270). The natives in the jungle are untouched by civilisation, and so have escaped the influence of the Empire. The jungle has not changed, and the fact that the Elizabethans visited it has left no mark behind (250). In this way the jungle is set up as an area where it is possible to escape the Empire. The jungle's independence is further established by the account of the explorer, Mackenzie's fate; he died of a fever almost within reach of

(262). This foreshadows Rachel's illness. However, as Mackenzie died on his way back to civilisation, and Rachel dies safely within civilisation it is indicated that the danger of illness is present only when leaving the jungle.

The other characters' relationship with the Empire is significant. Rachel's father, Willoughby Vinrace, is at least to some extent a self-made man. "Willoughby as usual loved his business and built his Empire" Helen Ambrose observes of him when they first encounter onboard the ship (16). Willoughby Vinrace can be seen as a representative of the Empire, more specifically as one of the builders of the Empire. He is one of the people who travelled out into the world and claimed it for England. Vinrace, however, aspires to be more. He has ambitions to go into politics and become a ruler of the Empire, rather than just a worker in it.

Willoughby Vinrace is not at all involved in his daughter's life. He assumes that she spends her day doing scales, or reading French and German, but he makes no effort to find out (21). He also expects Rachel to aid his advancement in politics, by performing the duty of hostess at dinner parties. Helen Ambrose's reaction to this is: "She could not help laughing at the notion of it! – Rachel a Tory hostess! – and marvelling as she left him at the astonishing ignorance of the father" (77). It is worth considering the choice of words here. Helen is not astonished at the ignorance of Willoughby, or the ignorance of Rachel's father, but the ignorance of *the* father. This suggests that fathers in general are ignorant of their daughters' lives, and apt to make the same mistake as Vinrace.

When Willoughby is seen as a representative of the British Empire, then his ignorance of what goes on in his daughter's life becomes a metaphor of England's ignorant handling of her Empire - her daughter nations. Many references are made to Rachel being young for her age. Helen calls her an unlicked girl (16), and observes, "She really might be six years old" (18). This again makes it possible to draw a parallel between Rachel and the countries constituting Britain's Empire. The Empire's interest in keeping its subject countries ignorant and underdeveloped is parallel to that of a father's interest in keeping his daughter ignorant and uneducated. The relationship between father and daughter becomes a metaphor of the relationship between ruler and colonised. He expects her to keep working to further his interests without regard for what she desires.

The impulse is to see Willoughby Vinrace as a rather brutish father who wishes to keep his daughter under his rule. This view of him is prompted in part by Helen Ambrose's opinion of him. "She suspected him of nameless atrocities with regard to his daughter, as she had always suspected him of bullying his wife" (17). His handling of his daughter is selfish and condescending. He speaks of her in the third person while she is in the room; "You think she does us credit?"(14) The statement more than suggests that he considers his daughter to

be his property. Only one jarring note prevents us from regarding him as a brutal, unsatisfactory father. When Helen approaches Vinrace to request that Rachel may come and stay with her, they speak of how primitive conditions will be for Rachel should she continue up the river. Willoughby explains that he had already thought of that but he "agreed because she wished it" (76). This reveals that it was Rachel's idea to come on the trip. It is Rachel's own ambition to go up the Amazon. Rachel's reluctance to submit to her aunt's desire to have her come stay with them further underlines this: "Vision of a great river, now blue, now yellow in the tropical sun and crossed by bright birds, now white in the moon, now deep in the shades of moving trees and canoes sliding from the tangled banks beset her" (77).

Through her father and his ship Rachel is attempting to escape the influence of the Empire by turning to nature. Rachel is drawn towards nature, towards adventure, and Helen has her choose society and civilisation. Rachel coming to stay with the Ambroses constitutes a rejection of Empire, because she gets away from the coloniser – colonised pattern set up by her relationship with her father. By rejecting patriarchy Rachel is simultaneously rejecting the Empire. However, under Helen's influence she still remains within the sphere of patriarchy, because by her role as wife and mother Helen herself is a subject of patriarchy, even though she refuses to submit to some of the rules of this society. However, it is not only Rachel who comes under the coloniser – colonised pattern. It could be argued that all women within a patriarchal society are subjected to the same thing. When Helen has Rachel choose society over nature, this is not necessarily out of some desire to keep her within patriarchy, but rather that Helen believes that opposing the Empire has to be done from within, and not by running away from it as Rachel seems inclined to do. The fact that Rachel is so much drawn to nature strengthens the identification between her and nature, thereby creating a strong link between Rachel and colony.

The Dalloways arrive onboard the *Euphrosyne* in Lisbon, and more than any of the other characters they come across as avid supporters of the Empire. He is a former MP; she is the daughter of a peer. The Dalloways are representatives of the Empire's ruling class. They firmly believe in the importance of the Empire. That the Dalloways belong to the upper class can be seen simply from the description of their luggage. " Many solid leather bags of a rich, brown hue soon surrounded them, in addition to witch Mr. Dalloway carried a despatch box, and his wife a dressing-case suggestive of a diamond necklace and bottles with silver tops" (32).

The Dalloways put a great deal of emphasis on behaving as is proper, which to them means changing for dinner and making polite conversation at the table. They are staunch supporters of the Empire, and also of Patriarchy, they do not believe that women should have the vote, they find the arts inferior to 'proper work', and they believe that the noblest profession in the world is that of the politician (33-40). That the Dalloways are more than mere representatives of the upper class is revealed in their bedtime conversation:

> D'you know, Dick, I can't help thinking of England, said his wife meditatively, leaning her head against his chest. 'Being on this ship seems to make it so much more vivid - what it really means to be English. One thinks of what we've done, and our navies, and the people in India and Africa, and how we've gone on century after century, sending out boys from little country villages - and of men like you, Dick, and it makes one feel as if one couldn't bear *not* to be English! Think of the light burning over the House, Dick! When I stood on deck just now I seemed to see it. It's what one means by London'. 'It's the continuity', said Richard sententiously. A vision of English history, King following King, Prime Minister Prime Minister, and Law Law had come over him while his wife spoke. He ran his mind along the line of

> conservative policy, which went steadily from Lord Salisbury to Alfred, and caught and enclosed, as though it were a lasso that opened and caught things, enormous chunks of the habitable globe. 'It's taken a long time but we've very nearly done it', he said; 'it remains to consolidate'.' And these people don't see it!' Clarissa exclaimed (42-43).

Pride in England and its Empire, and pride in what England has accomplished is the significant feature of the Dalloways. Richard Dalloway says, "I grant that the English seem, on the whole, whiter than most men, their records cleaner" (56). The Dalloways' function in the novel seems to be to serve as an alternative for Rachel Vinrace, perhaps even a temptation. Their influence over Rachel can again be seen as a metaphor of the relationship between coloniser and colonised. These representatives of the Empire are attempting to subject her to their ideals, whether it regards marriage or politics. "Clarissa invites Rachel into conventional womanhood as she will later invite Lily Everit; playing mother to the motherless girl, she makes Rachel desire to follow her example" (Froula 145).

When the Dalloways arrive onboard the ship they are described in the following way: "Their arrival, of course, created some stir, and it was seen by several pairs of eyes that Mrs. Dalloway was a tall, slight woman, her body wrapped in furs, her head in veils, while Mr. Dalloway appeared to be a middle-sized man of sturdy build, dressed like a sportsman on an autumnal moor" (32). Richard Dalloway may dress the part of a proper English gentleman, but it seems undeniable that he might look quite ridiculous standing on a Portuguese beach. His choice of wardrobe, however, does suggest certain implications: The typical image of an Englishman on an autumnal moor is that of the hunter out to shoot pheasants. Dalloway dressing as an Englishman on an autumnal moor suggests that he is a hunter. The question that immediately arises is: what is his prey?

Richard Dalloway spends much of his time onboard the ship speaking to Rachel Vinrace. She is young, inexperienced and completely overwhelmed that a man like he should want to speak with her. He attempts to sway her to his political views. “I can conceive no more exalted aim – to be a citizen of the Empire.” (57) However, he is not able to persuade Rachel to see things his way. They continue the conversation until Richard happens upon the word ‘love’.

> ‘It’s an odd thing to say to a young lady,’ he continued. ‘But have you any idea what- what I mean by that? No; of course not. I don’t use the word in a conventional sense. I use it as young men use it. Girls are kept very ignorant, aren’t they? Perhaps it’s wise- perhaps -You *don’ t* know?’ He spoke as if he had lost consciousness of what he was saying. ‘No; I don’t’, she said scarcely speaking above her breath (59).

Richard is about to commit the faux pas of speaking of love to a young woman, when Clarissa Dalloway suddenly cries out. “Warships, Dick! Over there! Look!!” (60) Speaking to Rachel about love would break one of the rules of polite society, so he is interrupted not only by his wife, but by the full force of the British Empire. Seeing the warships has an effect on all the passengers. It prevents them from speaking with each other naturally, and the conversation focuses on valour and death (60). The conversation is ended, and they are unable to continue it because a storm forces the Dalloways to take to their beds. However, as soon as the weather calms Richard leaves his still seasick wife to seek Rachel out. “’You have beauty’, he said. The ship lurched. Rachel fell slightly forward. Richard took her in his arms and kissed her” (67). Richard, the hunter, is out to catch Rachel, the prey. However Richard refuses to take responsibility for his actions by the words: “You tempt me” (67). He clearly leaves the

responsibility for the kiss with the woman; had she not tempted him, he would not have kissed her.

A parallel to the British Empire here is the desire to conquer. He can be seen as the Empire, she as colony, or rather he as conqueror, she as virgin land. Froula writes of the kiss: "Richard's kiss is not a rape, but it is nonetheless a violent sexual act in its Edwardian degree" (46) Rachel's initial reaction to the kiss is positive (67), but during the night she has disturbing dreams (68). Lee says: "Both Virginia Woolf and E.M. Forster felt that brutal sexual hypocrisy was the corollary to the energetic chauvinism of men like Richard Dalloway or Henry Wilcox. Rachel's eyes are opened to this, and in reaction she swings towards Helen, whose influence is from now on to be of increasing importance" (36). I believe that in addition to allowing room for Rachel's epiphany, where she suddenly has a vision of her own self, the kiss sheds considerable light on Richard Dalloway's character. Virginia Woolf manages to make his advances seem quite ridiculous. He has been seasick in a storm, and getting out of bed he immediately begins asserting his masculinity, first by attempting to make Helen acknowledge his intellect (65), but getting no positive response from her, he turns to Rachel. "He felt himself a man undoubtedly in the prime of life" (65), and to assert this conviction he turns to seduction. This is one of the many subtle references to the British Empire in the novel. The able man, in the prime of life was expected to go out and find work in the colonies. It is not explicitly stated in the text that Richard has never worked in the colonies. However, the fact that he travels abroad, and would have liked to travel in the East to broaden his mind when he is no longer able to serve in Parliament (31), at least suggests that he has previously not benefited from this kind of experience. Kissing Rachel becomes a substitute for not having been part of the colonising process.

On the surface Richard seems committed to his wife, to traditional values, the family, the Empire. He seems to be rejecting all of these ideals, when the first chance he gets he

kisses the only young woman onboard the ship. At first Richard seems to be a Man of the Empire, with a capital M and a capital E. However, he must be stopped, not only by his wife, but also by the British Navy in order not to subvert the ideals of the Empire by speaking of love to a young woman. Furthermore the reading that Richard suggests to Rachel is Edmund Burke *The Speech on the French Revolution* and *The American Rebellion* (66). Rebellion and revolution is what Richard suggests that a young woman should occupy her mind with, and this is a hint that Richard Dalloway might not be the faithful servant of the Empire that he would like to appear. This is not the first time that rebellion is mentioned in connection with Richard; it is said when the Dalloways arrive onboard the ship that Richard foretold a crisis in Spain at no distant date (31). The fact that Richard Dalloway, who on the surface seems such a strong supporter of the Empire can be seen as subverting the Empire, suggests a corruption of the Empire. The Empire's foundation is not solid if its representatives are not solid.

Rachel speaks to her aunt Helen about Richard kissing her, and through that conversation she is able to reject the Dalloways. "They had not been so wonderful after all, then, in the eyes of a mature person" (73). Rachel is also able to contemplate her independence. "'I can be m-m-myself', she stammered, ' in spite of you, in spite of the Dalloways, and Mr. Pepper and my Aunts, in spite of these?' She swept her hand across a whole page of statesmen and soldiers" (75). Rachel has found the right to declare herself free of statesmen and soldier; she need no longer feel oppressed by the Empire.

The novel's critical view of the British Empire, is only one side of the novel's political aspect. The collapse of imperial power is a major concern in the novel, but as important is its critical approach to patriarchy. The British Empire can be regarded as a patriarchal society, which I think it is quite fair to argue, and the novel's critical look at the Empire is part of its critical approach to patriarchy, as indeed the novel's critical look at patriarchy is part of its critical approach to Empire. Terence Hewet says something that very much suggests such an

interpretation: “What a miracle the masculine conception of life is – judges, civil servant, army, navy, Houses of Parliament, lord mayors – what a world we’ve made of it!” (197) The Empire is seen as a product of the masculine approach to life.

In the novel Empire and patriarchy mirror each other. It is not really woman’s liberation that is brought to light in the novel. Instead the novel focuses more on women’s confinement, allowing the reader to draw his own conclusions. Empire and Patriarchy can be seen much as two sides to the same coin. The Empire’s mishandling of its colonies can be seen as a parallel to patriarchy’s treatment of women. It seems that Rachel could say, as the outsider woman in *Three Guineas* would later say: “as a woman, I have no country” (197).

Under the influence of Helen, Hirst and Hewet, Rachel rejects religion after attending a service held in the chapel at the hotel: “Helen turned to her. ‘Did you go to church?’ she asked. She had won her sixpence and seemed ready to go. ‘Yes’, said Rachel. ‘For the last time’, she added” (247). Marriage, religion and Patriarchy; these are important building blocks of the Empire, and Rachel is struggling to get out from under them. Rachel’s possibility of escaping marriage seems to be her talent for playing the piano. It is quite ironic that the education that was intended to keep Rachel ignorant and manageable provides her with the key to escape the influence of patriarchy.[1] Helen tells Rachel that she has heard from her aunt Bessie, who is worried that Rachel will spoil her arms by playing the piano too much. “The muscles of the forearm – and then one won’t marry?” Rachel responds (13).

Rachel never states any desire to become a concert pianist, or in any other way make her living from the piano. Any such ambition is only hinted at: “If this one gift was surrounded by dreams and ideas of the most extravagant and foolish description, no one was

[1] Virginia Woolf mentions the way young women were taught to play the piano in her essay ”Two Women: Emily Davies and Lady Augusta Stanley.” “If women wanted to paint, there was, up to the year 1858, only one class in London where they could learn. If they were musical there was the inevitable piano, but the chief aim was to produce a brilliant mechanical execution, and Trollope’s picture of four girls all in the same room playing on four pianos, all of them out of tune, seems to have been, as Trollope’s pictures usually are, based on fact (62).”

any the wiser" (26). Angela Smith touches upon this in *Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf: A public of two*: "Yet she, like Mathilda, is playing the works of the old masters, and recreating their buildings; she can interpret the musical patriarchs but she is not the architect. She cannot speak for herself, musically or verbally" (127). I cannot agree with this. By this definition all musicians who do not write their own music prisoners of patriarchy. Or at least all women musicians are victims unless they play music written by women.Rachel is reluctant to own up to her talent in front of Mrs Dalloway, who represents marriage and motherhood. When Mrs. Dalloway enters the room while Rachel is rehearsing "the Bach fugue crashed to the floor" (49). This suggests that faced with the possibility of who she is not, but who she might become, Rachel is reluctant to assert her own self. Mrs Dalloway creates in Rachel a desire to be someone else, and so the music fails. Later, however, at the ball, Rachel takes control. "'But that's not a dance', said someone pausing at the piano. 'It is, she replied, emphatically nodding her head. 'Invent the steps.' Sure of her melody she marked the rhythm boldly so as to simplify the way" (152). This reveals how Rachel is able to make the music her own. Rachel's feeling for her music is stated early in the novel. "It appeared that nobody ever said a thing they meant, or ever talked about a feeling they felt, but that was what music was for" (29). This seems a very clear statement that Rachel's talent for playing the piano is the one thing she calls her own, more or less an extension of her personality, the one place she feels free to be herself. Rather than being a symptom of Rachel's imprisonment, Rachel's musical gift is her one weapon when opposing patriarchy, and as such her one opportunity of escaping the Empire.

Rachel Vinrace might seem an unlikely feminist heroine, bleak as her efforts at self-assertion are. Still, the subtle ironies over patriarchy's shortcomings might be rather more effective than the great gestures. The novel is continually dividing the world up into man's world and woman's world. The relationship man – woman in patriarchal society mirrors the

relationship coloniser-colonised. Throughout the novel the metaphors of Empire and Patriarchy mirror each other, so that it is hard to see where one ends and the other begins.

Helen says: "If one can give men a room to themselves where they will sit, it's all to the good" (33). Rachel realises that her father has always lived separately from her and her aunts: "They were very much afraid of her father. He was a great dim force in the house, by means of which they held on to the great world which is represented every morning in the Times. But the real life of the house was something quite different from this. It went on independently of Mr. Vinrace, and tended to hide itself from him" (201). Mr Ambrose is entirely dependent upon his wife to keep him comfortable (23), and once comfort is achieved he is quite happy to spend his time in his ivory tower:

> so that life becomes more harmonious and less disconnected than it would have been had Mr. Ambrose given up editing *Pindar*, and taken to a nomadic existence, in and out of every room in the house [...] Mr. Ambrose in his study was some thousand miles from the nearest human being who in this household was inevitably a woman (156).

Susan Warrington has grown up with many sisters, and has until she met Arthur Venning not had any proposals of marriage (94). Susan has been confined to the life of a single woman in the domestic sphere, reduced to no more than a servant for her wealthy aunt. When Arthur proposes to her she can suddenly see an opportunity for escaping this life; "how delightful it would be to join the ranks of the married women – no longer hang on to groups of girls much younger than herself – to escape the long solitude of an old maid's life" (127). These are the only two options available to Susan, to be an old maid, trapped and living at the mercy of her relatives' kindness, or to marry. The way that patriarchy divides society up into two sections,

one for men and one for women, is the cause of Susan's position. Mr Pepper has never married, due in part to the Empire, which had him spend his youth at a railway station in Bombay, but also because he wishes a wife who is not only beautiful but also educated (18). St. John Hirst has a slight horror of women, declaring, "they're so stupid" (96). Hewet on the other hand declares: "Women interest me" (96). This statement, perhaps more than anything indicates the gap between the sexes. Women interest him, as if they were a topic of study.

Women's education is called into question by looking at the way that Rachel has been educated. Her schooling has been inadequate.

> The shape of the earth, the history of the world, how trains worked, or money was invested, what laws are in force, which people wanted what, and why they wanted it, the most elementary idea of a system of modern life – none of this had been imparted to her by any of her professors or mistresses. But this system of education had one great advantage. It did not teach anything, but it put no obstacle in the way of any real talent that the pupil might chance to have (26).

A little later on Hewet considers the life of Hirst's sister. "Can't you imagine the family conclaves, and the sister told to run and feed the rabbits because St. John must have the school room to himself. 'Yes, said Rachel, I've fed rabbits for twenty-four years; it seems odd now'"(197). This reveals the way that women have been denied a proper education, whereas the men are all educated. Richard Dalloway has even gone to both universities, that is both Oxford and Cambridge (55). These thoughts about women's education are of course also to be found in Virginia Woolf's later works *Three Guineas* and *A Room of One's Own*. It is not only Rachel's formal education that is called into question. She has reached the age of twenty-four without ever realising that men desire women. "By this new light she saw herself a

creeping hedged-in thing, driven cautiously behind high walls, here turned aside, there plunged into darkness, made dull and crippled forever – her life that was the only chance she had – a thousand words and actions became plain to her" (72). Her education from this point on seems to be focusing on breaking down the barrier between her and men. As I pointed out in the previous chapter Helen believes that speaking candidly and not keeping any secrets between the sexes is the only way of creating reasonable human beings. Hirst and especially Hewet assist her in this approach to broadening Rachel's mind. At the ball, when Rachel has felt herself disparaged by Hirst and feels that separation between men and women is the solution, Hewet speaks to her. "Hewet brushed aside her generalisation as to the nature of the two sexes, for such generalisations bored him and seemed to him generally untrue" (142).

Rachel's death is as significant in throwing light unto the Empire / Patriarchy angle, as it could be seen throwing light unto the novel's approach to communication. Returning from the jungle, having chosen civilisation by choosing to marry Hewet, Rachel falls ill. Terence is reading her a poem by Milton, and she realises that she has a headache. When Terence first hears that Rachel is ill, he is overcome by feelings of dismay and catastrophe (309). As her fever lingers on he buries his head in the sand, and chooses to believe whatever the doctor says. "The interview was conducted laboriously upon both sides in French, and this, together with the fact that he was optimistic, and that Terence respected the medical profession on hearsay, made him less critical than he would have been had he encountered the doctor in any other capacity" (315). The doctor becomes trustworthy, not by virtue of his abilities, but merely by his title. Hewet is prepared to take the incompetent doctor's word over that of Helen. Helen and the nurse represent female knowledge that is based on other criteria than the male knowledge. The nurse declares "I never like May for my patients" (325). The doctor represents patriarchy, and his title has provided him with a position of power. Hewet takes the doctor's side against Helen, who is worried about Rachel's condition. Doctor Rodriguez could

be seen as being untrustworthy by nature of his nationality, he is a product of the influence of Empire, which has prevented the natural development of his country. Rodriguez offers proof of his capability by showing letters from people who have trusted him in the past. "As he searched he began telling a story about an English lord who had trusted him – a great English lord, whose name he had, unfortunately, forgotten" (319). Rodriguez is made ridiculous by this statement, it suggests that he lies, but the implication is clear that if he had in fact been able to produce proof that a lord at some point had faith in him, then Hewet might decide to keep trusting the doctor. The lord as a representative of the British Empire would be able to lend respectability even to Doctor Rodriguez.

When Hewet finally becomes convinced that Rachel is in fact dangerously ill, he sends Hirst to find a new doctor. Doctor Lesage is French, and immediately acknowledges that Rachel's condition is serious. That the doctor is French is significant in that the French have often been in opposition to the British Empire, so in spite of being as much a representative of an Empire and Patriarchy, Lesage can be seen as aiding Rachel in the fight against patriarchy, much as the French would lend aid or fight to prevent the English from acquiring a colony.

Rachel's death concludes the argument that patriarchy is negative. She falls ill listening to Milton, the significance of which I will come back to in the next chapter. Her husband to be is reading a work that propagates patriarchy's ideal of woman (308-309), and as if in response to this Rachel falls ill.

The novel holds all the major elements of the Empire. It starts out in England, in London, the Empire's headquarters. The ship, which was essential to England's conquests, is also found in the novel. Finally there is the new world, the Virgin land, represented by Santa Marina. The novel is structured around these three locations which all resonate with the influence of the British Empire. Rachel physically travels away from the Empire, first by leaving London, then by leaving the ship and finally by journeying into the jungle. She then

returns to the influence of the British Empire, by returning to the relative civilisation of Santa Marina. At the same time Rachel is distancing herself from the influence of patriarchy, first by leaving her home and her father, then by gaining the appreciation that she is entitled to her own self, and by further exploring her right to a self. She returns to the influence of patriarchy when she submits to its rules by promising to marry Terence Hewet. Having accepted civilisation in the form of Hewet's proposal, and in so doing agreeing to submit to the expectations of patriarchy, she falls ill and dies. Could this be considered a parallel to the way that a colony, once swallowed up by the Empire, loses its identity? Much more than that, Rachel as a person who is in opposition to patriarchy, cannot withstand the strain, the pressure that is put upon her to accept her role as woman. Rachel has no way to turn but into death. Her death then stands as an example of the negative force of Patriarchy, and in turn as an example of the negative force of the Empire. The collapse that Rachel's death represents is not so much the collapse of the Empire, as Sillars suggests (29-30), but rather the consequence of the influence of patriarchy and Empire.

Patriarchy and Empire leave the talented young woman completely destroyed.

An Attack on Literature

Literature is a primary concern of *The Voyage Out*. The novel constantly refers to reading and writing, and most of the characters are in one way or another associated with writing. A number of authors and literary works are mentioned in the text, which is full of literary allusions. Each new sentence seems to hold a hidden meaning, and each new reference adds an unexpected depth to the work. In this chapter I will look at the way the novel is drawing attention to its own textuality, and the way that this constitutes a rejection of literature.

The intertextuality of the novel is one of its most prominent features, but what is the reason for this constant allusion to other texts? Beverly Ann Schlack explores the literary allusions in *The Voyage Out* in the book *Continuing Presences: Virginia Woolf's Use of Literary Allusion.* She reveals a lot about the way that the literary allusions serve to bring greater depth, and new aspects to the characters: "Thus where more traditional novelists build character out of discreet factual units (e.g. the heroine's hair color or the hero's age), Woolf will offer intellectually and psychologically revealing data, such as their taste in literature"(1). Hermione Lee, too, observes that the literary allusions throw light upon the character's personalities: "Clarissa's patriotic taste for *Henry* V and Jane Austen is as revealing as Hirst's admiration for Gibbon and Sappho, Helen's reading of G. E. Moore and recommendation of Maupassant, and Ridley Ambrose's dedication to Pindar" (42). Characterisation is certainly a very important aspect of the literary allusions, however, that is not all it achieves. By the repeated allusions to other texts the novel is constantly drawing attention to its own textuality. The novel is being self-conscious.

One example of the many allusions is found when Clarissa Dalloway speaks of a performance she has seen at Cambridge: " 'I own,' she said, that I shall never forget the Antigone. I saw it at Cambridge years ago, and it's haunted me ever since. 'Don't you think

it's quite the most modern thing you ever saw?' she asked Ridley. 'It seemed to me I'd known twenty Clytemnestras" (37). Apart from being an example of the kind of small talk that Clarissa Dalloway makes at dinner it is also worth considering for other reasons. De Salvo suggests that:

> Clarissa has already observed Helen trying to charm Richard, her own husband, and so is prompted to this recollection of Agamemnon and the Clytemnestras she has known because she understands that Helen, like Clytemnestra, can be unfaithful. Yet Clarissa is shrewd: her assessment will only be conveyed to those in the company familiar with the Agamemnon, as Helen herself is not (131).

Shrewd or not, Clarissa recalls seeing *the Antigone*, not *the Agamemnon*; she has mixed up the titles. This gives us a clue to Clarissa's personality. She has a rather fleeting mind. This is not a mistake that any of the scholars would have made. I think DeSalvo is off the mark when labelling Helen as Clytemnestra. There is nothing in the text to suggest that Helen is in any way flirting with Richard Dalloway, if anything her tendency is towards ridiculing him. When she remembers that he is a politician all she can think of to say is: "Don't you ever find it rather dull?" (35) If Clarissa is displaying jealousy at this point, it might be the first sign that the Dalloway union is not as strong as it would appear. Meeting twenty Clytemnestras might suggest an unfaithful husband, and is foreshadowing Richard kissing Rachel a little later in the novel. I also cannot find anything in the text to suggest that Helen is not familiar with *the Agamemnon*. She is married to a man who spends his life translating Greek so there is no reason why she should not know it.

What I find most significant about the passage however, is the exchange of the titles, *The Antigone*, not *The Agamemnon*. Nobody at the dinner draws attention to Clarissa's slip of

the tongue, and it has been argued that the mistake was Woolf's. However, I feel that the mix-up was planned and deliberate. Antigone, under threat of being buried alive, commits suicide to escape the wrath of King Creon (358). The story can be read as foreshadowing Rachel's illness and death. The Antigone is about a woman's escape from a much more powerful adversary, a King, a representative of both patriarchy and Empire. The allusion is drawing attention to the novel's discussion of patriarchy. Mr. Pepper reveals his familiarity with *The Antigone* by quoting part of it in Greek. In this way he is able to mock Clarissa not only for her ignorance, but also for her insincerity, as she had just said "I don't know a word of Greek, but I could listen to it forever---" (37). She listens to Mr. Pepper's reading with compressed lips. The passage is rendered in the text in the original Greek, and as Clarissa is excluded from understanding it, so are all readers who do not understand Greek. Leaving the text in the original language could be ascribed to the author's expectation that the reader will be educated enough to understand it without the assistance of a translation. However, I propose that the intention is to create in the reader the feeling of being excluded, because as the reader is excluded, so is Rachel. Later in the novel her uncle chides her: "But what's the use of reading if you don't read Greek?" (157) Greek becomes a secret language between the men, and Rachel is excluded from it. By not translating the text the reader too experiences this feeling of being left out. The translated text reads:

> Wonders are many; yet than Man
> None more wonderful is there known
> He that over the frothing sea
> Voyages, blown by the stormy South,
> Through swollen waves around him
> In threatening surges tower (359).

If, on the other hand, the reader is able to understand Greek, he will realise that the passage relates to Rachel and her voyage out, and perceive it is a warning. The waves are described as threatening and towering. The threat of being swallowed up by the sea links up with Rachel's illness, when she feels that she has sunk to the bottom of the sea.

Another example of a trapdoor into new meaning is found at the service that Rachel attends at the hotel.

> Be merciful unto me, O God, he read, 'for man goeth about to devour me: he is daily fighting and troubling me. They daily mistake my words: all that they imagine is to do me evil. They hold all together and keep themselves close ... Break their teeth. O God, in their mouths; smite the jaw bones of the lions, O Lord: let them fall away like water that runneth apace; and when they shoot their arrows let them be rooted out (214).

This quotation from psalms[1] is full of a feeling of rejection and alienation: "Man goeth about to devour me, they daily mistake my words, they hold all together and keep themselves close". This relates to Rachel's situation and her attempts to find her own self, trying to make herself understood, while all the while being under siege with other people's demands and expectations. "They daily mistake my words," points to one of the central concerns of the novel: The difficulty of communicating. The words are extremely violent, notably the plea for revenge at the end. The reaction to these words that is noted in the novel is that of Susan Warrington. She is unable to relate any meaning to the words, and she listens to it as she would a work by Shakespeare. The play mentioned is *King Lear*. "Nothing in Susan's experience at all corresponded with this, and as she had no love of language, she had long

[1] Psalm 56, verses 1, 5, 6a; Psalm 58, verse 6. (370)

ceased to attend to such remarks, although she followed them with the same mechanical respect with which she had heard many of King Lear's speeches read aloud" (214). The choice of referring to *King Lear* here offers a hint to Susan's personality. Central to *King Lear* is the question of what it means to be a good daughter. The fact that Susan has no experience at all that corresponds to this, referring both to the sermon and to *King Lear*, suggests that Susan has never considered her relationship with her father, and she has never question whether he is worthy of her respect and admiration. "Still talking about her father, of whom she was very proud, she rose, for Arthur upon looking at his watch found that it was time they went back again to the tennis court" (306). Rachel, on the other hand, has begun to question the position that her father holds in the household. "She had always taken it for granted that his point of view was just, and founded upon an ideal scale of things where the life of one person was absolutely more important than the life of another, and that in that scale they were of much less importance than he was. But did she really believe that?" (201) Susan's ambition is not to become a man's equal, but rather to become woman's equal. When her engagement has become announced, her tyrannical aunt, Mrs Paley, no longer has any claim on Susan's time.

> Directly she became engaged, Mrs Paley behaved with instinctive respect, positively protested when Susan as usual knelt down to lace her shoes, and appeared really grateful for an hour of Susan's company where she had been used to exact two or three as her right. She therefore foresaw a life of greater comfort than she had been used to, and the change had already produced a great increase of warmth in her feelings towards other people (165).

Unlike Rachel, Susan has no inclination towards rejecting patriarchy; rather she desires to play by its rules to improve her own situation. By submitting to being passed from father to husband, Susan achieves new status in the women's world, and that is what she desires. Arthur rescues Susan from the dreary life of the old maid.

A third poignant example of the way that other texts are used to add depth to the novel is found just as Rachel is falling ill. Hewet sits reading Milton's poem *Comus* aloud, "because he said the words of Milton had substance and shape, so that it was not necessary to understand what he was saying; one could merely listen to his words; one could almost handle them" (308). The choice of *Comus* is significant, and it seems primarily connected with Hewet. Milton, like Hewet was a Cambridge scholar. *Comus* is a masque that revolves around the encounter between lust and chastity in the forest at night. Lust is represented by Comus, who is the son of Circe and has inherited some of her magic powers. A lady is out in the forest one night and becomes separated from her brothers. Following the sound of revelries, she falls into the clutches of Comus. Comus traps the lady in a chair and offers her his magic potion which will give her the appearance of a beast. The lady refuses and is saved from Comus by her two brothers and an "attending spirit". In order to free the lady from the chair the brothers enlist the help of the water spright Sabrina, she is an emblem of chastity, who saves only the truly chaste. Rescued from the chair the lady is returned to her parents (Milton: 174-229).

Disregarding any religious interpretations of the poem, it seems fair to say that it deals with two images of woman, the lustful harlot and the angel of the house. The angel is being held up as an ideal. Froula suggests that: "Milton's words are fatal to Rachel, not because no nymph arrives to save her but because they represent a tradition in which bound, endangered "ladies", drowned nymphs, and the marriage plot with its tightwoven construction of female sexuality as virginity, domesticity and maternity, figure woman's 'destiny'" (157). The

allusion suggests a duality in Hewet's character, on the one hand he wishes to educate Rachel and help her achieve her independence and full potential, on the other he wishes to marry her. By reading the poem aloud to Rachel Hewet is attempting to impose its ideal on her.

Schlack suggests: "*Comus* is an allusive restatement of Rachel's dilemma: marriage to Hewet would put her virtue – in the sense not of her chastity but of her inviolable freedom – in jeopardy: "Love virtue, she alone is free", Comus commands" (21). Throughout the novel Hewet focuses on the fact that he would like to keep Rachel free. "Oh, you're free! he exclaimed, in exultation at the thought of her, ' and I'd keep you free. We'd be free together" (231). The phrase 'I'd keep you free' seems very significant. It indicates that in a union between Rachel and Hewet, he would be in a position to grant or deny her freedom. It seems clear that if Hewet has the power to give Rachel her freedom, then she is not free. Whatever Hewet's good intentions, a little later in the novel he is seen imposing his will over Rachel's. She does not wish to go to lunch with Mrs. Thornbury, but Hewet mocks her so that she submits (291-292). Hewet is unable to keep Rachel entirely free. The change between them takes place after she has decided to marry him, suggesting that by submitting to marriage, Rachel surrenders her freedom. Suggesting that marriage in patriarchal society constitutes a form of imprisonment for the woman. It is possible to cast Hewet in the role as Comus, the deceiver, the would-be seducer, although at first glance he hardly seems the type. Hewet professes to feel no physical attraction to Rachel when he starts to develop an interest in her. "No. It always began in his case with definite physical sensations, and these were now absent, he did not even find her physically attractive" (169). Later he says, although this may be intended ironically, that Rachel is "not beautiful, or well dressed, or conspicuous for elegance or intellect, or deportment" (291). A link between Hewet and Comus is seen when Terence and Rachel first meet. She is lapping water from a stream (117), and it is later suggested that

it is drinking the water that has caused her illness (341). This could be seen as a parallel to Comus offering the lady a magical drink.

Schlack has examined the passage where Rachel tells Terence that her head aches. Terence feels a sense of dismay and catastrophe "all round him he seemed to hear the shiver of broken glass which, as it fell, left him sitting in the open air" (309). "No critic has commented on this puzzling 'shiver of broken glass' possibly because it is so jarringly unrealistic, even hallucinatory. Yet the image is understandable in terms of the meanings that the *Comus* allusion adds to the text" (Schlack: 23). When the lady's brothers come to rescue her they wrist the magical cup from Comus' hand and it is broken against the floor. Schlack maintains: "In Woolf's masterful symmetry of symbolic analogy Hewet too hears broken glass fall to the earth. The cup of pleasure has been broken. Neither Milton's lady nor Rachel Vinrace will taste of the sensual delight offered them by seductive men" (23). This interpretation clearly labels Rachel's death an escape. But while in the poem the lady is saved by the water nymph Sabrina and returned to her parents, Rachel dies. The seducer has not taken her away in the night, but openly and with honourable intentions and promise of marriage. Rachel's death is a rejection of the pattern set up in the poem. The lady is nameless, of value only for her chastity she needs the protection of her brothers to keep her from going astray. The poem sees woman as a victim unable to defend herself. The idealisation of woman's chastity is typical of patriarchy. Rejecting the poem is a rejection of patriarchy, and the roles that women are expected to fulfil within patriarchy. And if Hewet is to be seen as Comus, then the tables are turned. In the poem Comus is the enemy of patriarchy, with his offering of chaos. When Hewet is seen as Comus, patriarchy is cast as the enemy. Marriage is seen as the fate worse that death.

The allusions are many and appear both as straightforward mentioning of titles or authors, and more subtly, as is seen in the description of Helen's feelings when she and

Rachel have agreed to come with the Flushings into the jungle. “Her sense of safety was shaken, as if beneath twigs and dead leaves she had seen the movement of a snake” (249). And a couple of pages on Hirst says: “Good-bye. Beware of snakes” (255). Hirst is saying this to Terence and Rachel as they are going off into the jungle together. This is a possible allusion to *Genesis*. The jungle becomes the Garden of Eden, and somewhere within it lurks the snake. The talk of snakes suggests that whatever state of pure happiness that exists at this point will not last long. Whether the snake is foreshadowing Rachel being poisoned by the water, or Hewet’s proposal of marriage is more difficult to say. It would seem that the proposal is connected with the fall from grace. The passage where Rachel has the epiphany about her life can be seen as another subtle literary allusion. Rachel realising that she has all her life been “driven cautiously behind high walls, here turned aside, there plunged into darkness, made dull and crippled for ever”(72) echoes a passage in George Eliot’s *Middlemarch.* “hemmed in by a social life which seemed nothing but a labyrinth of petty courses a walled- in maze of small paths (51).

Sillars suggests:

> Were this the full extent of the literary references the novel might reveal itself continuing a conventional movement in which the key characters shift from living through literature to living directly through emotions […] Yet other forces make clear that the whole idea of literature is being satirically attacked, if not wholly rejected (28).

I agree that the novel is questioning the entire idea of literature and this is done not only through the use of literary allusions. Several of the characters are writers or in some way associated with writing. This enables the novel to explore the nature of writing. When Mr.

Pepper and Mr. Ambrose, who are old friends, meet onboard The *Euphrosyne*, they begin to discuss their shared acquaintances. The first man, Mr Jenkinson of Peterhouse, is dead and they note that his introduction to Jellaby still holds its own, "Which is surprising seeing how textbooks change" (9). It is true that textbooks change, but these are books that deal primarily in facts and so it seems that they can be expected to have some longevity. Instead the implication is that they change not only quickly but also frequently. Two interpretations can be drawn from this: One is that the years of work that go into the creation of a textbook, as well as the years spent teaching it can be made invalid at any time, when the textbook is replaced by a new work. This begs the question: is it worth it? The statement can be seen as criticising scholarly work in general. The other interpretation is that there can be no ultimate introduction to Jellaby; in time it will be replaced by something new, there will always be room for new approaches and new discoveries. There is no inherent quality in Jellaby that can be pinned down between the covers of a book. Furthermore Jellaby is a fictitious reference. Why, in a novel packed with allusions, would there be this reference to a non-existing work? I feel that it is to ensure that none of the readers will have heard of it. In this way the Introduction to Jellaby is disparaged, it is made irrelevant weather Mr Jenkinson's introduction to Jellaby holds its own or not, because it is an unknown work about an unknown subject. This can also be seen as a criticism of scholarly work. Criticising the way that some scholars bury themselves in a subject that can only be understood by themselves, and one or two of their colleagues. However, it may also be seen as a trap for the reader. In making the reader think that he knows the subject described because of associations that the name stirs up, while in fact he cannot know it because it does not exist. In this way the reader's sense of reality is tested. Placing references to real literary works alongside fictional ones raises doubt. Ought not a choice have been made between representing measurable fact and pure fiction? Which is which? Placed side by side in a novel like this, is there any difference between

them? I think it is done to make the reader question the novel's representation of truth; it is drawing attention to the artificial nature of the novel. This is one of the early hints that the novel is questioning the value of literary work as well as questioning the observability of reality. At the same time as Woolf is creating a plot which invites the reader's to regard the characters and events as real, she is drawing attention to the fictitiousness of the novel, and thereby undermining the structure that she is creating.

The next scholar discussed is Mr Jenkinson of Cats. The use of the same last name for the two scholars keeps them anonymous, they are distinguished only by belonging to different colleges at Cambridge, and so it is suggested that one scholar is much like another, lacking in any real personality. This Mr Jenkinson has spent his entire life gathering material for a book, having it all come to nothing. "There *was* a book, but there never will be a book; said Mr Pepper with such fierceness that both ladies looked up at him. There never will be a book because someone else has written it for him" (9-10). Scholarly work is again being criticised. It is a criticism of the futility and impotence of such work, reading and hoarding up material for years, without ever producing anything, unable to communicate the accumulated knowledge. It seems pointless and ridiculous. The third scholar discussed is a man named Miles, who goes to the other extreme by producing two and a half volumes annually. This type of industry is questionable because by such a large production could the contents possibly be satisfactory? It could be seen as being slightly superficial.

This feeling of impotence and pointlessness pervades in the description of the other scholars in the novel. Mr. Ambrose, for instance, spends his time translating Pindar, shunning contact with others locked up in his ivory tower.

> There were many rooms in the villa, but one room which possessed a character of its own because the door was always shut, and no sound of music, or laughter issued from

> it. Every one in the house was vaguely conscious that something went on behind that door, and without in the least knowing what it was, were influenced in their own thoughts by the knowledge that if they passed it the door would be shut, and if they made a noise Mr. Ambrose inside would be disturbed (156).

Mr Ambrose spends his time translating poetry, but at the same time professes: "what's the use of reading if you don't read Greek? After all if you read Greek, you would never read anything else, pure waste of time" (157). In this way Ambrose rejects the value of his own work. It is inferior because it is not Greek. The work he performs goes against his conviction that Greek literature is inherently superior to all other literature, simply by being Greek. Mr Ambrose is creating nothing new; he is translating the work of another. Still, the complements he craves and receives assumes him to be the originator of these works: " and some silly woman praised not only your books but your beauty- she said he was what Shelley would have been if Shelley had lived to fifty–five and grown a beard" (87-88).

Mr. Pepper is different from Mr. Ambrose in that rather than limiting himself to one field of study, he embraces as many as possible, and publishes pamphlets on each. Sclack has made a very worthwhile observation of Mr. Pepper's studies: "Most amazing of all is Woolf's ability to insinuate even Pepper's hidden sexual personality from this scrap of 'mere' allusive characterisation. The works organized for monthly reading by this overstructured, inhibited gentleman scholar happen to be outstanding examples of classical obscenity" (10). Knowing this adds another dimension to Mr. Pepper's character. He seems quite a boring man, but he has hidden depths. What I consider most significant about Mr. Pepper's work is the seeming futility of it. Try as he might he is unable to make it relevant to other people, whether it is advising the Borough Council to learn how to mend roads by reading Coryphaeous (19), or telling Rachel the history of Santa Marina (79).

Mr. Hewet regards himself as an author. He has three ideas for novels. The first is a novel about silence, the things people don't say. The second is about a man who owns only one suit, but who still desires to keep up appearances. " He is led into telling lies- my idea, you see, is to show the corruption of the soul - calls himself the son of some great landed proprietor in Devonshire" (204). The novel is set to end in sordid respectability in Croydon. The third is a Stuart Tragedy. "Removed from modern condition, one can make them more intense and abstract than people who live as we do" (205). Hewet's ideas are interesting because they seem to hint at the novel's own preoccupations. I have already commented on the novel about silence in the first chapter. The idea about the futility of keeping up appearances and the way that this corrupts the soul, also relates to *The Voyage Out*'s thematic concerns. The third idea voices the desire for a new way of expressing characters, which echoes the novel's own desire for a new form of the novel. However, as far as can be made out from the text, all that Hewet has are his ideas. He has not written anything so far, unless his contribution to Hirst's indecent poem about God is counted (254). Hewet is not published, and he is living off an annual income. There is again the feeling of a lack of achievement. "Terence, meanwhile, read a novel that someone else had written, a process which he found essential to the composition of his own" (279).

The most successful of the writers in the novel is Miss Allen. She makes her living from writing critical works. While she's on holiday at Santa Marina she is completing her work on an overview of the English novel. Originally intended to cover Swinburne to Browning, she cuts Swinburne and instead calls it *From Beowulf to Browning,* feeling that it is a more catchy title. Miss Allan says: "I rather like the two B's myself. 'Beowulf to Browning', she repeated, 'I think that is the kind of title which might catch one's eye on a railway bookstall'" (299). Schlack says of Miss Allan "Miss Allan's expansive personality finds a complement in her admiration of those two Bs, on a larger than life heroic epic of the

conflict between good and evil, the other a poet of optimism and robust vitality" (3). The fact that she is writing the primer, adds depth to Miss Allan's spinster character. This focus on heroism, vitality and life makes her something more.

Miss Allan is not taken entirely seriously as a writer. While people tiptoe around Mr. Ambrose, Miss Allan receives no such consideration. At the dance Mr Elliot exclaims when Miss Allan desires to leave to work on Alexander Pope: "Who reads Pope, I should like to know? And as for reading about him – No, no Miss Allan; be persuaded you will benefit the world much more by dancing than by writing" (150). Miss Allan's writing is in this way derided. There is also the suggestion that as a woman, she ought to stick to womanly pursuits, such as dancing, rather than writing. This opinion seems to be shared by other of the characters. Mrs Elliot and Mrs Thornbury discuss Miss Allan and agree: " 'It must be very interesting', said Mrs Thornbury. 'I envy her her knowledge.' 'But that isn't what women want,' said Mrs Elliot (104). However, Miss Allan is the most successful of the writers portrayed in the novel. She earns a living, not only for herself, but also for her unsatisfactory brother. Miss Allan is published, and she also has the ability to finish what she has started. Miss Allan defines herself by her work. Having spoken to Rachel and Terence about finishing her novel, she stops. "Then she thought she had said enough about herself" (299). The other characters are defined by some characteristic in addition to their work, but Miss Allan is defined by the fact that she is a single workingwoman. That is how she is perceived, and that is how she perceives herself. Having her work regarded as of little consequence, the way Mr Elliot does diminishes Miss Allan as a person. It makes her less distinctive and more anonymous. With just 70.000 words Miss Allan has covered British literature from Beowulf to Browning, this put together with the fact that it is the sort of book that people pick up at a railway station could be seen as criticism of Miss Allan's work. It seems ridiculous that a book of only 70.000 words could be seen as saying anything of great importance about

English literature. Furthermore the haphazard way that Swinburne has been cut from the work, simply because the two B's would look better on the cover, suggests a work of a rather whimsical manner. The book is not intended for students or libraries, but rather to keep a person entertained for a few hours on the train.

However, Miss Allan's work can be seen as a criticism of literature. Miss Allan's difficulty in writing the work was not that she had too much material, but rather that she had too little. "' Only Seventy Thousand words' Terence exclaimed. Yes, and one has to say something different about everybody,' Miss Allan added. 'That is what I find so difficult, saying something different about everybody'" (299). The implication here is that one author is much like another, and their works are much the same.

The writers in the novel can collectively be seen as quite unaccomplished. They write about the works of others, or they merely have the ambition to be writers. The futility of this ambition can be seen as criticism of literature. It is unimportant and petty; it is of no real significance. Through this critical view of the writers, and the many allusions Woolf is criticising literature. Still this is only part of Woolf's critical approach. Woolf is also questioning language. This is seen when Rachel is reading: "Rachel read what she chose, reading with the curious literalness of one to whom written sentences are unfamiliar, and handling words as though they were made of wood, separately of great importance, and possessed of shapes like tables and chairs." (113). The implication is that words are not separately of great importance, and possessed of shapes like tables and chairs. It brings to mind the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and his divisions into sign, signifier, signified and referent, which shows the way that meaning does not reside in words. There is a hesitation to accept language as a conduit of meaning. Lee observes that: "The old confidence in a general recognizable perspective on life and character has vanished" (18). That language is inadequate is pointed out on several occasions. "It appeared that nobody ever said a thing they meant, or

ever talked about a feeling they felt, but that was what music was for" (29). This superiority of music over language is seen again later in the novel. " 'I do love music', she said, as she thanked Rachel. 'It just seems to say all the things one can't say oneself'" (153). The implication is that music is superior to language because it communicates more directly with the emotions. By questioning language as a means of communication, Woolf questions the work that she is involved in. This in turn makes the reader question the work. If language is insufficient in carrying meaning, what value could the novel possibly have?

There are many references to different authors in the novel. The act of reading is debated between the characters:

> Plato, he said, laying one finger on the first of a row of small dark books, 'and Jorrocks next door, which is wrong. Sophocles, Swift. You don't care for German commentators, I presume. French, then. You read French? You should read Balzac. Then we come to Wordsworth and Coleridge. Pope, Johnson, Addison, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats. One thing leads to another" (137).

It is Mr. Ambrose who is saying this when he is attempting to find Rachel a book to read. Mrs. Dalloway bonds with the Ship's steward over Shakespeare's *Henry the Fifth* (46). While Mrs. Flushing declares: "Shakespeare? I hate Shakespeare!" (254) Hirst reads Sappho in church (217), while Richard Dalloway recommends that Rachel read Jane Austen (53). The fact that the characters read books, might be seen as making them seem more 'real', and their various literary tastes offers an indication of their personalities. But again I think Woolf is undermining the creation of her text. By drawing attention to the process of reading, she is drawing attention to what the reader is himself involved in, and is so making the reader conscious of the process of reading. Thereby undermining the illusion of reality that the text is

creating. Woolf is in *The Voyage Out* creating a text which apparently complies with the rules of a traditional narrative, and at the same time she is entering into a discussion of that narrative. The novel can be read simply as the story of Rachel Vinrace, going out to Santa Marina, falling in love and getting married, that is the paradox of the novel. At the same time as it is being created it is simultaneously rejecting itself.

When Rachel has first become aware of her own self, she is allowed for the first time to read whatever she chooses. While she was living with her Aunts in Richmond her reading had been censored for the good of her morals: "she did not naturally care for books and thus never troubled her head about the censorship which was exercised first by her aunts, later by her father" (27). At Villa San Gervasio Rachel can read what she chooses, and she reads to modern books (113). When Rachel later begins to have feelings for Hewet, she again turns to books, finding that they are unable to provide her with the answers she needs: "none of the books she read […] suggested from their analysis of love that what their heroines felt was what she was feeling now. It seemed to her that her sensations had no name" (211). This is a clear criticism of literature; it fails to provide an analysis that is relevant to Rachel as a reader. Rachel's reading leads her to question the very nature of reality. In the novel the nature of reality and the nature of writing is closely linked. The question raised is: Is there an observable reality, and if so is literature a medium capable of recording it? David Daiches proposes :

> In Virginia Woolf more than in any other English novelist the writer of fiction faces squarely the problem of the breakdown of a public sense of significance and its consequences for the novel. A novelist who could ask, "What is meant by reality?" and reply, "It would seem to be something very erratic, very undependable [...]"

> She saw one aspect of the modern problem with remarkable clarity, and consciously developed a view of fictional art which would enable her to deal with it" ("The Novel and the Modern World": 187).

The breakdown of a public sense of significance plays a central role in the novel. Things are falling apart and collapsing. Language is unstable, the Empire is unstable, and reality itself is not a solid entity. This is seen most strongly towards the end of the novel, but it is hinted at earlier on. After a conversation with Evelyn Murgatroyd, Terence Hewet is walking back to his room. "The mystery of life and the unreality even of one's owns sensations overcame him as he walked down the corridor which led to his room" (179). There is a questioning in the novel of the very nature of reality. And this questioning is brought to a climax with Rachel's illness and death.

Lee suggests that in this illness Rachel "voyages even further out, creating her own universe in her fever just as she did when blocking out Santa Marina with her hand" (49). Rachel suffers a long drawn out illness, filled with feverish fantasies and hallucinations. Rachel's entire world collapses. Time looses meaning; "Rachel woke to find herself in the midst of one of those interminable nights which do not end at twelve, but go on into the double figures – thirteen, fourteen, and so on until they reach the twenties, and then the thirties, and then the forties. She realised that there was nothing preventing nights from doing this if they chose (312)." Rachel is no longer bound by time, and she is also freed from her body. The nurse comments about one of her toes sticking out from under the blanket and "Rachel did not realise that the toe was hers." (312) This loss of a sense of the body has been suggested earlier when Rachel sits pondering the nature of reality, "She was overcome by awe that things should exist at all... She forgot that she had any fingers to raise." (114) It also represents a kind of freedom for Rachel; she escapes from the perception of her own image.

Rachel is no longer conscious of her own body, and so she has overcome the previous worries about her own appearance, which is seen in the beginning of the novel when the Dalloways arrive onboard the ship; “she had come to the depressing conclusion, since the arrival of the Dalloways that her face was not the face she wanted, and in all probability never would be” (33). This disappointment with her own image is also seen when she and Hewet look into a mirror together; “But it chilled them to see themselves in the glass, for instead of being vast and indivisible they were really very small and separate, the size of the glass leaving a large space for the reflection of other things.” (286) Rachel, having in her mind sunk beneath the surface of reality, no longer has to worry about the way she is perceived by other people. All the people around Rachel lose their form and meaning; “on the fourth afternoon she was suddenly unable to keep Helen’s face distinct from the sights themselves; her lips widened as she bent over the bed, and she began to gabble unintelligibly like the rest”(322). “Rachel’s illness completes what has been suggested throughout the novel; that reality is not a fixed entity, and that even our own perceptions can be deceiving.

While Rachel is ill she spends time trying to remember how the lines by Milton were:

> Her chief occupation during the day was to try and remember how the lines went:
>
> Under the glassy, cool, translucent wave,
>
> In twisted braids of lilies knitting,
>
> The loose train of thy amber dropping hair:
>
> and the effort worried her because the adjectives persisted in getting into the wrong places (311).

This passage showing Rachel trying to remember Milton, the words slipping away from her, reveals one artificially constructed reality collapsing within another, which is itself

constructed in such a way as to appear to collapse. The disintegration of the Milton text becomes not only a metaphor of the disintegration of Rachel's mind, but also of the collapse of the text. However, Rachel does not die in this state of confusion. "He expected to find some terrible change in her, but there was none. She looked indeed very thin, and, as far as he could see, very tired, but she was the same as she had always been. Moreover she saw him and said, 'Hullo Terence'" (333). The feeling is that she has been cured, and that she now is free to go on with her life. It is slightly reminiscent of Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* and Marianne Dashwood's recovery from a fever, which has freed her from her attachment to the rogue Willoughby and enables her to bestow her attention upon the faithful Colonel Brandon. However, there is no happy ending in sight for Rachel, having recognised her fiancèe, she immediately dies, this making her death seem all the more arbitrary and meaningless.

However, if, as I suggested in the first chapter, Rachel is seen as a metaphor of the novel, then Rachel's return to sanity signals the novel's return to the conventional narrative. Rachel's illness has for her been an escape from the rules of patriarchal society, and the description of Rachel's illness, in its impressionistic and fragmentary form, has been an escape from the restrictions of the traditional novel. Rachel dies, and the novel goes on to describe the minor character's reaction to this death. "Naremore suggests: Rachel' experience is seen ultimately in relation to the community at large, so that through her death that community, including its most rational member, Hirst, is able to sense the elemental affinities which are the pattern and meaning of life" (55). I cannot agree with this, the other character's reaction to Rachel's death does not suggest that they have achieved a deeper understanding of the meaning of life. Life is seen as proceeding as it did before. The characters resume their banter, although the conversation momentarily turn to death. Miss Allan concludes, over her knitting that "It would be very dull to die before they have discovered whether there is life on Mars" (351). Mrs. Paley cannot even remember who Rachel was: "We seem to have made so

many new acquaintances here" (341). Lee observes: After the death we return to the satirized world of the hotel, and the death itself becomes material for the humour associated with that world" (52). Their lives go on, in all their insignificance and insincerity. When St. John enters they all become temporarily solemn, but are soon distracted by the view. "come outside and see Wilfrid, it's wonderful" (353). Soon after the characters decide to retire:

> All these voices sounded gratefully in St. John's ear as he lay half-asleep, and yet vividly conscious of everything around him. Across his eyes passed a procession of objects, black and indistinct, the figures of people picking up their books, their cards, their balls of wool, their work-baskets, and passing him one after the other on their way to bed (353).

The focus of the passage is on the everyday objects; Rachel's death has in no way influenced this world. The way that life is seen as going on, and the way the narrative returns from the fragmentary impressionism of Rachel's illness mirror each other. The polite strangers, the insignificant chatter, highlight the emptiness of the ending. The ending represents the death of the novel, mirroring Rachel's death. As Rachel dies unfulfilled, unable to break the restrictions of patriarchal society, so the novel is seen moving into silence trapped within the traditional form. In the essay "Modern Fiction", Virginia Woolf writes:

> The writer seems constrained, not by his own free will but by some powerful and unscrupulous tyrant who has him in a thrall, to provide a plot, to provide comedy, tragedy, love interest, and an air of probability embalming the whole so impeccable that if all his figures were to come to life they were to find themselves dressed to the last button of their coats in the fashion of the hour (106).

This is what the novel desires to break free from. Rachel's only escape from the rules and expectations of patriarchal society is death, and the novel's only escape from the traditional narrative is silence. In this way the novel's attack on literature is completed. If the writer decides to stay within the tradition then he is doing little more than creating silence.

Conclusion

As I mentioned in the introduction: the division of the thesis into three chapters, though necessary for the sake of clarity, is really quite artificial. All the elements are closely connected. This is for instance seen when Rachel is reading *Who's Who*:

> Sitting on the deck at Helen's feet she went on turning the pages and reading biographies of bankers, writers, clergymen, sailors, surgeons, judges, professors, statesmen, editors, philanthropists, merchants, and actresses; what clubs they belonged to, where they lived, what games they played and how many acres they owned (74).

On the one hand this can be regarded as a literary allusion, mocking the way *Who's Who* pretends to be able to sum up people's lives by recounting where they were educated, who they are married to and what their hobbies are. On the other hand it clearly relates to the novel's discussion of Empire and Patriarchy, in that *Who's Who* lists a variety of male professions, all important pillars of the Empire, but only one female profession: acting. It echoes what Evelyn Murgatroyd says of women's position in society: "We none of us do anything but play" (235). This indicates the division between the male and female world where men hold solid and serious positions such as banking, while women's work is reduced to frivolous pretence.

In conversation with Rachel, Terence says: "until a few years ago no woman had ever come out by herself and said things at all. There it was going on in the background, for all those thousands of years, this curious silent unrepresented life. Of course we're always writing about women – abusing them or jeering at them; but it's never come from women themselves" (201-202).

This sheds light on the novel's preoccupation with communication, the need for women to break their silence, and at the same time it is a comment upon the divide between men and women, the way that the sexes have lived separately, one forced into silence, the other with every opportunity of expressing themselves, but failing to do so successfully. It is also a comment upon literature and men's failing to write women in a way that is truthful.

On the trip to the top of Monte Rosa Mrs. Hugling Elliot has expressed the opinion that people cannot simply assume that they have been introduced, as this contradicts the rules of polite society. This makes Helen laugh at her: "Mocking the poor lady's timidity, who depended so implicitly upon one thing following another that a mere glimpse of a world where dinner could be disregarded, or the table moved one inch from its accustomed place, filled her with fears for her own stability" (118). This relates to communication, in that Mrs. Elliot desires to impose restrictions on the way that people interact. Mrs. Elliot is one of the characters who remain very much within the sphere of Empire and patriarchy. The passage reflects the rules that are imposed upon society by patriarchy. The need for one thing to follow another very much echoes the way a traditional novel is structured.

All the pieces are intricately connected and mirroring each other, which makes Daiches' claim: "there is a hesitation, even a clumsiness in *The Voyage Out* (117), seem ridiculously off the mark. I am far more inclined to agree with E.M. Forster, who in his review in The Daily News and Leader said, "Here at last is a book which attains unity as surely as *Wuthering* Heights, though by a different path" (52-53). If the novel can be chided for anything it is for being too carefully structured. Each passage at once opens up to a whole variety of new meanings, and at the same time is closely linked with the other elements of the novel. This can make *The Voyage Out* seem an almost impenetrable web.

Woolf is carefully placing the different elements so that the literary allusions, the inquisitive look at communication, the critical approach to the British Empire and patriarchy all become aspects of the same argument. Rachel Vinrace becomes a metaphor of *The Voyage Out*, and Empire and Patriarchy leaving the young woman destroyed also leave the novel destroyed. The collapse of communication reveals the destructive force of the Empire, and at the same time reveals the need for a new approach to the novel. Rachel Vinrace has by the rules and restrictions of patriarchal society been forced into silence. She needs to reject the rules of patriarchy if she is to acquire a language of her own. In the same way, the literature of patriarchal society has failed to give women a voice. Through *The Voyage Out*, Woolf reveals the need for a new approach to the novel. The novel is suggesting that the Empire and its patriarchal structure is an archaic form of government, that needs to be overthrown. The novel must be free of the rules and restrictions that are placed on it by a tradition which is itself a product of the Empire. A language that is free and unguarded must be discovered. A new form of the novel is required.

Looking at the way the novel is uses the traditional structure in order to undermine and subvert it, provides *The Voyage Out* with a place of its own in the canon of Woolf's works. The fact that *The Voyage Out* does not overcome the traditional form of the novel cannot be regarded as a failure. The struggle between form and content perceived by David Daiches (*Virginia Woolf:* 21) is not accidental.

I have no doubt that there are many ways of looking at *The Voyage Out*. A comparatory reading of *The Voyage Out* and other of Woolf's works, would be interesting, provided that one work is not treated as inherently inferior to the other Another possibility is is a clear-cut feminist approach to the work, for which the novel would be certain to provide ample material. A colonial reading, perhaps comparing it with the work of an author who is writing from the perspective of the colonies, would be certain to be worthwhile. For my own

part if I were to do something different it would be to look at the use of humour and irony in the novel, as there seems to be the ringing of a rather mischievous laughter through the whole work. Woolf is continuously poking fun of her characters, their quirks, their conversations, and the situations they find themselves in. The complexity of *The Voyage Out*, the multi-layered kaleidoscopic quality of it, makes it apparent that a number of interpretations are possible.

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