

THE CONCEPT OF REALITY AND DEATH IN VIRGINIA WOOLF'S THREE MAJOR NOVELS: MRS. DALLOWAY, TO THE LIGHTHOUSE AND THE WAVES

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Virginia Woolf from the beginning of her literary career till she died, tried to find an answer to the question of the meaning of life and death, believing that the answer lies beyond life, that is, in death which would unite all human beings regardless of their social rank or personality. In all her novels, especially in her mature works such as *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To The Lighthouse* and *The Waves*, she continued to search for the meaning of life which was intimately tied up with the fact of death. However, she did not treat death as the most unbearable and terrifying fact in human life. On the contrary, it was a happy and unchanging solution for humanity and was not a fearful reality any longer, although her biography shows us that, she was extremely disturbed by a series of deaths in her family. She first experienced her mother's death, she had her first mental breakdown and these breakdowns continued intermittently throughout her life. Unfortunately, she suffered deeply from depressive mental illness and made several attempts to commit suicide. She eventually succeeded in her attempts, and drowned herself ¹.

Virginia Woolf's works reflect the spirit of the age. It seems that she was influenced by the current thoughts of the period such as Symbolism, Freudian Psychology and the Bergsonian Concept of time experience. Symbolists, finding objective reality limited, turned to unseen, hidden reality ². Therefore they rejected objective presentation; instead, they aimed at giving recognizable external images a spiritual and symbolic value. Generally speaking it was a form of expression in which unseen reality was grasped by the consciousness ³. Thus, the artist played the role of the correspondent between the visible and the invisible and became a person who could see resemblances between dissimilar things ⁴. For Symbolists art was a symbol of ideal truth and beauty. Symbolism brought a new relationship which was far beyond that of the cause and effect relationship. They were searching for the truth beyond

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- (1) John Lehman, *Virginia Woolf and Her World* London: Harcourt Brace, 1977, p. 109.
- (2) Frederick Karl and Mervin R. Magalaner, *A Reader's Guide to Twentieth-Century English Novels* New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1972, p. 16
- (3) *Ibid.* p.17
- (4) *Ibid.*, pp.20-24

the external reality; the reality which can be perceived through intuition and imagination rather than reason ⁵.

As for Freud's psychology, it placed importance on an unknown reality, that is, the hidden psychological reality. According to Freudian theory it was possible to reveal the individual's hidden thoughts about his personality by digging into his consciousness even into his subconscious ⁶. The surface reality was not favoured. Human nature was very complex and could never be explained without understanding all of his past and present, his consciousness and subconscious. This new theory brought the idea of multiple consciousness that man is a being whose personality consists of multiple aspects.

Freudian psychology found its support in Bergson's theory of time. Bergson also disliked the surface reality of life and stressed a life where the clock time is artificial but mental time is natural ⁷. As David Lodge points out: "Bergson ... contrasts time as we think about it and time as we experience it" ⁸. For Bergson, experienced time is duration, flowing in an invisible continuity.

This flowing quality according to Bergson is characteristic of all our experience; our experience is not a set of 'conscious states' clearly demarcated. Its phases melt into one another and form an organic whole ⁹.

In the Bergsonian world, time is immeasurable and evershifting in itself, in which things are indistinguishable. Therefore one should enter:

... Inside the object' by means of intuition, an irrational process, rather than surveying the object from the outside, from a window, which is an intellectual and rational process.

... To obtain a complete picture of reality, another faculty of the mind what Bergson called intuition is necessary ¹⁰.

Both Bergson and Freud emphasized the hidden motives of consciousness by suggesting that true experience and time existed in the various levels of the consciousness. Likewise symbolists emphasized the significance of invisible, spiritual realities. Thus "reality" in the first half of the Modern Age became something obscure and fragmentary for some intellectuals.

... objective reality has become fragmented, dispersed among limitless number of conflicting subjectivities; it is no longer a solid substance, but the sum of our illusions... ¹¹

Reality was distorted and broken into pieces, which meant nothing was precise and whole in the world; and neither the human mind nor life were in order. The whole

(5) Ibid., p.20

(6) Ibid., p.34

(7) Ibid., p.30

(8) David Lodge, *The Modes of Modern Writing* London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1977, p.145.

(9) Ibid., p.145

(10) Karl and Magalaner, p. 31.

(11) Damian Grant, *Realism* Bristol: J.W Arrowsmith Ltd., 1978, p.52.

work was chaotic. Thus, since there was no common understanding of solid reality, the artist had to bear the responsibility of "all kinds of consciousness" ¹². This new notion of multiple consciousness derived from Bergson and Freud, influenced many writers of the period and became the spirit of the age. The writer created new ways of describing human behaviour. The point is that, human beings were ever the same from the point of view of familiar realities. But, they became less sociable, more introspective in the Modern Age. The artist had a struggle to go beyond appearance and visible realities to get at the essence of people and events. This attitude was best reflected in the novels of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. Yet, the attainment of this essence was impossible through traditional realistic methods of portraying life which reflect only a part of the whole "reality":

For 'reality' Virginia Woolf substitutes the word 'life'; and 'life' she asserts, is something that traditional realism cannot capture... ¹³

"Life" for Virginia Woolf is not what day to day living reveals, its elusive baffling multiple. Again for this reason she called H.G. Wells, John Galsworthy and Arnold Bennet 'materialists'. She argues:

It is because they are concerned not with the spirit but with the body... we mean by it (materialists) that they write of un-important things; that they spend immense skill and immense industry making the trivial and the transitory appear to be true and the enduring ¹⁴.

Hence, Bennet, Galsworthy and Wells who portray life in terms of social realities were not esteemed by Virginia Woolf as true renderers of "life", because their portrayal of "life" was on the surface, only a copy of the phenomenal world. However, this does not mean that they never enter the minds of their characters, or render the characters' hidden thoughts and feelings. They do reflect inner lives of people, but without any ideal, metaphysical or mystical aspect in them. There has always been a strong interaction between the inner and outer worlds of their characters. What these writers reflect was the character's subjective reactions to external realities but nothing deep beyond this. As Virginia Woolf argues:

If, then we reckon up what we have got from the truth-tellers, we find that it is a world where our attention is always being drawn to things which can be seen, touched and tasted, so that we get an acute sense of reality of our physical existence ¹⁵.

The most significant characteristic of Virginia Woolf's novels is her treatment of experience and life. She does not copy it, she questions it ¹⁶. She also defeated death through a kind of spiritual unity which she reflected especially in all her major novels.

(12) Ibid., p.5.

(13) Lodge.,p.44

(14) Virginia Woolf, *Collected Essays* Sussex: Bookprint Ltd., 1968, 11.pp 104-105.

(15) Ibid.,pp.63-64.

(16) Lodge, p. 177.

In her early novels, such as *The Voyage Out* and *Jacob's Room*, life is meaningless and gloomy; and death is terrifying and sad. Each of these novels ends with the sudden death of its hero or heroine.

Mrs. Dalloway is Virginia Woolf's first work in which death is idealized. The theme of the book is universal love and communication¹⁷. She wanted to reveal the meaning of life and death through human relationships and experience.

The book opens with Clarissa, going to buy flowers for her party. She is introduced to the reader through her inner thoughts, memories and feelings; the memories about her youth, when she was eighteen, then her mind jumps to her former lover Peter Walsh who would be back from India. Afterwards the reader reads the thoughts of Scrope Purvis and learns that Clarissa is over fifty and has "grown very white since her illness."¹⁸ Walking in the street, Clarissa enjoys life, feels happy that the war has ended, and she is alive. Yet, the inhuman destruction of war is emphasized: that the war has ended, and she is alive. Yet; the inhuman destruction of war is emphasized:

... She loved; life; London; this moment of June. For it was the middle of June. The war was over, except for someone like Mrs. Foxcroft at the Embassy last night eating her heart out because that nice boy was killed.. or lady Bexborough who opened a bazaar, they said, with the telegram in her hand, John her favorite, killed; but it was over; Thank Heaven over. It was June¹⁹.

Virginia Woolf, although she lived through the world wars, never described war in her novels like Ernest Hemingway wrote in his *A Farewell to Arms*, *The Sun Also Rises* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. However, in this novel she refers to the destructive effects of war, especially in the character of Septimus. After the first reference to destructive power of war, the idea of death comes to Clarissa's mind; but soon it turns to be a vision of hopeful unity:

Did it matter then, she asked herself, walking towards Bond Street, did it matter that she must inevitably cease completely; all this must go without her; did she resent it; or did it not become consoling to believe that death ended absolutely? But that somebody in the streets of London, on the ebb, and flow of things, here there. She survived. Peter survived, lived in each other, she being part, she was positive of the trees at home; of the house there, ugly, rambling all to bits and pieces at it was; part of people she had never met; being laid out like a mist between the people she knew best, who lifted her on their branches as she had seen the trees lift the mist, but it spread ever so far, her life, herself²⁰.

She creates a visionary unity and unites herself with the whole world and becomes a part of it, so that death cannot separate her from life. In other words, she creates that visionary unity by building her vision on existing facts such as trees, houses, Pe-

(17) Karl and Magalaner, p.134.

(18) Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1971, p.6.

(19) Ibid. p.7.

(20) Ibid., pp. 11-12.

ter Walsh and the other people. Clarissa has the ability to communicate, to create universal unity ²¹. She can communicate through intuition: "Her only gift was knowing people almost by instinct, she thought walking on" ²². She can achieve a "reality" in which fact and vision, that is, inner and outer realities are combined in a delicate harmony; although she lives her social life, she also creates a visionary reality which is her own subjective reality, shared with nobody but exists in Clarissa's consciousness. Thus, there is a lack of interaction between her inner and outer lives. Throughout the party the reader observes that Clarissa's mind is full of thoughts of visionary unity which carry a spiritual meaning in them. Clarissa's parties are the means for communication and combination: everybody is there; Peter Walsh, Sally Seton, Elly Henderson, Lady Bruton, Hugh Whitbread, Sir Bradshaw and his wife, even the Prime Minister. However, the party has a symbolic meaning. It reflects the universal unity through death: the news of Septimus' suicide suddenly makes Clarissa feel close to him; she feels herself linked to this young man whom she does not know, simply because she understands the reason of his suicide ²³. Likewise, his inability to compromise with life and Sir Bradshaw's wrong treatment which make life more "intolerable" for him. Clarissa sympathizes with him although the news of his death makes her unhappy at first; she soon changes her mind:

Oh, thought Clarissa, in the middle of my party, here is death she thought

What business had the Bradshaws to talk of death at her party? A young man had killed himself. . . . But why had he done it?

This he had preserved. Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate, people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded; one was alone. There was an embrace in death! ²⁴

Death creates such a unity between Clarissa and Septimus that, right after this discovery, she sees an old woman who is about to go to bed, staring straight at her through the window. Clarissa also feels herself close to her, because she sees her own old age in this old lady, who is nearing death. Thus, within a few moments, she and Septimus and the old lady are united through death. Therefore she thinks:

There the old lady had put out her light! the whole house was dark now . . . she must go back to them, the visitors. But what an extraordinary night. She felt somehow very like him—the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away while they went on living. The clock was striking. The leaden circles dissolved in the air. But she must go back. She must assemble. She must find Sally and Peter. And she came in from the little room ²⁵.

(21) Alice van Buren Kelly, *The Novels of Virginia Woolf: Fact and Vision* (Chicago: The University of Chicago press, 1973), pp. 100-101.

(22) Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, p. 11.

(23) Vida Markovic, *The Changing Face*, Southern Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970, p. 63.

(24) Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*, pp. 203-204.

(25) *Ibid.*, p. 206.

It is an "extraordinary night" for her because in a twinkle of a moment she discovers that death is not a power that destroys or separates, but, on the contrary, it unites people. Therefore, the very moment of this discovery is the extraordinary moment. This is the unchanging truth lying behind life, and Clarissa manages to reach it. Likewise, Peter Walsh experiences the same unity within few moments after Septimus' suicide when his dead body is in ambulance, being taken to the hospital. Peter pities him and thinks:

... he had found life like an unknown garden, full of turns and corners, surprising, yes; really it took one's breath away, these moments, their coming to him by the pillar box opposite the British Museum one of them, a moment, in which things come together; this ambulance; and life and death²⁶.

Peter, just like Clarissa felt during her party, is also united with this man whom he does not know only for a few moments of course, but again through death. This idea reminds him of one of Clarissa's youthful theories about death as a unifying power:

Clarissa had a theory in those days—they had heaps of theories, . . . It was to explain the feeling they had of dissatisfaction: not knowing people; not being known. For how could they know each other? You met everyday; then not for six months, or years. It was unsatisfactory, they agreed, how little one knew people. But she said. Sitting on the bus going up Shaftesbury Avenue, she felt everywhere; . . . but everywhere. . . . Odd, affinities she had with people she had never spoken to, some woman in the street, some man behind a counter—even trees, or barns. It ended in a transcendental theory which, with her horror of death, allowed her to believe, . . . that since our apparitions, the part of us which appears, are so momentary compared with the other, the unseen part of us, which spreads wide, the unseen might survive, be recovered, somehow attached to this person or that, or even haunting certain places, after death. Perhaps, perhaps²⁷.

Obviously, it has a mystical, metaphysical meaning. The idea is that, the unseen part, the spirit survives after death; therefore, death is not separation but a unity: a spiritual unity of feeling which cannot be achieved in life because of impossibility of knowing people, each representing a different personality. Thus, communication in life is transitory; but in death it is eternal as James Naremore comments on Virginia Woolf:

All of Virginia Woolf's fiction attempts to indicate a universal, timeless sense of life which may be called truth or reality. . . . Clarissa wants to experience this sense of unity all the time; even it sometimes seems if such a unity can only be felt in the dissolution of personality or ultimately in death itself²⁸.

(26) *Ibid.*, p. 168.

(27) *Ibid.*, pp. 168-69.

(28) James Naremore, *The World Without a Self*. Chaton, Mass.: The Colonial Press Inc., 1973. p. 105.

in this respect, for Virginia Woolf, life contains some moments when one feels such a unity as Clarissa and Peter felt. They come like an inspiration or revelation. They are the moments of ecstasy, in which one experiences a communication with this eternal unity. Davit Lodge calls this very moment "the privileged moment" which is "transitory and recognized as such by those that experience it . . . and yet it transcends time:"³⁹ and continues to exist in the memories of that particular person who has experienced it till he dies³⁰. Such moments are the great moments because they contain a great "reality" in them: the reality of death as a unifying power.

As is discussed so far that the quest for eternal unity, especially unity through death is a common theme of Virginia Woolf's works. Her "fiction is a kind of death-wish."³¹

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, she begins to enlarge the symbolic possibilities of her characters by making them represent various aspects of fact and vision. In *To The Lighthouse*, she combines factual and visionary approaches in the marriage of two different personalities³².

The marriage of the Ramsays is the symbol of unity of two kinds of truth. Mr. Ramsay symbolizes intellectual truth and Mrs. Ramsay, intuitive truth; but Lily Briscoe is the artist whose painting symbolizes the unity of intellect and intuition that is, the work of art, representing reality as a whole. In other words, "the novel treats symbolically the marriage of opposites; and discusses art as another means of combining opposing attitudes toward life"³³.

Mr. Ramsay loves factual truth, he is a man of intellect. He is unable to apprehend spiritual, visionary truth because of his lack of intuition. He could only grasp one kind of truth, factual truth. "If reaching 'Z' means attaining perfect truth, he has failed; for try as he will he can proceed no further than 'Q' "³⁴ which means intellect cannot grasp the whole truth, except only one aspect of it. It is also unable to see beauty. Mr. Ramsay did not notice the beauty of the view, nor did he look at the flowers. Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe, the artist, symbolize intuition, "the immediate knowledge that comes when one is forgetful of everything external as well as internal"³⁵. In fact, *To The Lighthouse*, comes closest to formulating a metaphysical truth about human beings which will give direction and meaning to all his activities.³⁶ Therefore, Mrs. Ramsay, intuitively feels and thinks almost in a state of "transcendental consciousness"³⁷ in solitude the existence of a meaning which lies beyond life.

For now she need not think about anybody, She could be herself, but herself. ... To be silent; to be alone ... When life sank down for a moment

(29) Lodge, p. 179.

(30) Ibid., p. 179.

(31) Naremore, p. 106.

(32) Kelley, p. 114.

(33) Ibid., p. 115.

(34) Ibid., p. 117.

(35) Thakur, p.77.

(36) James Gindin, *The Harvest of a Quiet Eye* Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1971, p. 182.

(37) Thakur, p.78.

the range of experience seemed limitless. And to everybody there was always this sense of unlimited resources, she supposed; one after another she Lily, Augustus Charmichael, must feel, our apparitions, the things you know us by, are simply childish. Beneath it is all dark, it is all spreading, it is unfathomably deep; but now and again we rise to the surface and that is what you see us by. ... Losing personality, one lost the fret the hurry, the stir; and there rose her lips always some exclamation of triumph over life when things came together in this peace, this rest, this eternity; and pausing there she looked out to meet that stroke of the Lighthouse, ... the long ready stroke, was her stroke ... It will end, it will end she said. It will come, it will come, when suddenly she added, we are in the hands of the Lord. ... It was odd, she thought, how if one is alone, one leant to things, inanimate things, trees, flowers, streams; felt they expressed one, felt they became one; felt they knew one, in a sense were one; ... With her mind she had always seized the fact that there is no reason, order, justice: suffering death, the poor. ... No happiness lasted; she knew that. ... She saw the light again. ... she had known happiness, exquisite happiness, intense happiness ...³⁸

The idea of universal unity even with "inanimate things, trees, streams, flowers;" and the idea of losing personality so that she can unite herself with everybody and everything, not only with this world but also with that metaphysical truth which exists beyond our world, are emphasized again. Therefore, Mrs. Ramsay thinks, "the things you know us by, are simply childish"; they never give true happiness because they do not last long. The only happiness she feels is the very moment when she identifies herself with one of the strokes of the Lighthouse, losing her personality completely, forgetting her secular world in a moment of ecstasy; and being close to eternity, that is, eternal reality symbolized by the Lighthouse, the stroke which Mrs. Ramsay identifies herself with, will return to it. "It will end, it will end she said, it will come, it will come, when suddenly she added, we are in the hands of the Lord"³⁹. Virginia Woolf, "has moved her whole novel toward the significant moment, the symbolic achievement"⁴⁰. She seeks the eternal truth or rather the essence of "reality in novelistic terms"⁴¹. Thus, the marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay is not only the union of two separate individuals, "Both lives are a necessary part of the total truth"⁴².

Likewise the same idea of unity is created by Lily Briscoe in the moments when she created her vision of unity through Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, the two different individuals, Mr. Ramsay, representing intellectual truth, Mrs. Ramsay representing intuitive truth, are united "in transcendent unity," that is, Virginia Woolf's visionary truth.

Directly one looked up and saw them, what she called 'being in love' flooded them. They became part of that unreal but penetrating and exciting universe which is the world seen through the eyes of love. The sky

(38) Virginia Woolf, *To The Lighthouse*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1973, pp. 72-75.

(39) Woolf, *To The Lighthouse*, p. 74.

(40) Gindin, p.186.

(41) *Ibid.* p.186.

(42) Kelley, p. 222.

stuck to them; the birds sang through them. And, what was even more exciting, she felt, too, as she Mr. Ramsay bearing down and retreating, and Mrs. Ramsay sitting with James in the window and the cloud moving and the tree, bending, how life, from being made up of little separate incidents which one lived one by one, became curled and whole like a wave which bore one up, with it and through one down with it, there, with a dash in the beach⁴³.

The chapter titled, "Time Passes" is about the period of decay and death in the lives of the characters. Prue, Andrew and Mrs. Ramsay die. However, Mrs. Ramsay's presence is always felt. She continuously lives in the memories of the ones who knew her, especially in Lily's visions. Therefore, death does not appear as separation and it is only reported in brackets.

The book ends with the chapter called "The Lighthouse" which is the excursion of Mr. Ramsay, Cam and James to the Lighthouse with Lily and Mr. Charsichael watching. Lily finally completes her painting, because she has had the vision which she has been waiting for a long time and reflects it in her work of art, in her painting. Mr. Ramsay goes to the Lighthouse, but only after Mrs. Ramsay's death. He attempts to go beyond himself, his rationality towards the vast sea of intuition and through this "intuitional perception" he is changed for the first time. He praises James. Cam thinks "you have got it at last"⁴⁴. The end is again unify through death. Mr. Ramsay goes to the Lighthouse after Mrs. Ramsay's death, and although she is dead she still unites people as she tries in her dinner and the novel ends with Lily's thoughts which reflect this unity; the unity of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay.

With a sudden intensity, as she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done; it was finished. Yes; she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision⁴⁵.

The themes of the meaning of life, and death as the ultimate unifier are reflected in *The Waves* intensely. In the book, Virginia Woolf presents various types of characters; Bernard, Louis, Rhoda, Susan, Neville and Percival, a character who never speaks and thinks, but whose presence is always felt. The six characters, three boys and three girls speak prother, think in turn, at first in single sentences which symbolize the basis of their personalities; and gradually as they grow, sensations, perceptions accumulate and complex impressions are rendered in more complex sentences and paragraphs. In Bernard's statement "ring" symbolizes his mystic concept of reality, "the eternal renewal,"⁴⁶ as he repeats later: "the circle is unbroken; the harmony completes"⁴⁷. According to Jean Guiguet, Virginia Woolf wrote in her *Diary* that *The Waves* is "an abstract, mystical, eyeless book in which she expresses her mystical feelings"⁴⁸. She skillfully employs the waves and the sea as appropriate

(43) Woolf, *To The Lighthouse*, p.55.

(44) *Ibid.*, p.234.

(45) *Ibid.*, p. 237.

(46) Thakur, p. 109.

(47) Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* New York: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1959 , p.240.

(48) Jean Guiguet, *Virginia Woolf and Her Works*, trans., Jean Steward Edinburgh: T. and A. Constable Ltd., 1965 , p. 281.

symbols of life and unity, or rather reality. Just like the waves rising out of the sea, growing bigger and higher separately and subsiding into the sea, human beings are born as separate individuals like Bernard, Neville, Louis, Susan, Jinny and Rhoda, and after they live their lives passing through infancy, youth, maturity and old age, they return to the vast sea, to that eternal reality. Thus, death appears as an eternal unifier, not a hostile, terrifying power as Bernard says at the very end of the book:

Yes, this is the eternal renewal, the incessant rise and fall and fall rise again.

And in me too the wave rises. It swells; it arches its back. I am aware once more of new desire, something rising beneath me like the proud horse whose rider fast spurs and then pulls him back. What enemy do we now perceive advancing against us, you whom I ride now, as we stand powing this stretch of pavement? It's death. Death is the enemy. It is death against whom I ride with my spear couched and my hair flying back like a young man's, like Percival's, when he galloped in India. I strike spurs into my horse. Against you I will fling myself, unvanquished and unyielding, oh Death ⁴⁹.

The book ends with Bernard's challenging death. Like Clarissa, Mrs. Ramsay, Lily Briscoe, even Septimus who feels the unifying power of death, Bernard also feels the same unity. Death is not a separation. On the contrary, life is separation. Separation from eternal unity, and separation of individuals who are confined in their personalities; as Bernard reflects, each human-being enters life as a separate individual:

Having dropped off satisfied like a child from the breast I am at liberty now to sink down, deep into what passes, this omnipresent, general life, ... Then individuality asserts itself. They are off ⁵⁰.

Life for Bernard is complex indeed. It has various aspects and Bernard has lived all of them. Virginia Woolf presents life in its three main aspects: the aspect, which includes his social relationships and occupations. He boasts, talks, laughs, marries and has a son. He also has a psychological life, that is, his inner life; he thinks of himself and his friends:

I think of Louis now. What malevolent yet searching light would Louis throw upon this dwindling autumn evening, ... His thin lips are somewhat pursed; his cheeks are pale; he pores in an office over some obscure commercial document. My father, a banker at Brisbane being ashamed of him he always talks of him-failed ⁵¹.

Finally, Bernard has a spiritual life in which he tries to find the meaning of life and also feels the existence of hidden unity and unites himself with the whole humanity through dissolution of his personality. Although he has a strong personality as "Bernard", he can dissolve his personality and become "complex" and "many", "I am

(49) Woolf, *The Waves*, p.383.

(50) *Ibid.*, p. 203.

(51) *Ibid.*, p.238.

not one and simple, but complex and many. Bernard in public, bubbles; in private, is secretive.' " ⁵². Bernard sums up life in the end of the book, and explains the importance of identity to face the facts of life. In this respect, what he points out is social identity, which means to communicate with the outer world. He thinks:

In the beginning, there was the nursery, with windows opening on to a garden, and beyond that the sea ... It was Susan who cried, that day when my indifference melt. Neville did not melt. 'Therefore,' I said, 'I am myself, not Neville', a wonderful discovery ... I then first became aware of the presence of those enemies who change, but are always there; the forces we fight against. To let oneself be carried on passively as unthinkable. 'That's your course, world,' one says, 'mine is this. So let us explore' I cried, and jumped up ⁵³.

Bernard realizes, the importance of "identity" to fight against "the forces", "those enemies"; the facts of life in order to prevent himself from being "carried away passively". However, although Bernard has a strong identity, he can also dissolve this identity and become complex, many-sided, and unite himself with the other people. All these three characters (Bernard, Clarissa and Mrs. Ramsay) can create their own unity or rather reality. They can combine their inner and outer lives. They are neither merely social, nor merely spiritual characters. They are both. Hence, for Bernard, life is both "tolerable, enjoyable" and "detestable" at the same time. He thinks:

Nevertheless, life is pleasant, life is tolerable. Tuesday follows Monday; then come Wednesday. ⁵⁴

But soon he changes his mind and his thoughts reflect his hatred towards life:

Lord, how unutterably disgusting life is. What dirty tricks it plays us, one moment free, the next, this. ... Disorder, sordidity and corruption surround us ⁵⁵.

He also feels that he is old, coming closer to death. For this reason he feels that he is dissolved. His life is about to end.

The woods had vanished; the earth was a waste or shadow. No sound broke the silence or the wintry landscape ! No Cook crowed; no smoke rose; no train moved. A man without a self, I said. A heavy body leaning on a gate. A dead man ⁵⁶.

He feels that he is dissolved completely and united with his friends and cannot find his own identity as Bernard:

And now I ask, 'Who am I ? I have been talking of Bernard, Neville, Jinny, Susan, Rhoda, and Louis. Am I all of them ? Am I one and dis-

(52) Ibid., p.227.

(53) Ibid., pp. 342-43.

(54) Ibid., p. 355.

(55) Ibid., p. 380.

(56) Ibid., p.374.

tinct ? I do not know. We are here together. But now Percival is dead, and Rhoda is dead; we are divided; we are not here. Yet I cannot find any obstacle separating us. There is no division between me and them. As I talked I felt, 'I am you'. This difference we make so much of, this identity we so feverishly cherish, was overcome ... Here on my brow is the blow I got when Percival fell" ⁵⁷.

He feels that he cannot say "I am Bernard" any longer because he is united with his friends including his dead friends Percival and Rhoda through dissolution of identity; and the discovery of this unity stimulates him to challenge death because he has realized that death is a unity, not separation. In short, the book 'stresses the continuity and also the eternity or the discontinuous; the conflict between time and duration, parallel to that between the transitory and the permanent'" ⁵⁸

ÖZET

1882 - 1941 yılları arasında yaşamış olan İngiliz kadın romancı Virginia Woolf özellikle en ünlü üç romanı olan *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To The Lighthouse* (*Deniz Feneri*) ve *The Waves* (*Dalgalar*) isimli yapıtlarında – biraz da mistik bir yaklaşımla – sürekli bir arayış içindedir. Aradığı, yaşamın ve buna bağlı olarak ölümün anlamının ne olduğunu. Bu arayış onun insanı ve çevresini yalınca maddesel yanıyla algılayan ve yansıtan gerçekçi yazın akımlarına karşı çıkmasına neden olmuştur. Böylelikle Woolf görünen gerçeklerin ötesine geçerek onların özünü bulup yansıtmayı yeğlemiştir. Sonuç: kısmen tinsel, kısmen de düşsel bir iç gerçek kavramıdır. Ona göre sah bu dünyada gördüklerimiz yalnızca asıl gerçeğin birer yansıması ya da parçasıdır. Asıl gerçek ise yaşamın ötesindedir ve ona ancak ölümlle ulaşılabilir. Bu nedenle ölüm Woolf'a göre korkulacak bir son, bir boşluk değil, aksine ulaşılacak en büyük huzur ve mutluluğun ta kendisidir. Her üç roman da kahramanlarının bu gerçeğin farkına varışlarıyla sona erer. İşte, bu makalenin amacı Virginia Woolf'un ölüm ve gerçek anlayışını bu üç roman çerçevesinde ayrıntılarıyla incelemektedir.

(57) Ibid., p.377.

(58) Guigbet, p. 288.