Reading Masculinity in Virginia Woolf's The Waves

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VIRGINIA WOOLF'S *THE WAVES*

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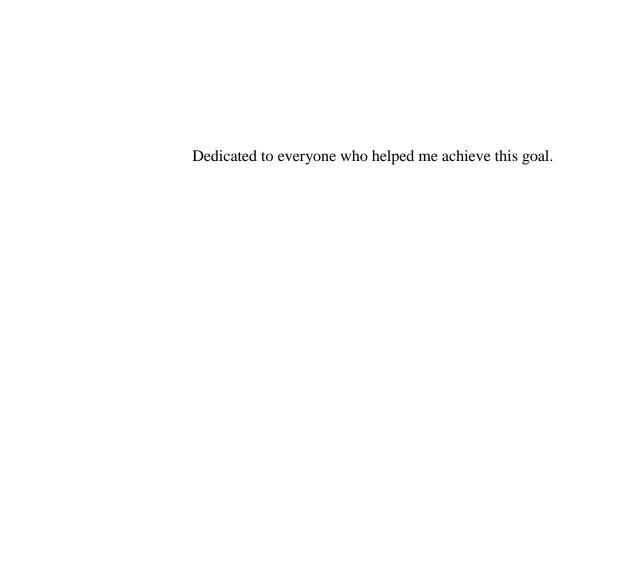
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Dedicated to everyone who helped me achieve this goal.

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ABSTRACT

The Waves subtly subverts traditional notions of gender, and creates a space for divergent expressions of masculinity, specifically, the masculinity referred to in this paper relates to norms established in England during the Edwardian and Post World War I periods. In *The Waves*, the three male voices, Bernard, Neville and Louis, are introduced at school to a pro-imperialist vision of masculinity which is further reinforced through their relationship with the silent Percival. However, unlike Percival, the three male voice characters are either barred from the homosocial (Nevill and Louis) or are ambivalent to its production (Bernard). By employing masculinity theory we can see through *The Waves* Woolf destabilizes traditional male roles by normalizing expressions of masculinity outside patriarchal prescriptions. *The Waves* blurring of gender also allows, or creates an environment, where traditional male literary modes are destabilized. Bernard, through his becoming author at the end of the novel, holds the possibility for breaking the traditional mode of male writing through his desire to go beyond mere description of the corporeal and his search for deeper meaning. Such subversion is also heightened by the aesthetics of the text of *The Waves*, itself.   While normalizing countertypical expressions of masculinity, *The Waves* opens up the possibility for a new way of reading a text outside of the male controlled literary tradition.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The difficulty with reading *The Waves* (1931), particularly for the

contemporary reader, stems from the absence of plot. Readers are conditioned to

expect a plot where B follows A resulting in C; however, *The Waves* cannot be said to

have a plot. *The Waves* consists more of moments, moments in the lives of six

characters who never really seem corporeal. The novel becomes even more difficult

by the manner in which it is written. *The Waves* primarily consists of the internal

thoughts of its characters, though "characters" does not properly describe these

individuals as their speeches float through the text like voices in a fog. They are

heard, but the reader has a hard time visualizing them; their speeches are poetic in

nature and follow stream of consciousness. In August 1930, Woolf writes in a letter to

Ethel Smythe, "I think then that my difficulty is that I am writing to a rhythm and not

to a plot. Does this convey anything? And thus though the rhythmical is more natural

to me than the narrative, it is completely opposed to the tradition of fiction and I am

casting about all the time for some rope to throw to the reader" (204). However,

Woolf *is* successful in throwing a rope to her readers, and recent work in masculinity theory has opened up new possibilities for reading her text.

In this paper, I argue that *The Waves* subtly subverts traditional notions of gender, and creates a space for divergent expressions of masculinity. Specifically, the masculinity referred to in this paper relates to norms established in England during the Edwardian and Post World War I periods. *The Waves'* blurring of gender also allows, or creates an environment, where traditional male literary modes are destabilized. By employing masculinity theory we can see through *The Waves* Woolf destabilizes traditional male roles by normalizing expressions of masculinity outside patriarchal prescriptions. In *Masculinities*, RW Connell postulates that the masculine hierarchy is based on relationships, particularly, the relationship between the masculine stereotype and what he terms countertypes. In *The Waves*, Percival takes on the role of masculine ideal and his relationship with the male voices is a center for desire as Louis wishes to be emulate Percival, Neville desires Percival, and Bernard wishes to turn him into a literary hero.

In order to analyze the relationship between Percival and the male voice characters, we must analyze the ways in which the male gender was constructed in Britain in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. When read through this context, particularly through John Tosh's historical study of masculine gender construction, we can observe that the male voices in the text further destabilize the masculine hierarchy through their inability to be properly constructed or ambivalence. Once the center of Louis', Neville's and Bernard's personal connection to the masculine ideal, Percival, is removed, they are free to create their own center of

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masculinity. For Louis, this center becomes an embrace of capitalism, while Neville embraces his homosexuality and aesthetic sensibilities. Bernard, on the other hand, takes a traditional route by taking a wife and having a family; however, his true center is his struggle with becoming an author. In Bernard's final attempt at storytelling, he throws away his book and pencil, his desire to create a literary hero, in the form of Percival, and traditional literary techniques. Finally, it is in Bernard's final act of writing the lives of the voices that destabilizes not only notions of what constitutes masculinity, but, more pointedly, the male literary tradition. Bernard's conscious decision to remain outside the homosocial patriarchy places him in a unique position to destabilize traditionally masculine methods of authorship and allows him the potential to create language that is outside gender constrictions. Bernard, through his "taking over of the text," at the end of the novel, holds the possibility for breaking the traditional mode of male writing. Such subversion is also heightened by the aesthetics of the text of *The Waves* itself. Woolf describes the text as being "completely opposed to the tradition of fiction," but more specifically, she is speaking of a male literary tradition that was taught and given priority in literary study during Woolf's life. While normalizing countertypical expressions of masculinity, *The Waves* opens up the possibility for a new way of reading a text outside of the male controlled literary tradition.

 The Waves subverts traditional gendered writing both the construction of the narrative and the nature of the persons who inhabit its world. *The Waves* traces the life of six individuals, three male—Louis, Neville, and Bernard—and three female— Jinny, Susan, and Rhoda—as they mature from children to adults. These individuals

act as narrators of the text primarily through a stream-of-consciousness narration of their interpretations of the world around them though the novel is interrupted with chapters called "The Interludes." In fact, *The Waves* is narrated in three parts: the "interludes" (a limited-omniscient narration), the soliloquies (first-person narration of the mind) which are the majority of the text, and Bernard's monologue (a one-sided dialogue with a silent audience). The interludes are narrated objectively and frame the novel, while the "soliloquy" sections exhibit characteristics of a polyphonic symphony that illustrates the subjectivity of first person narration. Bernard's monologue funnels the narratives of the six voices into an attempt to narrate their lives in Bernard's final attempt at becoming author.

The novel begins with the children as they are discovering their identity through difference: their difference among them both as individuals and as opposite sexed beings and their difference from the world around them. Gender identity becomes more complicated when they enter school because gender becomes not just about difference between male and female anatomy, but about the characteristics within their own gender that further individualizes them. The school system was set up to divide the sexes; boys and girls did not attend the same school. Furthermore, the nature of education that boys and girls received was much different. Boys were taught to be leaders of the nation, while girls were taught domestic skills. A higher priority was paid to boys' education, as they were the ones who went on to attend universities, which girls were barred from until well into the twentieth century. At school, both sexes are confronted with societal influences which attempt to dictate the proper expression of their respective genders. It is at school when the novel

introduces a seventh individual, Percival. However, unlike the six speaking voices, Percival's inter thoughts or perceptions are not narrated. Percival, who exhibits the masculine qualities of the patriarchy, acts as a center to which the other characters compare their own gender expressions, particularly the males who are outside the homosocial network. Later in the novel, when Percival dies during his colonial work, the males are left without a center. As previously stated, Louis finds his center through the promotion of capitalism and Neville embraces his homosexuality and promotion of aesthetic sensibilities. Bernard abandons his traditional notion of writing and creates a narrative that holds the potential to destabilize gendered language; however, criticism of *The Waves* has not viewed Bernard as dominating the text.

Criticism of *The Waves*, possibly because of the abstract and experimental nature of the text, has not been as widely pervasive as some of Woolf's other works. I believe the scattered criticism on the novel is due to the fact that critics do not know what to do with the text and mush of the analysis of *The Waves* relies more heavily on relating the texts to Woolf's other works or in conjunction with works by other authors. Jane Marcus, in *Virginia Woolf: A Feminist Slant* (1984), expresses her own difficulty in working with *The Waves*: "As a feminist critic, I had avoided the subject of Woolf's mysticism, and of *The Waves*, feeling that acknowledging her as a visionary as a trap that would allow her to be dismissed as another female crank, irrational and eccentric" (27). Some critics of *The Waves* have embraced this "mysticism." Gillian Beer argues for the mono-character and asserts the voices in the novel are "six persons of one woman" (75). I believe such an assertion is not

supported by the text and Beer primarily uses Woolf's journals and letters to support

her claim. Woolf's non-fiction works do shed light on her personal philosophy, but do

not directly support a reading of *The Waves*. In "Woolfenstein," Rachel Blau

DePlessis opens *The Waves* by comparing it to Gertrude Stein's "Forensics" and

discusses the intertextuality between the two works. De Plessis argues the two texts

are connected by "the existence of a 'feminine' practice of otherness…A practice

stirring up difference and undermining closure" (100). I would argue the text seeks to

bridge the gap of difference; however, difference is a common theme of feminist

critiques of *The Waves*. A common reading of *The Waves* seems to pit Bernard

against Rhoda that paints "Rhoda as a counterpoint to Bernard, whose final, dominant

expression is considered to suppress hers" (Goldman 188). I read Rhoda's suicide as a

resistance to complicity and subordination and Bernard's "dominating the text" as a

move toward Woolf's philosophy seen in *Three Guineas* when she gives her last

guinea to the men's pacifist union. While not identifying with these men, Woolf sees

the powerful subversive potential of men outside the traditional male patriarchy. Both

Bernard and Rhoda are subordinate to the masculine hegemony, and I argue a

masculinity reading of *The Waves* will illuminate this position.

Returning to *The Waves*, and dropping her mystic reading of the text, Jane

Marcus takes up the issue of imperialism, a by-product of the patriarchy, in the text.

In her essay "Brittania Rules the Waves" (1992), Marcus argues that *The Waves* is an

anti-imperialist text that deals with "race, class, colonialism, and the cultural politics

of canonicity itself" (232). Although Marcus does not explicitly state it, the themes

Marcus mentions have one thing in common—they are all controlled by the

masculine hegemony. While not specifically using masculinity theory, Marcus makes

an argument of the tension between the masculine stereotype and countertype when

she argues, "Imperialism in India and the exploitation of servants in England thus

fused in Woolf's imagination with her own revolt as a feminist" (238). If taken in

terms of masculine relationships, Marcus is arguing that Woolf's novel is uniting a

variety of masculine countertypes in a revolution against the hegemonic masculine

stereotype. The problem in the essay is that Marcus' main support for her theory

relates to a loose correlation of Percival and Bernard to historical figures of

imperialism and the interludes to a variation of Hindu prayers. Marcus argues,

"Bernard is Desmond [MacCarthy, biographer of Stephen, who praises his

misogynistic works] and Percival is J.K. Stephen [Woolf's cousin, a misogynistic

poet], the patriarchal imperialist makers of British culture" (240). While it is

undeniable that the text does deal with the ideas of colonialism and deals with a

condemnation of imperialism, Marcus' analysis possibly reaches too far, as there is

no evidence to support the interludes as Hindu prayers. In fact, the same year Marcus

wrote this essay, Patrick McGee wrote an article countering Marcus and, in particular,

her theory of the Hindu prayers.

In "The Politics of Modernist Form; Or, Who Rules *The Waves*?" (1992),

McGee argues that Marcus stretches her argument by claiming what Woolf probably

would have read, which includes books on Hindu philosophy and prayer. McGee

argues that Marcus reduces the text and its historical complexity with hypotheticals.

Also, McGee argues against Marcus' relation of Bernard and Percival to historical

imperialist figures: "She [Marcus] blatantly projects the personal characteristics of

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these two historical figures onto the characters of Bernard and Percival in a way that completely overstates what Woolf actually puts into the novel" (633). Unfortunately, McGee does not take this point much further, as he debates whether or not Bernard fulfills the necessary requirements of becoming a poet, thus correlating him to Desmond McCarthy. Further, McGee's article goes onto discuss the issue of literary form in the text without fully recapturing the theme of imperialism.

The issue of imperialism appears as a main topic of interest for Laura Doyle in her essay "Sublime Barbarians in the Narrative of Empire; or, Longinus at Sea in *The Waves*" (1996). Doyle's essay is a direct address to both Marcus' and McGee's essays and, in her essay, Doyle agrees with the presence of imperialism; however, Doyle disagrees with both critics as she sees Woolf using the notion of myth to create an anti-imperial text. Doyle hits on a key factor in the text which is Percival, and how Percival is at the center of the notions of empire. For Doyle, Percival represents the mythic figure who is worshipped at a pagan level. Since each of the voice characters have some relation to Percival, they, in turn, have some relation to the powers that support and promote imperialism. Marcus, McGee, and Doyle circle around the presence of male masculinity in the text; however, I contend the critique of gender construction and the potential for undermining masculine aesthetics that emerges at the end of the novel is not only a condemnation of imperialism, but the power structure that creates and supports the empire: the imperialist masculine hegemony that existed in Britain in the Edwardian and Post World War I periods.

While many critics have chosen to interpret *The Waves* based on its political *or* aesthetic qualities, the subversive aesthetic qualities of the text—multi-perspective

narration, shifts from omniscient narration to first person—complements the political

subversion of ideals of masculinity perpetuated by early twentieth-century British

masculine hegemony. Teresa Winterhalter, in the essay "'What Else Can I Do But

Write?' Discursive Disruption and the Ethics of Style in Virginia Woolf's *Three

Guineas*"(2003), reads *Three Guineas* (1938) for both aesthetic and political qualities

and argues that the two are not separate entities living in the text, but symbiotic

organisms feeding one another. The aesthetic presentation of such a political text,

much like *The Waves*,

> encourages us to deconstruct the opposition between aesthetics and
>
> politics that characterizes many early discussions of her
>
> works…Woolf's text can be understood, instead, to purposefully enact
>
> a moral position to which she is deeply committed… Thus, in her
>
> breaks with expository convention, she can be seen to manipulate
>
> rhetorical technique to move her plea for a pacifist world beyond mere
>
> social platforming into a performative prose that emphasizes the ethics
>
> of decentralizing authorial power. (237)

A reading of this sort, analyzing the aesthetic *and* political, is necessary to bring to

the forefront Woolf's experiment in form and her philosophy of gender politics,

particularly in a discussion of *The Waves*. Furthermore, Winterhalter discusses the

importance of narrative device in *Three Guineas*: "Thus, in developing multiple

speaking styles and identities, she resists delivering her views with unqualified

narrative authority and demonstrates how expository tradition can, if left

unchallenged, tacitly participate in war's proliferation" (237-238). Winterhalter

argues that Woolf's aesthetic choices are an extension of her politics; aesthetics aid her in destabilizing traditional male modes. In particular, Woolf saw male forms of narration as contributing to the ideology that produces war; "for Woolf, war is the product of assuming the infallibility of one particular viewpoint, then narration inevitably participates in this dynamic of power" (239). This singular viewpoint is most closely aligned with the male literary tradition of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and a tradition Woolf urged women to subvert. Winterhalter's aesthetic/political reading of *Three Guineas* opens up a new way to read *The Waves* in which the aesthetic deepens the gender and political philosophy within the text. The aesthetics of *The Waves* moves to subvert the traditional literary authority; it breaks form as it creates a new space for gendered speech or a space where neither gender has authority. The break in style and form of *The Waves* compliments the tension within the masculine hierarchy and mirrors Woolf's fears of the power of the British masculine hegemony and masculine aggression throughout Europe.

The break in style comes in the form of three narrative techniques: the inner monologues of the six voices, the seemingly omniscient narrator of the interludes, and Bernard's narrative summary. The final section of the text suggests that the art of narration helps to breed a dominant narrative, one created and maintained by the masculine hegemony. In writing *The Waves*, Woolf sought an aesthetic which dismantles more male associated forms, specifically that of one narrator and one viewpoint. It should be noted that this could also be said to be the narrative structure of fascism. Fascism sought to create one narrative thread and condition its followers to conform to the one "true" story. Woolf structured *The Waves* purposely to cause

disruption, disorder, and difference. The external descriptions the interludes create with images of the untamable waves are juxtaposed with the internal monologues of the six characters who have competing points of view. Julie Berman, in "Of Oceans and Opposition: The Waves, Oswald Mosley, and the New Party" (2008), comments "oceanic images particularly images of undammed feminine waters which flow indiscriminately and transgress boundaries, ultimately threaten the fascist desire" (106) and the desire for stability and order. This desire is not isolated to Fascism, but to the masculine power structure that creates and promotes activities such as Fascism and colonialism. Thus, the imagery of the interludes, with its flowing waves ever crashing and receding against the shore, destabilizes the order of the masculine hegemony and masculine modes of writing. Woolf's narrative techniques allow the characters to develop their own divergent points of view and in doing so Woolf is careful to distance herself and not allow her voice to become the dictator of the narration. However, aesthetics is not working alone within the text. While disrupting masculine modes of narration in the text, *The Waves* also works within the narrative to attack male control. Critics have largely focused on the ways in which her female characters rage against the oppressive masculine hegemony; however, in *The Waves*, Woolf illustrates that not only were women subjugated to the hyper masculine, but also men who were not like the image of the masculine stereotype are also subjugated. In *The Waves*, not all men are to blame for the suppression of others, but the minority of men who hold the power of hegemonic masculinity are to blame. In order to end the subjugation of the countertype male and females, the gender binary,

which is controlled by the masculine hegemony, must be destabilized, or eliminated,

through the creation of new expressions of gender.

CHAPTER II

CONSTRUCTING MASCULINITY AND PATRIARCHAL VALUES IN

EDUCATION

The concept of masculinity is oftentimes falsely correlated to the biological expression of sex; in fact, a sexed male is not inherently masculine, but is constructed as such through normalizing social influences. In the social sphere, gender is constructed through a series of gender specific practices and also through the establishment of a norm. In *Undoing Gender* (2004), Judith Butler argues:

> A norm operates within social practices as the implicit standard of
> *normalization*…The norm governs intelligibility, allows for certain
> kinds of practices and action to become recognizable as such,
> imposing a grid of legibility on the social and defining the parameters
> of what will and will not appear within the domain of the social. (41-
> 42)

To promote a normative masculinity, society has had to construct a figure who acts as a benchmark for every other person's expression of gender. In twentieth-century

America, the norm has manifested itself in a multitude of figures—action movie stars, athletes, politicians, war heroes—all of whom have been "deemed" masculine, and stand for the image of the masculine object whom all other males are judged against. In *The Waves*, this character would be Percival. Percival is the character whom the other males use as a benchmark for masculinity and the person they use to define their own expression of masculinity.

However, this is not to say that those who do not meet the standards of the norm are outside the realm of masculinity. For Butler, gender has fallen into a binary with two forces—the male and the female. However, this binary overshadows the fact that within the male and female there are variations of gender expression. Reifying gender with terms such as "…masculine/feminine, man/woman, male/female, thus performs the very naturalization that the notion of gender is meant to forestall" (43). The binary creates the illusion that there are only two avenues for the expression of gender—male and female; however, within the feminine and the masculine there are myriad varying gender expressions. During the 1920's and 1930's, gender was viewed very rigidly for both sexes, although men were more successful at circumventing these prescriptions. Women were forced into strict roles usually centering in the domestic sphere as that of wife or mother, like Susan in *The Waves*. Susan, and also Jinny, are able to successfully navigate through life because they conform to society's view of women. Susan becomes an "Earth mother" who gets married, has a family and maintains a farm. Jinny does not become a wife and mother; however, she embraces the aesthetic ideal of womanhood. She follows society's opinion of how women should look and uses her sexuality to engage men.

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Rhoda, on the other hand, does not fit into a domestic role nor perform the traditional feminine performatives. She has higher ambitions and wishes to enter the male sphere and has bisexual proclivities. The society of *The Waves* has no room for women who do not fit its strict guidelines. In the end, the only option for Rhoda is death because there is no place for her in a male dominated world. Women like Rhoda, who do not fit into the role designated for women, have no place in society; however, men who did not live up to the "masculine standard" created by the hegemony could still successfully navigate.

While the masculine norm entails a strict designation, men who do not live up to this norm are considered outside of the masculine. In George L. Mosse's *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (1996), he discusses the history of masculine construction and varying categorizations of masculinities, in particular, the stereotype and the countertype. The stereotype and countertype result from "The construction of masculinity [which] had fashioned a stereotype that in its quiet grandeur and self-control reflected the view society liked to have of itself" (56). Furthermore, "the strength of the masculine stereotype and its successful institutionalization was further documented by the strong desire of most outsiders…to conform to the image of normative masculinity" (Mosse, 134). *The Waves* plays with this ideal of conformity and the desire to belong. Throughout the novel, Louis, in particular, strives to belong to the group of unmarked males who are admitted into the homosocial brotherhood maintained by the patriarchy. The men in this society are granted admittance not just because they are male, but because they possess a specific type of masculinity, one that Mosse describes as the masculine stereotype. Mosse

studies the history of masculinity and, in particular, the masculine stereotype, whose image he traces back to the mid eighteenth century. According to Mosse, before the eighteenth century, masculinity had evolved from chivalric mentality to warrior mentality and then to an aristocratic notion of rank and breeding. However, in the nineteenth century with the rise of the bourgeoisie, masculinity became tied to middle class sensibilities and with it emerged the masculine stereotype. The new masculine stereotype "symbolized the physical and moral values of a new age, but it also presupposed an emphasis upon visual perceptions that had not existed before in this manner" (23). The masculine stereotype was not only a fusion of the mind and soul, but also the body, in which masculinity was defined by strength of body. In order to strengthen the masculine, science had to create a countertype that was verifiable and "Those who stood outside or were marginalized by society provided a countertype that reflected, as in a convex mirror, the reverse of the social norm" (56). The countertype was specifically those who were not masculine enough. Countertypes to masculinity served to strengthen the normative view of the masculine stereotype. Countertypes were those who were ethnically, physically and/or sexually different. Based on their marked status, Louis, a colonial subject, and Neville, a homosexual, represent a countertype to masculinity. Countertypes also represented the physical/mental disorder needed for the masculine stereotype. Percival's masculinity is only heightened because it is juxtaposed with the countertypical masculinity of those like Louis and Neville. However, during the Edwardian period, new images arose to threaten masculinity as the new era of the soldier brought masculinity to its heights.

Masculinity at the turn of the twentieth century faced destabilization due to a new prominence of countertypes, the "New Man" movement and an increase in vocal women. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the masculine stereotype faced a threat from the destabilizing effect of new images of the "other." Modern masculinity was founded upon placing the world in a stable order where the ideas of masculinity and nationalism maintained hegemony; and the image of the countertype threatened to disrupt both masculinity and nationalism. However, as the world neared the 1900's, the countertypes became more vocal (during a period Mosse calls the "decadence"), in particular "unmanly" men (homosexuals) and "manly" women (lesbians and women's suffragettes). Also, a new form of masculinity emerged that was more socialist in nature. The "new man" provided a counterpoint to the stereotypical man at this time and based the definition of masculinity on "solidarity, the renunciation of force and rejection of nationalism" (119) in a pursuit to purify the modern man. Thus, the countertype during the Edwardian period began to threaten the stereotype it was created to uphold.

Due to the threat of a more vocal countertype, the masculine stereotype, in Woolf's era (at the beginning of the twentieth century), evolved into a more specific figure. The masculine stereotype around the Edwardian period in England was promoted as one who embodied the virtues of "abstinence, chastity, and physical endurance" (Mosse 95). The fusion of morality and the body was taught to young boys through school and sport: "There the chapel and the playing field were often singled out as the two centers of school life: one to instill the proper morality, the other to train a fit masculine body" (Mosse 135). As World War I moved closer on

the horizon, a new emphasis was placed on more warrior-like manliness which embraced such characteristics as "willpower, courage, and capacity to deal with pain" (101). The Great War further cemented the masculine return to warrior as Europe "would once more exalt the masculine ideal as the defender of society and the state" (105). This occurred as boys became soldiers and fought in trenches across Europe. However, before men took up arms to defend the nation, they first went through a system of construction which began with their formal education in both public and private schools.

Particularly at the beginning of the twentieth century, two institutions recruited and prepared boys to enter the realm of adult masculinity—sport and nationalism. In *Masculinities* (1995), R.W. Connell explains the importance of sport in conditioning boys to the group and hierarchical structure of the masculine stereotype. The purpose of boys learning and partaking in organized sport is that "when boys start playing competitive sport they are not just learning a game, they are entering an organized institution" (35). Sport functions as a method of not only constructing masculinity, but also constructing men to think in terms of nationalism and power and the expression of physical strength. Sports "serve as symbolic proof of men's superiority and right to rule" (Connell 54). Only the men who have physical strength or who can adapt to competitive mentality flourish in sports. Sport weeds out the "weak" and the feminine and is the point where division of masculinity begins to occur, since only the strongest and most athletic males succeed in sport and graduate into the masculine hegemony. Like gender itself, the construction of masculinity through sport was not a natural occurrence, but "was produced

historically, and in this case [English football circa 1905] we can see it produced deliberately as a political strategy" (Connell 30). Sport was a means to promote the stereotypical view of masculinity while, at the same time, promoting nationalism, as sport was oftentimes promoted and maintained by the masculine-controlled government. Sports also served as a benchmark for gauging a boy's value to the Empire. Thus, sport was a divisive tool usually dividing boys based on defining their masculinity in the eyes of other men.

Sport was a means to create a divide between varying forms of masculinity, but once the creation and cementation of the hegemonic masculinity occurs, the relationship between the "quite masculine" and "not quite masculine" becomes an issue of importance. Connell lists four relationships that occur between the masculine stereotype and masculine countertypes: hegemony, subordination, complicity, and marginalization. He defines hegemonic masculinity as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (77). While hegemony grants power to males, males are also subject to subordination. Subordination refers to cultural dominance where gender relations lead to a "dominance and subordination between groups of men" (78); for example, the dominance of heterosexual men and subordination of homosexual men. There also exist men who are not inherently barred from the masculine hegemony because of race or sexuality, but by the mere fact that they are not masculine enough—the relationship of complicity. Complicity relates to the fact that few men meet the normative standard of masculinity and those

practicing the hegemonic practices are fewer. However, the majority of men reap the

benefits of the hegemony and patriarchy in the fact they do not prevent the

domination and subordination of women and subordinate men. Finally,

marginalization (which does not play much of a part in *The Waves*) is the relation of

class and race structures with the masculine stereotype. The maintenance of the

masculine hegemony depends on structures of power where white, heterosexual

patriots were given agency over men falling into one of the countertypes. In essence,

any male who was viewed as "different" was to be subordinate and marginalized,

thus, creating a homogenous group of men who retained dominance. During the late

1920's and through the 30's and 40's, new systems of male homosociality, Fascism

and Nazism, emerged which took this idea to an extreme and shaped *The Waves*, in

part, and certainly Woolf's later works.

   During the years surrounding the publication of *The Waves*, a new form of

hyper-masculinity emerged on the mainland of Europe; in Italy, this movement was

created Fascism and, in Germany, Nazism. For Fascists, masculinity was not only the

expression of sex, but a "national symbol" (Mosse 155). Fascism employed

masculinity "both as an idea and in a practical manner in order to strengthen its

political structure" (155). The Fascist man was an amalgam of traits of masculinity

from previous eras, particularly, the passion of war from the Warrior male and the

mental and physical stoicism of the Victorian man. The Fascist man "must be

disciplined, at one in spirit with like-minded men through a way of perceiving the

world, acting and behaving, based upon the sober acceptance of the new speed of

time and love of combat and confrontation" (156). The goal of the Fascist movement

was the annihilation of the past and a rebirth of a new nation and world. Thus, the

Fascist movement was a contradiction in motion; it sought to break itself with the past

and move toward a new future, while exhibiting the traits of an inherited masculinity.

Furthermore, Fascism mirrored the ancient Greeks in the exaltation of the nude male

body. The correlation being that "Men's bodies in all their well-sculpted nudity

became fascist symbols; women…kept their bodies at least partially clothed" (161).

This image was used to help construct men into the guardians of the nation through

military and political means, while woman were constructed to help the nation by

giving birth to children and maintaining the domestic spheres. Woolf saw the attitude

toward women's roles, and their limited access to the workforce, as a form of

Fascism, which was beginning to gain momentum in parts of Europe, particularly

Italy and Germany.

Berman discusses how Fascism garnered a following in Britain. In the late

1920's, Oswald Mosley, a minister in the British government, broke with the Labour

party and the British government and began the New Party as a "means of solving the

unemployment crisis" (Berman 107). In 1932, the New Party, as it was called,

evolved into the British Union of Fascists (BUF). Berman explains "[t]he common

bond among those attracted to Mosley seems to have been desire for organized and

decisive action that would wrest Britain's economic policy from the hands of the

international banking community, action that would unite Great Britain even as it

connected to people's movement in other nations" (107). Around the same time,

Woolf began to distance herself from the Labour party due to Labour party's close

alignment with trade unions, which "were seen to be a male-dominated movement"

(109). Furthermore Woolf saw the Labour party as "not wholly committed either to anti-imperialism or to the emancipation of women" (109). *The Waves* picks up Woolf's critique of imperialism and the power structures which prevent women from becoming fully emancipated. Critics of *The Waves* have discussed the presence of colonial dissent; however, critics have largely overlooked the connection between the masculine hegemony and the construction of gender which breed and maintain imperialism and other hyper-masculine endeavors.

While gender studies has provided analysis of relations between the genders, masculinity theory paints a fuller picture of the tension between varying expressions of the male gender and the societal influences which attempt to construct boys into an image of masculinity created by patriarchy. John Tosh, in his work "The Making of Masculinities: the Middle Class in Late Nineteenth-Century Britain" (1997), discusses the institutional forces that shaped the construction of gender in nineteenth century Britain. The ideal expression of masculinity is dependent on a specific time, a specific place and a specific need of the masculine hegemony. The construction of masculinity, and its dominance, has immediate consequences for femininity. In the late-nineteenth century, family and school were vital to the construction of gender as "masculinity is formed within the family, in intimate relations of desire and dependence" (40). As young children, boys are immediately affected by the manner in which the society structures a family; in particular, the domestic role of women and the father as head of the household. While this may not have been the case in every home, it was the standard propagated by societal norms. The family established gender roles; women were designated mothers and wives while men went out and

provided for the family. The school environment established boys' relations with one another and introduced them to the masculine hierarchy. *The Waves* begins when the characters Bernard, Neville, Louis, Jinny, Susan and Rhoda are young children; however, the images of childhood the reader receives is devoid of parental or familial influence. The children do not describe interactions with their parents; however, they do narrate the actions of their nannies. Bernard describes "We must form, two by two. Miss Curry is taking us for a brisk walk, while Miss Hudson sits at her desk settling her accounts" (15). In fact, the only mention of a parent is Louis' father who is "a banker in Brisbane" (12) and Susan's close bond with her father. The gender construction in these sections is not marked by familial influence, but by difference: I am different than that of the opposite sex. The real gender construction does not begin until the sexes are divided and sent off to separate boarding schools. While the girl's education revolves around skills to be implemented in the domestic sphere, the boys are being instructed in the structure of power controlled by the masculine hegemony.

School was greatly influential in the construction of masculinity because many middle and upper class boys attended boarding schools, where they lived away from their families and had little interaction with the opposite sex. Schools created homosocial environments because

> from puberty (and often earlier) masculine identity is developed, and
> partly validated, through participation in male peer-groups, school
> usually being the first arena in which boys are exposed to a
> competitive masculine ethos. Winning recognition from one's fellows

is critical to socially valid masculinity, which partly explains why

male bonding continues to be such an important feature of men's adult

lives, notably at the workplace or in leisure activities. (Tosh 40)

Beyond actual education, boys were influenced by the social aspects of such an

education and the competitive activities that were encouraged. Furthermore, the

gender norms which began at home were intensified through the educational system.

Schools set up an environment that rewarded masculine attributes and, at least, over

looked the punishment of boys whose gender expression fell outside scripted norms.

Emotion was viewed as a feminine characteristic:

the gender polarization of many middle-class homes discouraged the

display of feeling in boys; [while] school tended to make the ban

absolute…Manliness was essentially the code which regulated the

behaviour of men towards each other. It extolled action rather than

reflection, duty to one's country rather than one's conscience, and

physical pluck rather than moral courage. The manly ideals propagated

in the 1880s and 1890s made less allowance for the inner man or for

transparency in personal relations; they emphasized instead

conformity of opinion and correctness of behaviour—or 'good

form'…male friendship in an institutional setting strengthens

patriarchy, but exclusive sexual relationships between men introduce

division and jealousy, as well as undermining the vital reproductive

mechanism of marriage. (Tosh 49-50)

Boys learned to shun "feminine" characteristics such as any type of empathy or display of emotion. This helped strengthen the image of the stoic male who controlled his emotions, including sexual impulses. Men were to become a brotherhood of soldiers in the service of nation. Women were to serve the nation by supporting their men, maintaining the domestic sphere and producing babies. Tosh explains, "Growing up male is not only about establishing one's standing in the company of men and learning the appropriate codes of masculine behaviour, it is also about taking one's place in a social order designed to deliver power and privilege to men at the expense of women" (51). However, as evidenced in *The Waves*, it is not men who are privileged, but a select group of males who fulfill patriarchal values.

In *The Waves*, the construction of masculinity begins when the three male voices enter an all-male private school where they are indoctrinated into the world of masculinity and nationalism. Upon first entering the school, Neville observes, "That is our founder; our illustrious founder, standing in the courtyard with one foot raised. I salute our founder. A noble Roman air hangs over these austere quadrangles" (21). This immediately sets the tone for the atmosphere of school life the boys will experience. The statue of the founder takes on the appearance of a military general who requires "saluting." The founder of the school is steeped in military imagery which signifies the tenets of the masculine values upon which the school is based. In *Making a Man of Him: Parents and Their Son's Education at an English Public School 1929-50* (1988), Christine Heward studies British education of young boys and argues that the education system was geared toward "reform and growth of the state and the British Empire" (29). While discussing the dominance of masculinity

and patriarchy in the 1930's, Heward attributes Woolf as one of the few that who

perceived the consequences of male dominance as Woolf believed "continuing

domination of education and the professions by competitive male values hastened

war" (57). In the novel, the atmosphere of the school and its Headmaster, Dr. Crane,

introduces the males to institutionalization, and begins to divide the boys into the

stereotype and countertype. After the boys have "marched in two by two" (34), they

sit in neat rows to listen to Dr. Crane's speech as he exerts his authority over the

boys. The headmaster had an important role in maintaining and promoting the

Empire. J.A. Mangan, author of *The Games Ethic and Imperialism: Aspects of the*

Diffusion of an Ideal (1998), studies the importance headmasters played in turning

boys into soldiers of the Empire. Headmasters held a position of power and influence

over young men which placed them in an important function for the patriarchy where

they acted as

> role of agents of hegemonic persuasion. They were not merely
>
> executive autocrats with an ability to impose their views: they exerted
>
> powerful moral authority. They comprised a pedagogical leadership
>
> which managed in a variety of ways – through the pulpit, the playing-
>
> field exhortation, the speech day admonition, the informal 'jaw', the
>
> classroom digression and the school magazine editor – to suffuse every
>
> pore of the school society with their version of reality. (22)

This was a version of reality which was in line with the masculine power structure.

Louis revels in Dr. Crane's speech stating, "my heart expands in his bulk, in his

authority" (23). Louis sees Dr. Crane as a figure of power and the image Louis wishes

to emulate. Louis has an almost religious experience listening to the speech: "Now all is laid by his authority, his crucifix, and I feel come over me the sense of earth under me, and my roots going down and down till they wrap themselves round some hardness at the centre. I become a figure in the procession, a spoke in a huge wheel that turning, at last erects me, here and now" (23). Louis is so desperate to shed his colonial "roots" that he is easily seduced by the Dr. Crane's speech and religious iconography. However, it is not Louis who will be accepted into the fold, but Percival. Percival "…would make an admirable churchwarden. He should have a birch and beat little boys for misdemeanors. He is allied with the Latin phrases on the memorial brasses" (24). Louis is unable to gain the same type of power over others because Louis is colonial and thus feminized; he does not hold the same masculine threat as Percival. Louis' status as other bars him from entering the homosocial circle of the true English, no matter how hard he tries to assimilate.

Neville and Bernard, who are of English descent, resist the indoctrination of the headmaster. Neville makes the connection between the totalitarian authority of Dr. Crane and the use of religion to force the boys into submission. Neville exclaims, "The brute menaces my liberty…The words of authority are corrupted by those that speak them. I gibe and mock at this sad religion, at these tremulous, grief stricken figures advancing, cadaverous and wounded, down a white road shadowed by fig trees where boys sprawl in the dust" (24). Neville feels an animosity toward the authority of the masculine headmaster and rejects any sort of indoctrination. while Bernard on the other hand, feels ambivalence toward the whole scene. Bernard is more interested in putting his observations into words. Later in life, Bernard recalls

"There was the Doctor lurching into chapel as if he trod a battleship in a gale wind, shouting out his commands through a megaphone, since people in authority always become melodramatic—I do not hate him like Neville or revere him like Louis" (179). However, his ambivalence verges on pity for those he sees as trapped in a system which they do not fully belong: "It is an action which all other masters will try to imitate; but, being flimsy, being floppy, wearing grey trousers, they will only succeed in making themselves ridiculous. I do not despise them. Their antics seem pitiable in my eyes" (36). Bernard and Neville question the authority and validity of the Headmaster's speech which placed them in a precarious situation because "In education independent thought was stifled" (Heward 57). Bernard cuts through the charade of the event and sees what he believes is its true nature: constructing the boys into the image of the stereotypical masculine male.

While Dr. Crane instills in the boys masculine philosophy, the act of male bonding on the sports field separates the boys as a homosocial that is formed between the athletic boys. Percival begins to attain the status of the masculine stereotypic ideal when he enters the male activity of sport, and, concurrently, Louis, Neville, and Bernard attain the position of countertype. All of the boys are indoctrinated into the masculine world through Dr. Crane's oration; however, only a few of the boys, like Percival, are able to enter into this world. Louis, Bernard and Neville are not among the boys who play sports and thus become outsiders to the masculine world. Sport is a signifier of a masculine dominance among men; men who take part in sports are given a higher value within the masculine structure. Louis describes the group mentality of the boys playing sports:

The boasting boys…have gone now in a vast team to play

cricket...Larpent's brother played football for Oxford; Smith's father

made a century at Lord's…the names repeat themselves, the names are

the same always. They are the volunteers; they are the cricketers; they

are the officers of the Natural History Society. They are always

forming into fours and marching in troops with badges on their caps;

the salute simultaneously passing the figure of their general. How

majestic is their order, how beautiful is their obedience. (46-47)

The boys who are playing sport seem to be inheritors of their position, already having

brothers or fathers who have established themselves in the masculine hegemony.

Sport has turned the select few into their own elite society, where they act and move

in the same manner, almost like a squad of soldiers, and where they have been formed

and molded to be one and create order for the world. School culture also created an

environment where boys were divided. Those who have physical athleticism are

viewed positively, while boys who display emotion or who are physically weaker are

on the bottom of the pecking order. Bernard, because he chooses not to join in with

the playing boys, is marginalized. He observes, "Archie makes easily a hundred; I by

fluke make sometimes fifteen. But what is the difference between us?" (34). The

difference is Archie is successfully made a part of the patriarchy because of his

participation in group activity, while Bernard is looked down upon because he

chooses thought over action. If a boy is perceived differently than the norm, then he is

ostracized:

The boy culture of the public schools despised intellectual ability and

aesthetic sensibility; it elevated athletic prowess to become a fetish;

and it cultivated a strong but somewhat mechanical group loyalty,

easily adapted to an unthinking patriotism and a secular sense of

public duty. Two attitudes proved particularly relevant to men's

responses to women's suffrage. In the first place, public school

enforced a crude pecking order of privilege by seniority and by

muscular might…Pro-suffrage activists like Laurence Housman who

struggled to counter this 'physical force' argument were well aware

that undue respect for force was one of the most pernicious legacies of

a school culture which taught boys to endure cruelty and then inflict it

on those weaker than themselves…Secondly, the public schools

intensified a preference for the company of males. (Tosh 48-49)

The issue of power is important because it fosters homosocial relationships and

prepares boys to wield their power in the public sphere in the name of nationality,

more specifically, they are taught cruelty and to exploit those weaker than

themselves. This relationship of power echoes colonialist philosophies as the colonial

rulers prey on weaker countries and feminize their colonial subjects as the feminine is

viewed weaker than the masculine. Percival enters this world when he partakes in

cricket, thus distancing him from the "not quite" masculine voices. Louis, Neville

and Bernard, who do not partake in sports, but are still complicit to the system which

divides the young men, represent the disorder that threatens the masculine

stereotype—they are the countertypes.

The relationships between Percival and each of the voices, Louis, Neville and Bernard, takes on the form of the relationship of the "masculine stereotype" and the "countertype" in the case of Louis, this relationship manifests itself in the form of subordination. Louis passionately desires to be one of the select few who are accepted into the masculine stereotype; however, he is unable because he is viewed as the "other." Louis is not English, he is Australian, a fact which he can not hide because of his Australian accent; he laments, "I am now a boy only with a colonial accent" (52). Australia was originally a penal colony of Great Britain; therefore, Louis represents the colonized other. Louis, while living in England, can never break free from his designation as a countertype to enter the masculine stereotype, and thus can never enter into the English masculine hegemony. Louis resents Percival, as representative of the masculine class, and also resents him because he wishes to enter the status of stereotypic ideal.

The complexity of Louis' relationship to Percival is heightened by Louis' homosocial desire for Percival. The activity of sport, in which Percival is a participant and Louis is not, is a signifier of the importance of homosocial bonding within a patriarchal society as there is "a special relationship between male homosocial (including homosexual) desire and the structures for maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power" (Sedgwick 25). Louis' desire for Percival is platonic; he does not want to be in a sexual relationship with Percival, but to be accepted into his social circle. As the cricket boys are marching outside, Louis wishes "If I could follow if I could be with them I would sacrifice everything I know" (32). Louis desires to belong overpowers his self esteem, he is willing to give up everything just to belong.

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However, there is nothing Louis can sacrifice because he cannot change his colonial position and, thus, will always be barred from the idealized homosocial. Louis transfers his frustration of his position within English society, which has denied him entry, onto Percival, as he pronounces "I resent the power of Percival intensely" (24-25). Percival is filled with tension as he both "resents" Percival and "adores" him. However, Louis feels "My heart turns rough; it abrades my side like a file with two edges; one, that I adore his [Percival's] magnificence; the other I despise his slovenly accents—I who am so much his superior—and am jealous" (25). Louis feels he is superior to Percival in the intellectual arena; however, this is not valued as highly as athletics in imperialist school culture. Louis, like Neville and Bernard, turns to the world of education and literature as a replacement for sport; however, the presence of Percival prevents him from fulfilling any artistic endeavor. Louis exclaims, "I see for a second, and shall try tonight to fix in words, to forge in a ring of steel, though Percival destroys it, as he blunders off, crushing the grasses, with the small fry trotting subservient after him" (40). Louis may be marginalized by the masculine hegemony, but he is also complicit in it. Percival is the reminder of what Louis can never attain; however, Louis is also divided because in his heart Louis sees the importance of the stereotypical masculine ideal; Louis thinks, "Yet it is Percival I need; for it is Percival who inspires poetry" (40). Louis needs Percival to strengthen the masculine. Louis desires to be with Percival, not in a homosexual sense, but as a member of Percival's inner-circle. Louis' homosocial desire for Percival represents Louis' desire to belong and to not be viewed by his difference.

Like Louis, Neville is related to the masculine hegemony through subordination and complicity, and Neville seems content with his status as a masculine countertype. Neville's rejection from the masculine hegemony stems from his sexuality, which is revealed later in life. Also, his interests do not lie in sport, but in the desire to be close to Percival. Neville perceives the ambivalence Percival shows him while in the games are going on: "He is thinking nothing of nothing but the match. He never waved his hand as the brake turned the corner by the laurel bush. He despises me for being too weak to play (yet he is always kind to my weakness" (47-48). Though in public, especially in the presence of the cricket players, Percival ignores Neville; however, there seems to be a fondness that Percival feels for Neville as he shows him empathy. However, Percival is growing further from Neville as Percival has become indoctrinated into the competitive state of sports, which prepares boys for the competitiveness of national conquests, where nations have enemies and wars are won or lost. Neville does not share in the desire to compete; therefore, he cannot be a part of the masculine hegemony where competitiveness is a criterion of nationalism and the desire to colonize and rule other lands. Neville is also barred from the stereotype by his latent homosexuality, which is indicated by his repeated profession of love for Percival. Neville keeps his affection Percival to himself; "I cannot talk to him [Bernard] of Percival. I cannot expose my absurd and violent passion to his sympathetic understanding…To whom can I expose the urgency of my own passion? Louis is too cold, too universal. There is nobody" (35-36). Neville is forced into silence because he believes the males around him will not understand his feelings and he desires someone with whom he can confide in, so that he is not

"feeling alone" (36). His love, and silence, for Percival makes him complicit to the masculine hegemony, which the athletic boys are inheritors, because he accepts his position of outsider. Neville remains complicit because he adores the masculine beauty that Percival exudes.

Complicity also seems to define Bernard's relationship to the masculine order, but his designation as a countertype is much more difficult to define. Bernard does not have any inherent factor of birth or sexuality that bars him from the masculine hegemony; he simply has no interest in the activities of the masculine. Bernard seems rather ambivalent about sport and is more concerned with becoming a writer. Neville observes that "Bernard could go with them, but Bernard is too late to go with them. He is always too late" (33). Bernard is in a unique position to Louis and Neville. He is not barred from the homosocial circle; rather, he chooses not partake and has no desire in competitiveness or nationalism. While he does at one point call the cricket players "horrid little boys" (49). He shows no real sign of hatred, in fact, he is also enamored with Percival. Bernard sees Percival as a masculine romantic figure that authors such as Byron used to portray as their epic hero. Bernard does not wish to become Percival, but to honor him by capturing his masculine essence in words, and he describes Percival in heroic terms. To Bernard, Percival "is conventional; he is hero. The little boys trooped after him across the playing-fields. They blew their noses as he blew his nose, but unsuccessfully, for he is Percival" (123). Percival embodies the mythic figure, Bernard wishes to capture in words, thus he needs Percival, and other men who exhibit the stereotypical masculine, to act as muse to his artistic endeavors. Bernard, like the other boys, does not have his own

expression of masculinity, his is always in relation to Percival (the masculine ideal); however, when Percival dies the boys are free to define their own masculinity outside of the shadow of the masculine stereotype.

Before his death, Percival's status as masculine stereotype is cemented when he enters the army and becomes an extension of colonialism and nationalism. Percival joins the British army and is sent to India. Thus, Percival was successfully initiated into the imperialist power structure that began with his participation in sports. Percival goes to India to support Britain's national and imperialist interests there; however, this also spells his demise. While in India, Percival is thrown from his horse and killed. The death of Percival is not narrated in the first person; the reader gets the details of his death through the six voices. Neville explains Percival fell off his horse and, as Neville muses, "[t]hey carried him to some pavilion, men in riding boots, men in sun helmets; among unknown men he died. Loneliness and silence often surrounded him" (109). Percival was not mourned in some grand regale of a king or an epic hero; he died quietly and alone. Woolf is very deliberate in giving him such a death, as millions of men died much the same way in imperial battles and in the Great War. To their loved ones they are mourned, but to those in power they are just another number, another statistic to use in their war propaganda. The very power structure that raised him to the heights of admiration, in the form of masculine stereotype, is also the same power that led to his violent death. The violence of the masculine drive towards nationalism and imperialism destroys itself. When Percival dies, so does the influence of the masculine stereotype on the lives of Louis, Neville and Bernard.

CHAPTER III

CREATING A NEW CENTER FOR MASCULINITY

Once Percival has perished, the tension that exists among the three male

narrators shifts from the tension between their masculinities and Percival's to the

struggle with developing their own masculinities. Percival no longer has the power

over Louis; Louis is also free from the comparison to the masculine stereotype.

Without Percival gaining all of the attention, Louis can be a new figure of

masculinity, one separate from national roots and propelled by his capitalist success.

Wealth becomes Louis and he becomes attractive to others; he boasts, "All the young

ladies in the office acknowledge my entrance" (200). While there are still men like

Percival living in the world of the text, they no longer have their hold on Louis' life.

There is no masculine ideal present to counter Louis' own expression of masculinity;

therefore, his status as "other" is no longer detrimental to his self-image and he is able

to attract English women and take a position of economic power. Louis defines his

masculinity through this economic power and opens up the potential for a powerful

masculine figure not tied to nationalism, but to capitalism.

Louis finds his masculinity through twentieth-century progress as a capitalist.

Although he can never be considered a masculine stereotype, Louis finds his own

way of promoting masculinity through the spread of capitalism and creation of order.

Louis, in effect, enacts the tenets of masculinity and attains his own masculine height,

as he boasts, "I divest myself to my own authority" (200). Louis has transferred his

desire to be like one of the "running, boasting boys" to the war of business. Louis'

description of his business dealings take on a military imagery. He describes "[u]pon

these white sheets I indent my name…I, now a duke, now Plato, companion of

Socrates; the tramp of dark men and yellow men migrating east, west, north, south"

(121). Louis is lord of his business world; where he was shunned from the world of

athletic young men he flourishes behind a desk wielding "typewriter and the

telephone" like a sword and shield. Louis is all too comfortable with his position as a

free market gentleman. While Louis has been barred from actual military service, he

seems to have found a way to fulfill his own desire to have dominance.

Louis likens the work he does to a quasi imperialism where his business

influence is spread throughout. He thinks, "I like to be asked to come to Mr.

Buchard's private room and report on our commitments to China. I hope to inherit an

arm-chair and a Turkey carpet. My shoulder is to the wheel; I roll the dark before me,

spreading commerce where there was chaos in the far parts of the world" (122). The

desire to spread his way of business and create order in the world echoes the methods

of colonialism. Ashis Nandy, in his chapter "The Uncolonized Mind," explains the

life of Rudyard Kipling who, born in India and brought up in England, had a similar

experience in the hyper-masculine world of English schooling. Nandy's description

of Kipling provides an analogy to Louis as schooling produced the idea "that England

was part of his [Kipling's] true self, that he would have to disown his Indianness and

learn not to identify with the victims, and that the victimhood he had known in England could be avoided, perhaps even glorified, through identification with the aggressors, especially through loyalty to the aggressor's value" (68). Louis fully accepted the words of his Headmaster and spends much of his childhood trying to identify with the colonizer. He takes this further in his adult life when he goes beyond simple identification and assumes the same system of dominance by attempting to spread his own brand of capitalism to other parts of the world. However, Louis is still below someone, this time Mr. Buchard, who he works for. Louis desires to be a man unto himself, but he still feels the nagging of being an outsider: "when six o'clock comes and I touch my hat to the commissionaire, being always too effusive in ceremony since I desire so much to be accepted" (123). Louis's need to be "accepted" is the fear that the colonial power which "perpetuated itself by inducing in the colonized, through socioeconomic and psychological rewards and punishment, to accept new social norms and cognitive categories" (Nandy 3). Louis will create an identity and put order to his world in order to fit into the mold dictated by others.

After the death of his beloved Percival, Neville's sexuality takes shape as he participates in numerous affairs with different men. Before Percival's death, Neville remained in the shadow of his sexuality, never revealing his attraction to men, and always silently tormented by his unrequited love for Percival. For Neville, Percival not only represented the ideal masculine beauty, but also the hegemonic masculinity that stifled and relegated Neville, preventing him from embracing his sexuality. Neville relates the death of Percival to the death of Neville's former life and a shift from silently desiring to act on his sexuality to internally embracing it. Neville

ponders, "so I revisit my past life, scene by scene, there is an elm tree, and there lies

Percival. For ever and ever, I swore" (178). In Neville's mind, he was

monogamously committed to Percival. The language he uses to describe Percival's

passing indicates that he took a vow, much like a marriage vow, to forsake others and

only desire Percival. Neville holds on to the image of Percival, but once Percival is

dead he is free to engage in sexual activity with other men. However, the politics of

masculinity and the order placed on sexual activity still keeps Neville and his lover

from fully coming out with their homosexuality. Neville and his lover can only meet

in an isolated room and must be "silent without raising our voices. Did you notice

then and that? We say. He said that meaning…She hesitated, and I believe

suspected" (179). For Neville, Percival's death may have freed him from sexual

abstinence, but he is still not free of the heterosexual suspicions and prejudice against

homosexuality. He and his lover must remain silent and fear accidentally revealing

any clue to their sexuality, for someone may always be there to "suspect."

Furthermore, as with Percival, Neville sees himself as lesser than his more masculine

lover. Neville thinks of his lover: "Alcibiades, Ajax, Hector and Percival are also you.

They loved riding, they risked their lives wantonly, they were not great readers

either." (131). Neville seems to be attracted to lovers who easily flow through

activities and whom Neville perceives as more masculine, as Neville perceives

himself as "the depravity of the world" (131). Neville's self loathing, stemming from

his perceived weakness in relation to other men, and his silence about his sexuality

makes him complicit to the masculine hegemony which dictates the proper expression

of masculinity.

While Neville feels inferior in terms of his masculinity and physicality, he garners strength from his intellectual and artistic pursuits. Neville holds a perspective on the aesthetic as he wishes not to be the ruler of his works: instead, he wishes to capture the world as it is without bias. His view of art closely aligns with his strong distaste for order and societal structures. Neville believes "We are not judges. We are not called upon to torture our fellows with thumbscrews and irons; we are not called upon to mount pulpits and lecture them on pale Sunday afternoons. It is better to look at a rose, or to read Shakespeare" (143). Neville sees the aesthetic as the "real" and societal conventions as the "make believe." He sees the sermons as constructions to validate actions of war and violence. Neville also sees the construction of a uniform narrative as a false reality; "But then Rhoda, or it may be Louis, some fasting and anguished spirit, passes through and out again. They want a plot do they? They want a reason?" (144). For Neville, there is no "real" plot or reason. All that is real is what he can see and the goal of art is not to capture truths, but to transfer the beauty of life.

For Neville the aesthetic is not political. It is purely the expression of the beauty and essence of life; however, for Woolf, the aesthetic is extremely political. Bernard's philosophy of art is much different from Neville's. While Neville seeks to make the beauty of life eternal, Bernard seeks to go beyond the surface and capture existence in its entirety. Bernard is not concerned with beauty or dogmas, but with capturing the "truth" of his subject; furthermore, Bernard is not hampered by trying to fit into the masculine hierarchy. Woolf uses the juxtaposition of the narrative styles to destabilize traditionally male narrative modes. In particular, the change in narration in the last section of the novel signifies a very political shift as Woolf moves from a

multi-perspective to a single perspective: Bernard's. The key distinction between the

final section of the text, in which Bernard narrates alone, and the voice chapters, is

that the characters are not speaking to an audience, and in essence, are a direct

account of the ebb and flow of their consciousness. Bernard's concluding narrative is

directed towards another person; he *is* speaking to another person as Bernard attempts

to tell the story of his life and the lives of the other "voices." Bernard's speech to the

"listener" most closely aligns with the technique of the monologue. This section of

the novel is the first point at which one of the "voices" directly addresses his speech

to a listener. Bernard states, "[n]ow to explain to you the meaning of my life. Since

we do not know each other (though I met you once I think on board a ship going to

Africa) we can talk freely" (238). The implication of this switch is not only

structural, but ideological.

CHAPTER IV

DISRUPTING TRADITIONAL NARRATIVE MODES

Bernard's masculinity is the least affected by Percival's death, since he was always ambivalent in relation to the masculine hegemony. After the death of Percival, Bernard takes a wife and has a family, but still desires to become a writer. Bernard's evolution is much more difficult to pinpoint because, on one hand, he is complicit to the masculine hegemony as he propels Percival into the image of an epic hero, but at the same time rejects the machinations of the masculine hegemony which Bernard sees as falsely creating order in the world. He states, "But what is to be done about India, Ireland, Morocco? Old gentlemen answer the question standing decorated under chandeliers…But it is a mistake, this extreme precision, this orderly and military progress; a convenience, a lie" (255). Bernard seems to oppose the political maneuvering of the masculine hegemony, while at the same time admiring the image of the stereotype (Percival) and wishing to portray the stereotype as mythic hero. The reasons Bernard has contradicting views of his relationship with masculinity lies in his inability to attain a static self-definition, while also

highlighting the myth of gender itself. Bernard thinks, "What am I? I ask. This? No, I

am that…I am not one and simple, but complex and many" (76). Bernard's inability

to attain a static identity also illustrates the inability to attain a static expression of

gender. Both identity and gender are illusions that society creates for the means of

producing order. This is the tension that exists in *The Waves* and is reflected through

Bernard's struggle as an author. Bernard doubts both his place within the artistic

world and his place within the masculine hierarchy. Bernard at once loathes

"ridiculous, flamboyant, beautiful phrases" while at the same time, he "distrusts neat

designs of life that are drawn upon half sheets of note paper" (176). However, in the

final section of the novel, it seems as though Bernard takes on the persona of an

authoritative narrator. In choosing a monologist narrative at the end of the novel,

Woolf illustrates her pessimism that writing and the state of discourse can/or will be

changed for the positive, the positive being disrupting male controlled/created

discourse and language.

 In the final section, Woolf silences Neville, Louis, Jinny, Susan, and Rhoda

and allows Bernard to have narrative authority. In the prior sections of the novel,

those except for the interludes, the narration is internal, while in the final section

Bernard finds himself speaking to an audience of one: a fellow passenger on a train. It

is in this section, that Bernard begins to contemplate his ability as an author. Bernard

attempts to summarize the lives and impressions of his fellow voices into one version

of their shared and separate histories Bernard explains

  Whatever sentence I extract while and entire from this cauldron is only

  a string of six little fish that let themselves be caught while a million

others leap and sizzle, making the cauldron bubble like boiling silver, and slip through my fingers. […] How impossible to order them rightly; to detach one separately, or to the effect of the whole. (189-190)

Bernard's lifelong attempt at becoming a writer and his feelings of utter futility that such a project is possible puts into question the ability to capture into language a "true" version of history. The "six little fish" he attempts to catch are the stories of Bernard and the other voice characters. However, he is cognizant of the fact that he could never properly construct a story that would capture the full narrative of any one life. Judith Lee, in her essay "This Hideous Shaping and Moldings" (1991), explains, in *The Waves*, "Woolf makes a crucial distinction between what *exists*, what is *real*, and what is *made*. The natural world *exists* inexplicably and eternally, but it becomes real only when its material *reality* can be seen in terms of an image we *make*" (191). *The Waves* plays with the essence of reality; since the reality of text is primarily made up of internal thoughts and not the material, it opens up a new way of writing that may encompass a greater understanding of existence.

In a 1931 letter to Hugh Walpole, Woolf writes:

Well—I'm very much interested about unreality and the [sic] Waves— we must discuss it. I mean why do you think The Waves unreal, and why was that the very word I was using of Judith Paris [Walpole's novel]—"These people aren't *real* to me."—though I do think, and you won't believe it, it has all kinds of quality I admire and envy. But unreality does take the colour out of a book of course; at the same

time, I dont [sic] see that it's a final judgment on either of us. You're

real to some—I to others. Who's to decide what reality is?

The Waves attempts to break any hegemony over "reality." The narrative of the

Headmaster attempts to create one reality that of the masculine hegemony and by

extension the Empire, "But it is a mistake, this extreme precision, this orderly and

military progress; a convenience, a lie" (189). Furthermore, Bernard critiques, in

particular biographical narration, not only of living figures, but also biography of

characters. Bernard imagines

> Once, I had a biographer, dead long since, but if he followed my
>
> footsteps with his old flattering intensity he would here say, 'About
>
> this time Bernard married and bought a house…His friends observed
>
> in him a growing tendency to domesticity…The birth of his children
>
> made it highly desirable that he should augment his income.' … that is
>
> how the biographer continues and if one wears trousers and hitches
>
> them up with braces, one has to say that though it is tempting now and
>
> then to go blackberrying; tempting to play ducks and drakes with all
>
> these phrases. But one has to say that. (192)

The compulsory style of the biography can be said to extend to narration of any type;

however, Bernard, his ambivalence toward the "cricket boys," is ambivalent about

this type of writing. While critiquing biography, Bernard's final narration also echoes

Woolf's own critique, in *A Room of One's Own*, of "men…now writing with the male

side of their brains" (101). In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf postulates that the mind

is composed of both male and female parts, and the meaningful writer melds these

two parts to create a dynamic text. Woolf critiques authors, such as Rudyard Kipling and John Galsworthy, and equates them to an author/critic she calls Mr. B. Mr. B. represents a style of writing that one may call "Realism," but more pointedly, a type of "Realism" that only asserts facts and surface descriptions. As a representative of this type of writing, "when one takes a sentence of Mr. B into the mind it falls plump to the ground—dead; but when one takes a sentence of Coleridge into the mind, it explodes and gives birth to all kinds of other ideas, and that is the only sort of writing of which one can say that it has the secret of perpetual life" (101). Bernard inserts the example of biographical writing to juxtapose his own style which attempts to reach beyond the surface of material life. Bernard's "writing of *The Waves*" does not conform to what can be described as typical masculine language; Bernard's attempt at writing reaches the possibility of writing outside the masculine hegemony, and outside the style of the biographer.

Bernard's relation to the masculine patriarchy is much different than that of Louis and Neville because Bernard could have joined the boisterous boys playing ball; however, he chose not to. Bernard in choosing his aesthetic style also rejects masculine modes. Bernard views traditional narrative modes as only capturing the surface of life: "Let us pretend that life is a solid substance, shaped like a globe, which we turn about in our fingers. Let us pretend that we can make out a plain and logical story, so that when one matter is despatched [sic]—love for instance—we go on, in an orderly manner to the next" (186). Bernard rejects a narration that makes easy resolution and only paints a picture of the superficial; he attempts to capture the very essence of existence. Bernard proclaims, "I will record in word of one syllable

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how also under your gaze with that compulsion on me I begin to perceive this, that and the other. The clock ticks; the woman sneezes; the waiter comes—there is a gradual coming together, running into one, acceleration and unification" (218). However, Bernard's story does not follow an "acceleration" and his descriptions go beyond what is felt by the senses. Bernard sees the futility in narrating based on senses alone; that the very essence of the story lies beneath. He asks, "But how to describe the world seen without a self? There are no words. Blue, red—even they distract, even they hide with thickness instead of letting the light through. How describe or say anything in articulate words again?" (213). The very essence of perception is called into play. If one relies on their sense of sight to illustrate a story, is one getting the complete story? For Bernard, the real story lies beneath the iconography and the dressings of the chapel during Dr. Crane's speech. These distract the listener from what is important; what lies beneath the surface. Bernard's aesthetic attempts

> to recall things gone far, gone deep, sunk into this life or that and become part of it; dreams too, things surrounding me, and the inmates, those old half-articulate ghosts who keep up their haunting by day and night; who turn over in their sleep, who utter their confused cries, who put out their phantom fingers and clutch at me as I try to escape— shadows of people one might have been; unborn selves (215)

The "unborn self" is the repressed part of one's personality; it includes all the possible life paths one could follow if chosen. Bernard could allow himself to be an imperialist and that desire may exist; however, he chooses not to:

I marked the ease with which my mind adjusted itself to assimilate the

message—it might be (one has these fancies) to assume command of

the British Empire; I observed my composure; I remarked with what

magnificent vitality the atoms of my attention dispersed, swarmed

round the interruption, assimilated the message, adapted themselves to

a new state of affairs and had created, by the time I put back the

receiver, a richer, stronger, a more complicated world in which I was

called upon to act my part and had no doubt whatever that I could do

it. Clapping my hat on my head, I strode into a world inhabited by vast

numbers of men who had also clapped their hats on their heads, and as

we jostled and encountered in trains and tubes we exchanged the

knowing wink of competitors and comrades braced with a thousand

snares and dodges to achieve the same end—to earn our livings. (197)

This part of his personality, the part repressed, is as much of who Bernard is and what

makes his narrative that much more complex. By choosing to include, what is not

seen, he moves one step closer of encompassing that which traditional language

cannot capture. Bernard explains,

even when we arrive punctually at the appointed time with our white

waistcoats and polite formalities, a rushing stream of broken dreams,

nursery rhymes, street cries, half-finished sentences and sighs…that

rise and sink even as we hand a lady down to dinner. While one

straightens a fork so precisely on the tablecloth, a thousand faces mop

and mow. There is nothing one can fish up in a spoon; nothing one

could call an event. Yet it is alive too and deep, this stream. (189)

Bernard's view of narration has evolved from desiring to recount huge epic battles

with larger-than-life heroes, to the realization that the "real" story is comprised of

small moments, like going down to dinner. Moments like these are infused with

memories and perceptions that color the essence of character. Bernard's story opens

up the possibility for a new way of reading a text, one in which the traditional

language of the patriarchy is broken. Bernard's narrative seeks to break conventions:

"How I distrust neat designs of life that are drawn upon half sheets of note-paper. I

begin to long for some little language such as lovers use, broken words, inarticulate

words, like shuffling of feet on the pavement…What delights me then is the

confusion, the height, the indifference and the fury" (176). A language that

destabilizes the essence of the way words are written also destabilizes those who

created and continue to maintain such language. By creating disorder and multiple

perceptions, Bernard threatens the monologism of the patriarchy; thus, *The Waves* as

a whole can be read in such a way. The novel as a whole destabilizes the notion of

narrative by creating multiple perceptions, even within a singular being, and

subverting traditional literary techniques.

Bernard's story of the lives in *The Waves* has often been read as "taking over

the text;" however, when read through the context of masculinity theory, Bernard's

narrative is revealed as subversive. A masculinity reading of the text illuminates

Bernard's, as well as Louis' and Neville's position outside of the English male

hegemony; therefore, their narratives must be read given this context. Bernard does

not so much "take over the text," as provided a distinct perspective on British politics and literary technique from the position of outsider. Bernard's final narrative is a culmination of subtle critique on the construction of gender in early twentieth-century education and the privileged status of homosocial relationships built upon athletic activities and nationalist endeavors, such as imperialism. Many critics have chosen to draw out the critique of imperialism in the novel; however, the text is not so simple. *The Waves* is not only a critique of imperialism and the construction of masculinity, but the English masculine hegemony which promotes and supports a vision of masculinity which aides in the dominance of men. It is important to note this only applies to men who display the proper characteristics such as athleticism and nationalism, and the subordination of women. However, we must be careful not to reify masculinity, as is the case in many critiques of the novel. Masculinity refers to a specific set of characteristics, norms, and social construction specific to a particular place and time. The Britain of the 1920's and early 1930's, when Woolf was writing *The Waves*, was dominated by the desire to hold on to its remaining Empire which entailed constructing men into imperialist soldiers and women into domestic chaperones, supporting their men through their maintenance of the household. In order to end the subjugation of the countertype males and females, the gender binary, which is controlled by the masculine hegemony, must be destabilized, or eliminated, through the creation of new expressions of gender. The structure of power, and of nation, is built on a hierarchical system where not only women, but also men of varying expressions of masculinity are relegated to the bottom. In fact, there are few

men who comprise the powerful hegemony; men of color, different nationalities and homosexuals are all banned from the masculine power class.

In *The Waves*, Woolf gives a voice to three female characters (Jinny, Susan and Rhoda) and three male characters (Louis, Neville, and Bernard), who fall into the category of countertypes, while at the same time silencing the sole figure of the masculine ideal (Percival). *The Waves* also juxtaposes two visions of the world—one in which the male characters' definition of their own masculinity centers around an image of the masculine stereotype (Percival), and another where the stereotype has died and the countertypes are forced to define their own masculinity. Louis, despite his status as "other," attains a prominent position and is successful where Percival perishes in masculine pursuits. While Louis desires entry into the masculine homosocial world of the cricket boys, his actions are subversive because he is persistent in attaining status despite his colonial roots. While many critics view the final section of *The Waves*, where Bernard is the lone narrator, as an act of narrative hegemony, when read through the context of masculinity theory, Bernard's re-telling of *The Waves* actually destabilizes hegemonic literary authority. When Bernard is writing the story of the voices' lives, he is doing so as a culmination of a lifetime of living outside the patriarchy. However, unlike Louis and Neville who are subordinated, Bernard chooses to remain outside the homosocial games of the cricket players. Bernard's ability to abandon his literary influences, the Romantic and Victorian writers, seems to be only possible because at a young age he resisted patriarchal gender construction and remained outside the male homosocial environment. Though he struggles with this choice, partly because of societal

expectations, he attains the status of author by throwing conventional male writing techniques out the window. Bernard's speech is a culmination of subtle subversive acts by the male voices. When read in the context of Woolf's oeuvre, Bernard's final speech acts as a bridge between Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*. Woolf gives Bernard a symbolic guinea by giving him the narrative voice with which to destabilize gendered writing.

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